

**ACTIVISM AT THE GRASSROOTS:
WORKING FOR CHANGE WITH
MIGRANT AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN CANADA**

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of the four decades that the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program has operated as an international labour recruitment initiative for Canadian farmers, a variety of community groups, churches, and non-profit organizations have mobilized around the causes of the Mexican and Caribbean migrant workers who call rural Canada their temporary home. This paper explores and analyzes the activities of one urban-based social justice collective dedicated to building a politicized movement that is driven by migrant workers themselves, and that brings together individuals from various sending countries. From internal ideological struggles to large-scale structural barriers, the collective as a whole and its individual members must grapple with a range of challenges. These challenges and the strategies employed to overcome them demonstrate the complexities of civil society organizing and political activism in the context of one of Canada's most infamous managed migration programs.

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CHAPTER ONE

LOCATING AWARE: AN INTRODUCTION TO AGRICULTURAL WORKERS AND ALLIES FOR RIGHTS AND EQUITY

The parking lot of the A & P supermarket in the tobacco-farming town of Tillsonburg, Ontario, is a lively and interesting place on most Friday evenings in the summer. Teenagers wearing make-up and baseball caps talk loudly as they walk by or sit on the curb, big white men and women in heavy trucks greet each other as they exit their vehicles, large Mennonite families in traditional dress file into the stores, and various small groups of black and brown men congregate next to buses and pick-ups, sometimes deep in discussion, sometimes saying nothing at all.

On alternate Fridays another set of people can usually be seen milling around the trunk of a car or van. They approach the small groups of black men with stacks of paper and familiar handshakes. These young men and women, dressed in sweatshirts and jeans, are different shades of white, brown, and black. They often walk in pairs, but always arriving at the parking lot in a group of five or six.

Although these men and women are not from the town, they are well-acquainted with a handful of the migrant agricultural workers, on contract from Mexico and the Caribbean, who spend much of their time socializing around the busses and trucks that litter the parking lot. The migrant workers live and labour in the region for most of the year and come in groups to the A & P every Friday evening to shop, chat with each other, and relax from their hard week of work.

The other outsiders, young people in their twenties and early thirties, come to the Tillsonburg parking lot in irregular intervals, but always at the same time of day as the migrant workers they are there to see. Between five and seven o'clock, weary from a three hour drive from Toronto, they empty out of the car, stretch their legs, and start looking around, taking a quick survey of their surroundings. They do not buy groceries or go out to eat. The parking lot is their destination, they have come a long way to get there and they only have a few hours to stay. Once they arrive, they want to begin right away.

Some of these young people are students, some employees of non-profit or government organizations, some work in restaurants and others with labour unions. All of them are activists, unpaid and unemployed as such, but committed to the title as an identity and a job. Different combinations of these activists can be seen in Tillsonburg on Fridays, and in the nearby towns of Simcoe and Delhi some Saturdays. Sundays they might arrive in Chatham or Niagara on the Lake, and during the week they will often meet up in different locations around downtown Toronto. They work together, sometimes in a large group of ten to fifteen people, but more often in smaller groups of four or five. There is no named boss or leader, and no one who determines definitively the time, location or quality of weekend trips or weekday meetings.

These young activists are part of Agricultural Workers and Allies for Rights and Equity (AWARE)¹, a self-defined grassroots volunteer collective. AWARE was founded

¹ In order to protect the anonymity of participants in this research, pseudonyms are used for the personal names of members of the collective, as well as for the collective itself.

by, and continues to be comprised of, dedicated activists who are committed to struggling for social and political change on behalf of, and alongside, migrant workers. The primary focus of the collective is Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), a government-regulated labour recruitment initiative that contracts close to 20,000 Mexican and Caribbean men and women to labour in Canada's agricultural industry for three to eight months of the year.

AWARE's primary mandate is to meet migrant agricultural workers and organize politically with them in the rural towns where these migrants live and work. Founders explain that the collective was established so that migrant workers and their activist allies could participate in equal parts in the struggle to improve workplace conditions and change the social and political structure that underlies the exploitative nature of the SAWP.

Activism at the Grass-roots, the story of a collective then and now

The ideologies and principles according to which the collective is meant to operate were laid out by the founders of AWARE when they established the collective in 2002. These original founding members came together to formulate ideas about how they wanted political organizations to be structured, and how they hoped that the people in them would think and behave. Specific ideological commitments set out by the founders at the time of the collective's establishment continue to shape the constitution of

AWARE, and also to represent important ways in which the collective carves out a niche for itself in the political atmosphere of SAWP activism, advocacy and service work.

AWARE, like many social justice collectives that currently operate on local and global scales, attempts on one hand to change policy and on the other to change the general attitudes that make certain kinds of policy possible. In their efforts to make a lasting impact on the social and political world, these collectives strive to “be the change they seek” by rejecting hierarchy and creating spaces for consensus, inclusion, and diversity. The pressure of achieving this difficult goal often helps to create complicated and difficult relationships between members of the collective. Such internal personal conflicts and organizational difficulties are not unique to AWARE. They are the common products of non-corporate quasi-groups, where membership is fluid and authority is not centralized.

This ethnography will examine the relationships among ideology, structure and practice in AWARE, showing both the positive and negative effects of the strong and earnest commitment to social change that pervades all the activities of the collective. Through an analysis of AWARE, its ideological structure, and the relationships that define it, this thesis will provide more general insight into the ways in which people who are committed to positive change come together, organize themselves, and struggle for sustainable social and political justice.

Beginning with the history of AWARE and a brief description of its processes, and then moving into a description of some bodies of literature that will help shed light on the intricacies of social activism in this context, the following pages will deal, first,

with the ways in which political ideals shape goals for structure and agency in a collective and, second, how political realities, when ignored or obscured, prevent some of those goals from being achieved. The stories and analyses that make up the next chapters and the case study that follows will expose conflict, contradiction and dissent within AWARE. Rather than describe failures of the collective, however, these contradictions explain the complex and important ways in which the collective operates and is significant in the context of activism and advocacy with participants in the SAWP.

The Beginnings

A history of AWARE's formation provides an introduction into its current structure, priorities and challenges. When Mexican farm workers employed in Leamington, South-western Ontario, embarked on a wildcat strike on April 29th, 2001, a number of concerned labour activists, including union representatives and students trained in the labour movement, decided to travel from Toronto to the site of the dispute to conduct an investigation. They found that strikers were protesting the early and unjust repatriation of over twenty of their co-workers, and that they had a host of serious concerns associated with the actions of specific employers, as well as with the general operation of the government program through which these foreign workers were contractually employed on farms all over Canada.

Workers who were interviewed by the team said that they were dissatisfied with unsafe and unsanitary housing and working conditions but they were afraid that

complaining to their employers would put their jobs in jeopardy as they could be repatriated to their home countries at any time. In Spanish, English and Patois, these foreign labourers explained that even the act of expressing solidarity with the men who had been unjustly terminated could damage their reputations as good and reliable workers, and consequently put their livelihoods in danger.

Those investigating the issues listened intently and noted that these migrant workers were in fact indentured labour for their employers. For this team of labour movement representatives the strike signified that the structure of the SAWP was inherently exploitative and illegal since it tacitly allowed employers to be unaccountable for their actions in the workplace. Even where standards for work and housing existed in law, these conditions were not being upheld by the governing bodies responsible for protecting the rights of migrant workers.

The initial investigative mission to Leamington inspired the development of the Global Justice Care Van Project (GJCV), a series of trips to farms and towns in the region organized to expose the plight of migrant workers and generate media attention about the SAWP. The project was funded by the Toronto office of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) and was implemented by a delegation of former graduates from its Solidarity Works Youth Internship Program. These students and youths of colour, angered by what they had learned on the first trip to Leamington and eager to link injustices in the program to the lingering racist tendencies of Canada's immigration policy, brought together friends and allies whose experiences in journalism, politics, and campus activism could contribute to the credibility and influence of the project.

As testimonials were collected by the team, differences emerged among members as some felt that there were serious problems related to the ways in which migrant workers' issues were being exposed. Some of the youth volunteers who had worked with established labour movement representatives on the investigative team were concerned that the stories of workers were being exploited by seniors in the union who were not aware of real issues on the ground. These volunteers claimed that the workers felt disenfranchised from the struggle and were unjustly losing ownership over their own experiences and political capacities.

In an attempt to address the problem that workers were not fully part of their own struggle for justice, the established labour representatives who initiated the investigative mission acted on the advice of the youth volunteers who had participated in the investigation with them and developed an idea to build service centres that would be located within the agricultural towns where workers lived. The idea was considered and discussed, but shortly thereafter funding shortages forced the UFW office to close down, and the project proposal was subsequently dropped.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union of Canada (UFCW), acquainted already with the issue of migrant farm workers through their attempts to unionize agricultural workers across the country, decided to take on the task of setting up these support centres for migrant agricultural workers. The Dunmore decision, passed by the Supreme Court of Canada in the winter of 2001, had given agricultural workers the right to associate but not to participate in a "collective bargaining regime" that would

protect their right to strike.² This was considered a hollow victory and the UFCW made commitments to follow-up on the challenges with the hope that collective bargaining could also be legalized. Employees from the UFW office were hired on to manage the initial stages of establishing centres. The youth volunteers who had originally met with workers through the GJCV project were also hired by the UFCW to follow-up with these contacts and run the individual centres.

Again, ideological differences with respect to how investigative work should be carried out, and how workers should be incorporated into union processes, created tensions among those involved in this initiative. Management within the union was concerned with focussing on specific political issues that could be understood and treated within a legal framework. They wanted to collect information from migrant workers that would substantiate the claims that it had already begun to make in charter challenges. The GJCV youth activists who had become employees of the union were interested in creating change at a more structural and ideological level. They saw the workers as the best engineers of their own struggle against a state which they defined as racist and exploitative.

² In the case of *Dunmore v. Ontario* Tom Dunmore, supported by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, challenged the exclusion of agricultural workers from labour legislation that would protect these workers' right to organize. The court ruled 8-1 in favour of Dunmore and defined the denial of unionization rights as a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms clause on the freedom to associate. The court declared that "...the wholesale exclusion of agricultural workers from Ontario's labour relations regime does not minimally impair their right to freedom of association. The categorical exclusion of agricultural workers is unjustified where no satisfactory effort has been made to protect their basic right to form associations." Judgement of the Supreme Court of Canada – <http://scc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/2001/2001scc94/2001scc94.html>

These youth volunteers-turned-employees started to meet up in restaurants and cafés to discuss the disillusionment that they felt with the union and with other service-oriented groups associated with migrant farm workers. They believed that such groups failed to address many of the broader issues that were central to the exploitation of migrant farm workers. As friends and allies of workers, the young employees who were meeting in coffee shops wanted to put into practise some of the ideas and processes that they had developed through their experiences investigating farms and working in UFCW support centres. They felt however, that they were unable to do this work within the confines of their jobs with the union.

This group of former GJCV volunteers and current union employees decided to form a listserv in order to discuss the issues that they had identified, and perhaps to put some of their unique ideas into practice. The listserv was active quickly, and from the interactions on it, a collective was founded. The founders had a few discussions about what to call the collective, and how to formulate its structure. They eventually settled on Agricultural Workers and Allies for Rights and Equity (AWARE), a volunteer-run, politically-motivated collective that would be based on the principles of anti-oppression.

Who is AWARE? Complications in Discussing the Social World(s) of Individuals in a Collective

Who is the subject of this ethnography? To explore this question is to acknowledge and highlight the divisions and diversity that make up any social grouping that is not structurally bound to operate as a whole. An explanation of the complications

of addressing AWARE as a single organizational unit will provide the reader with an understanding of the various subject-groupings that are referred to throughout the rest of the thesis.

The history of the collective shows how AWARE's founding members sought to develop a collective whereby individuals would participate according to their diverse abilities, strengths, and capacities. The founders hoped then, and continue to hope now, that migrant workers themselves could be at the forefront of this social and political unit. The thoughts, feelings and ideas of these workers would drive their own actions as well as the actions of others. Allies, or people who were not migrant workers, would facilitate and support the efforts of workers and contribute in their own ways to the realization of goals as they were set out.

The founders of AWARE established that, as a collective, the grouping of individuals would have no hierarchy and no set authority structure. Every person would have equal rights and participation in the collective, and everyone would have ownership over the activities that the collective endorses or participates in as a unit. While AWARE continues to be the sum of many parts in that it is propelled by various volunteer members (defined as such by the fact that they subscribe to the organizing listserve) the collective also has an identity and a reputation, from the perspective of outsiders to it, as a bounded unit. In many cases AWARE is called upon to make decisions as such a unit. And in these cases a consensus must be reached so that all members can feel comfortable with the outcome. Often the consensus that is reached represents less a collective agreement than the absence of dissent.

Throughout my research with, and my participation in AWARE, I have had a problem distinguishing the collective from the individuals who make it up. In fact, members of AWARE, as well as people who are not members, say that they have the same problems making this distinction as the fluidity and openness of the collective make it difficult to determine when a member is operating as an individual and when that member is acting as a representative of the collective as a whole.

Individual members have different opinions, ideas and commitments. They have different jobs and interests, and different ways of incorporating those jobs and interests into their activist work with AWARE. No one person could represent the collective as a whole, and yet all members are influenced by the intensity of participating in AWARE, to act in accordance with the principles originally set out by the founders.

For the purpose of this thesis I will be using AWARE or “the collective” as a subject when I am describing an intention, action, or opinion that is encoded in these founding principles and ideologies. For example, AWARE’s website and the documents that are distributed to workers explain the collective and refer to a singular unit that operates according to set standards. Insofar as certain ideas, definitions, and actions are taken for granted by members as consensual, they will be described as the ideas, definitions and actions of AWARE as a whole.

When I am discussing ideas that are common among members but not necessarily encoded in the founding principles or in the published information that is disseminated about AWARE, I will refer to “the members” or “the membership”. Individuals who make up the membership will be treated as individuals. The thoughts and feelings that

each person has expressed to me, in interviews, meetings, and in casual interactions within my period of participant observation, will be attributed to that individual person and should not necessarily be understood as reflective of the stated ideology of the collective as a whole.

What is AWARE? An Introduction to the Ideology and Structure of a Grassroots Collective

Ideology and Anti-Oppression Principles

The focus of the collective was, and continues to be, the provision of what is perceived to be a much-needed space for agricultural workers to participate in, as well as lead, their own movement to achieve rights and justice for themselves and for fellow workers. It was explicitly hoped by founders of AWARE that, by avoiding the “insensitive, white male hierarchy” of unions, and the depoliticised, often short-term focus of service and charity-based organizations, these workers with the help of allies and friends could develop their own model and leadership structure so that their specific needs and desires would never be compromised or overlooked. Importantly, the process used to achieve these ends would be one that emphasized intersecting levels of oppression such as race, gender, and nationality and that contextualized those levels of oppression in the political and economic histories of the countries involved in the SAWP.

Anti-oppression is a conceptual model that founders of AWARE established as central to the collective. The founders began the collective based on the premise that this framework would underlie all the actions and attitudes of members of AWARE. The

terms or title of the model are therefore frequently evoked in a rhetorical manner by members of AWARE when they refer to the principles that they see as essential to AWARE's activism in particular, and to equitable social interactions in general.

There has been discussion in meetings around whether new members must be trained in anti-oppression principles upon joining AWARE. But, as yet, this has only been put into practice sporadically and informally. References to websites that explain and elaborate upon anti-oppression have been circulated through listserves as a result of requests being made by individual members to have it be more explicitly understood throughout the collective. While the principles of anti-oppression are not always expressed as parts of a unified model, bits and pieces of the framework are nevertheless constantly discussed in meetings, on outreach trips and throughout personal interactions.

Anti-oppression first emphasizes the necessity of identifying and understanding one's personal position of privilege and power with respect to those around one who suffer oppression in any way. This requires that one recognize that this oppression exists and that one constantly challenges the assumptions that contribute to dominant ideals. The acknowledgement that categories of whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality, and so on have historically been understood as universal and treated as invisible is a first step in this direction.³

Secondly, anti-oppression occurs through the commitment by people who are a part of dominant social groups to be open to learning more about the ways in which oppression is felt by others. The model encourages active listening and strategies

³ soaw.org/new/article.php?id=741---- Overcoming Discrimination

whereby each individual can become aware of how much time s/he speaks, where, why and to whom. These practises are meant to combat the silencing or isolation of people who may feel oppressed but not be able to express this or contribute to effective change.⁴

Thirdly, anti-oppression involves the realization that language and behaviour may contribute to oppression and should therefore be considered flexible and changeable according to the fluid nature of each individual's understandings of power and privilege. The commitment to anti-oppression is therefore an ongoing process and must involve constantly educating others on the principles by which it operates. If an individual comes to view oppressive processes in a new way, s/he is encouraged to share this view and, similarly, to be open to the criticisms or challenges of others without getting defensive or indignant.⁵

Anti-oppression principles are part of the collective in structural ways through the collective's commitment to no hierarchy and consensus building. They are also part of the collective in individual ways though each person's commitment to questioning their own privilege and power. Anti-oppression principles represent a set of behavioural politics that members of the collective try to promote both within AWARE and in the broader context of activism and political and social engagement.

Structure

AWARE was created because its founding members could not find another established space in which activism with participants in the SAWP was happening from

⁴ soaw.org/new/article.php?id=471---- Tools for White Guys who are Working for Social Change

⁵ soaw.org/new/article.php?id=398---- Principles and Practice of Anti-Oppression

the 'grassroots'. Because they firmly believed in the importance of the anti-oppression ideology, the founders decided to base the structure of AWARE on principles of equality, anti-racism and critical thought and practice. The collective is described on its website as "a volunteer driven political non-profit collective comprised of committed activists from diverse walks of life (including labour activists, educators, researchers, students and youth of colour)...[who are] engaged in this work alongside our personal commitments and numerous social justice struggles."

AWARE has no office and owns no property. It operates in large part over cyberspace through a website and two main listserves. One listserv is the "organizing listserv" and is comprised of about thirty "members" who initiate and engage in activity under the banner of the collective. The other listserv is the general listserv, and it is made up of over 200 people who are called subscribers, not members. Subscribers sign onto this listserv by way of a link through the website that encourages "getting involved". They sign up in order to get information about public events and issues that have to do with the collective's actions and causes.

The website is accessible, bilingual (English and Spanish), updated regularly, and has a vast collection of scholarly and journalistic resources on topics including but not limited to migrant workers, agricultural workers, and Canadian immigration policies. It serves as a source of information on the activities of the group, on the SAWP, and on the state of agricultural work and migration in Canada and around the world. Links on the site direct users to a huge array of resources including academic bibliographies, photo galleries from past demonstrations, copies of press releases written by the organizing

listserv membership, and a “Wall of Shame” dedicated to exposing politicians and the racist and/or discriminatory remarks about immigrants and minorities that they make.

The site is maintained by one of AWARE’s founders, who is the creator of the organizing listserv and who continues to serve as the web manager of that listserv. Most of the communications that lead to any activity by the collective occur over this small and exclusive space of email contact. Individuals must be added to the organizing listserv by the web manager. At the time that these new members are added to the listserv, they are encouraged to introduce themselves to the rest of the members. Currently however, there is no fixed policy as to how this should happen. Each member has been added or introduced in a slightly different way.

Other important communications among organizing members of the collective occur at meetings. Meetings may be called by any member at any time, and have taken place in a wide range of venues and locations. Typically, an individual member will propose a meeting topic and date over the organizing listserv, and others will respond with their availability and/or alternate ideas for dates, times, or places. Usually, the arranging of a meeting requires several exchanges over the listserv as people’s various schedules and personal commitments get in the way of everyone coming together at the same time in the same place. Meetings often begin quite late as last minute cancellations or changes are made close to the time that the meeting are set to begin.

There are a few kinds of meetings which take place within AWARE. A ‘visioning meeting’ is one that a large number of members of the collective are expected to attend. The purpose of these is to solidify the structure, perspectives, and goals of the

collective, and to clear the way for other activities to proceed with these principles in mind. Visioning meetings are relatively infrequent and are less likely to occur in a café or public setting and more likely to be held in a private space in some way reserved for AWARE. They are expected to take several hours and to cover and clarify broad-ranging subject matter, including the future of the collective, its basic stance on issues, and its internal structure with respect to such practical concerns as membership policy and the need for office space.

General meetings are much more frequent and can take place with as many as fifteen members, or as few as two. In July of 2005, in response to a number of failed attempts to get large numbers of people to come to these meetings, and with a knowledge that those few members who were coming to meetings were experiencing ‘burn-out’, there was a consensus in AWARE to organize a formal committee structure centred on the main activities and concerns of the collective. It was believed by the membership that individual members could focus their time, energy, and attention on one or two issues which they felt they could contribute to most effectively. The committees that currently exist are: Outreach, Fundraising, Membership and Political Action.

AWARE in Action

Outreach

Outreach is the term used in the collective to refer to the contact that members make with agricultural workers in the towns where they live and labour. Full day trips,

often extending from 1:00pm to 1:00am, take place on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, depending on the day that workers are most likely to have off work in any particular location. Much of the time allotted for these trips is spent is on getting to and from these locations since traffic and long distances can put driving times anywhere from two to four hours each way.

Outreach can take many forms, but always involves interactions with men and women from Mexico or the Caribbean who are working on contract in Canadian farms for three to eight months at a time. The members of AWARE carry with them on these trips a wide variety of written handouts that are used to explain anything from who the group is, to health and safety information, to instructions on how to file a worker's compensation form. Various members of the collective have translated most handouts from English to Spanish, but some are only available in one or the other language. The handouts are distributed in conversations with workers. These conversations most often take place in the parking lots of shopping centres where workers are likely to be spending time on their one day off a week.

Small groups of individuals from AWARE pull up to the shopping centres that long-time members know to be particularly busy. These groups of members stand around or walk to other parking lots to look for workers to talk to. There is no direction as to the way that these conversations must go. Each member uses his or her own discretion in determining what is an appropriate way of approaching workers and creating rapport. Many members rely on casual greetings and introductions and then immediately explain the motivations and character of the group. In this scenario it is usually emphasized that

the collective is made up of volunteers. Many members also find it necessary to define the group in terms of what it is not. This is because it has been observed by the founders of AWARE and long-term members of the collective that workers might be suspicious of, or uninterested in engaging with, religious solicitors, sales teams, representatives of the government, or union leaders.

Since a high percentage of workers are warned before coming to Canada that it is illegal for them to become involved in unions, many are aware that they could lose their jobs if employers or friends of employers see them interacting with people who are strangers to the town or community. Members of AWARE are cognizant of this issue, and in fact invoke the 'safety' of workers as the number one priority of the group. People who do outreach are advised to keep a low profile when on trips and to maintain an awareness of who is curiously watching interactions in the parking lot.

There have been incidents where farmers/employers have approached members of the collective with hostility or suspicion. In these cases individuals have been called upon to defend themselves and the group against harsh accusations. Because of the intimidating and potentially damaging nature of these interactions, dealing calmly and diplomatically with encounters with farmers is one aspect of outreach that has become the subject of explicit training for members. One member of the collective, usually a founder, will lead a role-playing activity, typically in the car ride on the way to the town. Another member, generally one who has more recently been incorporated, will act as an individual undergoing attack from an angry farmer/employer. In this way, members learn

to deflect attention from the situation by remaining calm and emphasizing that the members of the collective are concerned citizens and not union representatives.

In a few towns, workers have come to know members of AWARE individually and as a group. They plan to be at the parking lot to meet the car when it pulls up and often bring along friends or acquaintances of theirs to interact with members of the collective or to benefit from some of the service work, for example filing parental benefits forms, that is done in this context. These workers are known by members of AWARE as 'key contacts' or possible local-level political organizers. Some are in touch with one or another member of the group regularly by telephone. Other workers do not extend the relationship this far but have a long history working in the program and are well acquainted with most of the AWARE activists who work in this context.

Fundraising

Outreach can be costly for the collective in financial terms. However, AWARE has no set system whereby the trips taken correspond directly or proportionately to money garnered through fundraising. Usually trips will depend on the use of one member's car and that person as a driver. Often the same person will pay for gas and repairs or maintenance for his/her car without any immediate offer of compensation from the collective. Each individual can submit receipts to AWARE's treasurer in order to get the money returned to them. Members know very little about the finances of the group, as one person is in charge of the treasury and this individual may or may not be a member

who regularly attends meetings. Currently, three people have signing power on the chequebook, and the onus is on any individual who spends money and desires compensation to approach those people with receipts.

The collective has no standard source of funding and members are consequently always concerned about the costs of different actions. A short blurb on the website is the only sustained method for requesting funds, and it produces an extremely small percentage of any money that AWARE receives. The funds that AWARE does receive depend mostly on the actions of one member who is adept at discovering, completing, and submitting funding applications to large unions or funding bodies that may be interested supporting the work that is being done. Sometimes there are conversations regarding the tensions associated with accepting funding if one or another potential funding body does not seem to be in line with the political and social goals of the collective. Additionally, if a funding body demands some kind of alliance or commitment from AWARE in order to donate funds, the decision to accept the money is brought before several members at a meeting or over the organizing listserve.

The organization of parties or fundraisers is another method that the collective uses to raise funds. These require a lot of work, however, and depend on one or two people taking the initiative to organize the event. Fundraisers are expected to use performers, venues, and methods of advertisement that correspond with the anti-oppression principles according to which the collective operates. However, because it is very difficult to come to a consensus on how these principles should be addressed in the context of planning a party, the job of organizing a fundraiser is difficult.

Political Action

The collective is explicit about the political motivations that sustain the work that it does. While AWARE has a small capacity to provide services to migrant agricultural workers, the broad framework under which it operates is one that stresses political change as a means toward social justice. Political action, as it is defined by the collective, is directed towards Canada's immigration policy and more specifically, towards the terms and functions of the SAWP.

A political action committee meeting may arise in a seemingly spontaneously way, to address a long-standing issue or problem with which the collective is trying to deal. Alternatively, and more usually, a meeting of the committee is requested by a member over the listserv in response to some pronouncement or event that has taken place in provincial or national politics. Such a meeting is held for the purpose of organizing a direct action.

Direct actions are meant to address a particular problem by either informing the public, or specific people in the government, of the collective's critical views on an action, event, or policy decision. These actions have taken the form of issuing a letter or a set of demands, creating and distributing an information package, writing and circulating a press release, setting up meetings with relevant government officials, and mobilizing people for a demonstration, protest or picket. Often a single direct action plan will incorporate more than one of the preceding elements. Actions are typically planned

by three or four people, but the participation of other members of the collective is usually solicited in a variety of ways.

In the case of press releases or other documents meant for public consumption, it is expected that members of the collective arrive at a consensus on what to write and how to frame issues. Often this period of negotiating wording and style significantly adds to the time required to get the document out. In the case of time-sensitive issues, this can cause members a good deal of stress and anxiety as each person involved in the creation of the document tries to speed up its submission while still not wanting to damage the democratic process.

In the case of meetings with representatives of the government, only two or three people will participate, after which a detailed review of what happened in the meeting will be posted on the organizing listserv so that those members who were not present can engage in a discussion of what should happen next. In the case of public demonstrations, protests, or pickets, members of the organizing listserv, subscribers to the general listserv, and the friends or acquaintances of organizers will be encouraged to participate. There are often several notices that go out over both listserves to remind people to come and support the initiative.

Political actions have led to meetings, speaking engagement invitations, and formalized responses to demands that have been made. They have not, however, led directly to any change in policy as far as members of the collective know. Political actions are thought by most members to be most effective at applying pressure to specific individuals in the government to meet or engage with members of the collective.

Members also say that political actions are effective in calling attention to the problems of migrant agricultural workers and creating awareness about exploitation in the SAWP.

Membership

Members of the collective are activists who communicate on the organizing listserv and work with migrant agricultural workers in a variety of capacities. The activities of members on the organizing listserv are not constrained by any defined expectations or obligations. Each member may participate in any or all of the activities that are associated with the collective. These activities include engaging in discussion on the listserv, acting as a speaker on behalf of the group, attending committee meetings, going on outreach trips, meeting with workers or political figures individually, taking part in political action, supporting events put on by other like-minded organizations, and sharing information, articles, or contacts with the organizing and general listservs. Members may dedicate more or less energy to these activities at different moments, depending on how they perceive their own personal responsibilities, interests, or availabilities.

There are only a few prescribed roles within the collective and these are understood to be flexible enough to accommodate the schedules of those members who take them on. One person volunteers time to the mechanical aspects of banking and treasury. The treasurer must provide a mailing address where cheques can be received. He or she is expected to manage the account but does not have any special privileges or

obligations with respect to determining how money is spent. The treasurer is not the only member who has signing powers on the cheques and as such is not uniquely responsible for receiving or monitoring claims made by people who would like to be compensated for money spent on collective expenses.

Another member is responsible for the maintenance of the website. This person makes sure that new information is posted and that relevant phone numbers, addresses and links are up-to-date. Anyone is invited to submit information for posting on the website, but that posted material must be approved by the website manager . Similarly, anyone from the general public as well as from the organizing listserve who would like to post an email on the general listserve will automatically have his/her entry pass through the website manager for his/her approval.

A third person is in charge of checking the email account of the organizing listserve and responding to, or forwarding information, requests, or queries to others on this list so that they may respond. Much of the time these emails are a request for public speakers from the group, or for individuals who are needed for interviews. In these cases, the emails are forwarded to the organizing listserve and ensuing discussion over the merits of doing a speaking engagement or interview occurs among members.

Although some orientation sessions have been planned over the course of AWARE's four years of operation, there is no fixed method for recruiting members to the organizing listserve, and no standardized way through which new members become integrated into discussion and activity. Individuals who become involved are expected to post an introduction of themselves on the listserve when they are added, and then to

participate according to interests and abilities. Recently more set systems of finding and incorporating new members have been tabled as important issues for the collective.

My Fieldwork

At the time of submitting this thesis, I have been an active member of AWARE for nineteen months. During this time I have been in constant connection with various members of the collective through the daily practise of receiving, reading, writing, or sending materials transmitted over the organizing listserv. I continue to engage in this work, and plan to remain a full member of the collective for as long as possible after the completion of this project. My activism in this context has, and continues to be based on, a personal and sustained desire for structural change and social justice. As I have told many of my fellow members of AWARE on many occasions, this research was inspired by my own keen interest in the collective and its cause.

The bulk of my research for this project was conducted over the summer of 2005 when my own involvement, as well as the involvement of other members, was particularly concentrated. I regularly participated in discussions online, attended meetings, organized and took part in outreach trips, joined protests and demonstrations, and engaged socially with members of the collective. During these five months, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with four members of AWARE and with two individuals, initially affiliated loosely with the collective, whose connection with AWARE has since developed into what could be characterized as full membership.

The materials I use in this thesis come from notes I took during meetings, on outreach trips, and in interviews. I did not tape-record these interactions, but took notes by hand, filling in any missing details later that day or week. Once my research intentions were known to all participants, I began to bring my note book along with me to all collective-related activities. As weeks passed, I recognized that the process of conducting research was an important source of information about the collective. Tensions related to note-taking, and to research in the collective in general, were a primary feature of my fieldwork experience and will be taken up later in the ethnography.

Throughout the field experience, I saw myself as a participant observer, an activist, and a researcher. As intertwined as these roles were, however, I was alternately detached and engaged with them at different points in my fieldwork experience. I was not always effectively doing research; conversely, I was not at every moment as committed an activist as I might have been. Rather, my priorities and attentions to these roles were in constant flux depending on the many and varied waves of emotional intensity that characterised this research and life-experience.

While I have enjoyed and learned from my time acting as a researcher and activist with the collective, I have often felt ambivalent about the structure of AWARE and the ways in which the collective operates. I have openly expressed to fellow members of AWARE both the enthusiasm and warmth that I feel towards the collective as well as the confusion and anger I have felt about particular issues and the collective's internal politics. This thesis is therefore a product of that ambivalence and an expression of a powerful field experience that has helped me understand, among other things, where and

how conflict and contradictions are located in AWARE, and where and how internal strife plays a part in my own personal relationship with activism.

Getting involved in a meaningful way with the collective was my first challenge, alerting me immediately to the ways in which busy schedules, and an unclear division of labour within the membership, can act to keep the collective small, tight-knit, and exclusive. Some members of AWARE are reluctant to incorporate new people into the collective, and those who are eager to increase membership find that the impersonal nature of email communication makes it difficult, firstly, to determine who is suitable for the collective, and secondly, to follow through with invitations and orientations.

There is no set protocol with respect to recruiting or integrating new members into AWARE, and no formal hierarchical structure through which potential members are screened or approved by any one individual. Every person who wants to play an active role in structuring the activities of the collective will have a unique experience making the transition from the 'general listserve' (subscriber) to the 'organizing listserve' (member).

I found out about AWARE when I was searching online for information about migrant agricultural workers. The website is very prominent as it seems to be linked to a number of search words related to the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. I joined the general listserve as a subscriber by clicking a link on the site that encourages "getting involved". Once my email address had been submitted I began to find out information about AWARE and about migrant workers through emails that were sent to the general listserve from what I perceived were two of the founding members of the collective, Will,

a 29-year-old Jamaican-born student and committed activist, and Gabriela, a 28-year-old graduate student born to Argentinian parents who had moved to Toronto as political refugees.

When AWARE called a press conference to demand that the chief coroner do an investigation into the death of a worker who was crushed by a tobacco kiln, Will wrote a persuasive email to solicit participation from the general membership. I went to the event, and later contacted him and Gabriella by replying to emails sent out to the general listserv.

After about a month and a half of writing and receiving no responses from either Will or Gabriela, I received an email from Gabriela saying that she could meet with me in the next few days to discuss my joining the group and doing research while participating as an organizing member. In late January 2005 I came to her workplace downtown and told her about my own interest in the issue of migrant agricultural workers and my intent to make some aspect of migrant workers in Canada the subject of my Master's Thesis. I told her that I had been thinking lately about focussing on women who participate in the SAWP. Gabriela said that she shared this interest and felt that it was under-represented in academic literature and media. We talked casually and at length about the fact that she was thinking about doing similar research herself, and exchanged ideas and sources related to this topic.

She then introduced herself in more general terms and explained to me the history of her experiences with the collective, specifically its founding as a separate and distinct entity from other groups and organizations working with agricultural migrant workers.

She warned me that there was some suspicion among members of the collective that academic interests were not in line with the interests of the workers. This issue had come to the fore after Paul, another graduate student, had begun volunteering with AWARE and had incorporated workers into his thesis by facilitating art workshops and creating a booklet of what had been produced. Paul was then called upon to leave the country abruptly to begin a job. In his haste to pack up and leave, he neglected to give a forwarding address to workers or to fulfil his promises to send copies of the final product back to those who had participated.

Gabriella explained that the members of AWARE felt responsible for the actions of this former member and were embarrassed and upset that they could not satisfy the workers' requests to see what had been made of their comments and collaboration. Personally, Gabriela felt that research was important for the advancement of the issue, but she advised me that others were still affected by Paul's mistakes and were consequently unsure that researchers could be trusted considering the sensitive nature of the work that the collective tried to do. Everyone could agree that it was of utmost importance that SAWP participants not feel used or abandoned by those whom they were being told they could trust. The difficulties of these agricultural workers were only too well-known by members of AWARE and their emotional and psychological health could not be taken for granted.

After speaking for an hour and a half, Gabriela asked if I spoke Spanish and was excited to find out that I did. We continued the rest of the very friendly conversation in Spanish as she explained to me that this was an asset since the number of Spanish-

speaking members that were active in outreach was dwindling lately and the group needed more members to be able to carry out events and outreach bilingually and effectively. She asked if I would like to be added to the organizing listserv so that I could be involved with the planning of activities with the collective and I said that I would.

I received an email that evening saying that I had been invited onto the listserv. I also received another email, via the organizing listserv, a few days later, written by Gabriela, indicating to all members that she had included me on the list and had discussed with me “who we are, what we do and our ideas/concerns with ‘research’”. I was encouraged to introduce myself through email and so I did, emphasizing that I was a student. I also wrote that my research aspirations regarding the SAWP came from a general and long-term interest in the issues of migration.

I received no responses from this email but felt confident that I had entered into a role that would be satisfying and educational. My personal experiences working with immigrants in various capacities over the years seemed appropriate to becoming an activist in this collective. Additionally, hearing the stories of my mother and grandmother who were both immigrants to Canada, and being immersed in the Mexican migrant culture that is prevalent in my father’s hometown on the U.S.-Mexico border, inspired me to get involved in work that could ease the burden of the experience of migration. I was unsure how I could or would participate in the activities of the collective or indeed what those activities were. It was not until a few months later that I began to feel comfortable in the role of activist and researcher. And it was not until

several months after that that I began to understand how much the experience would teach me about the complexities of social organization, politics, grassroots activism and international migration.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORIZING ACTIVIST COLLECTIVES

The analyses of organizations, local politics, collectives and migration form the framework of this thesis. In the following chapters, I explore the local-level politics of a loosely structured collective whose cultural and ideological politics prioritize the social and political inclusion of migrant agricultural workers in Canada.

The Anthropology of Organizations

Three distinct theoretical approaches have been noted as defining the body of work that has come to be known as Organization Studies. The Classical theory, the Human Relations approach and the Structuralist school all attempt to locate and describe the flows of power in formal organizations; and each contributes in distinct ways to a model of analysis that explores and codifies the relationships, operations, and activities of a collection of individuals committed to a common project. When understood as an aggregate whole, these three theoretical paradigms provide insight into the changing face of organizations and the changing ways in which researchers and theorists have studied and reflected on those organizations.

Weber's early observations of the dehumanizing qualities of bureaucracy set a trend for looking at the organization of business and industry as separate from everyday social interactions. Weber wrote that organizational life had no place for "purely

personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation” (Weber in Strati, 2000). Studies in Classical organization theory (Haire 1955, Strauss 1956, Stinchcombe 1959) elaborated upon Weber’s ‘rationalist model’ of study by emphasizing the idea that an organization’s primary goal was control for the purpose of efficiency and productivity. In this school, organizations were understood as scientifically managed entities according to which individuals were to “transform their perceptions of themselves and others.”(Strati, 2000:10) Authority, through centralized decision-making as well as a highly specialized division of labour, was thought by these theorists to achieve the purest form of efficiency.

The Classical theory introduced useful ways of mapping out hierarchies, and determining the efficiency of organizations. Research done by proponents of this school, however, neglected to represent the full range of relationships between individuals or members of organizations. Thus, the Human Relations School or ‘interactionist model’ emerged partly in response to the positivism and rationalism that Classical theory popularized. Critiques based on empirical studies (Mayo 1933, Lewin 1936) challenged the view that workers and managers would always be predictable ‘economic men’. The approach therefore attempted to look at the ways in which individuals derive personal and not just economic satisfaction from work. It was proposed that more complete studies of people in organizations would have to consider the effects of emotions, non-rational actions and unplanned events (particularly on a micro-social and socio-psychological level) on individual behaviour. While studies conducted in this period were still focussed on prescriptive analyses of the productive power of business, the

paradigm shifted to an emphasis on concepts such as social capacity, communication and participation.

The Structuralist approach to organizational studies was a model that was based on an extended range of organizations including hospitals, churches, social-work agencies and prisons. Proponents of this school (Etzioni 1961, 1963, Ashton 1966, Blau and Duncan 1967) sought to compare and synthesize other organizational theories in order to acknowledge the complexities and tensions inherent in the relationship between the individual's desire for satisfaction or happiness and the organization's quest for efficiency. With their focus on conflict, these theorists aimed to bring attention to the multiplicity of groups and values that can operate within a single organization. They therefore emphasized that power and conflict both internally, within bounded organizations, and also externally, between bounded organizations and their social environments, were important areas of inquiry for organizational studies.

In synthesizing two schools and expanding upon the types of organizations researched, structuralists attempted to widen the scope of organization studies by addressing aspects of organizations that were disordered, inconsistent or difficult to quantify. More than determining just the efficiency of an organization as the Classical School did, Etzioni (1961) in particular provided a way to describe the types of power that characterize organizational relations as well as organizational capacities.

Literatures on the anthropology of bureaucracies that emerged from the Newfoundland school in the 1970's and 1980's continued in the Structuralist trend of exploring a wide variety of organizations. This group of scholars studied a range of

bureaucratic contexts in the social service sector, emphasizing the ways in which a concentration on “informal organization in formal bureaucratic process”(Britan and Cohen, 1980:3) can help to illuminate diverse forms of hierarchy and bureaucratic organization. Studies of the bureaucratization of such personal and emotional issues as child rearing (Nader, 1980), child abuse (Handelman 1978), workman’s compensation (Leyton, 1978), and mental health (Schwartzman, 1980) led to the development of new theoretical and methodological trends in the anthropology of organization. While research continued to explore the bureaucratic arena, it was now being done with a “sharper awareness of the moral responsibilities contained in the anthropologist’s vocation”(Paine, 1985:251). The notion of anthropology as advocacy became possible, opening the door to new ways of discussing power and influence in organizations.

Anthropologist Eric Wolf (1990) expanded on this particular aspect of organization studies in his essay on four different “modes of power” and the ways by which those modes are articulated at various levels of organization. Wolf identifies “tactical or organizational power” as power in which “operating units circumscribe the actions of others within determinate settings”(1990:586). He then compared this kind of power to “personal” and “structural power” in order to situate organizations in a broader context.

Wolf picked up where the three schools left off by encouraging an understanding of organizations and organizational power as a process within which ‘flows of action’ provide information on “what is going on, why it is going on, who engages in it, with whom, when, and how often...”(1990:591). His point is that organization is never static

or unchanging because local and global fields of power shape the sets of processes that characterize every organization. Wolf's idea of process is especially useful for studies of collectives that are fluid and changing. This is because understanding organization as process legitimizes the changing nature of informally structured organizations without reifying the inconsistencies that make those changes happen.

Recent ethnographic and theoretical explorations of organizations, and loosely structured organizations in particular, address methodological techniques that are appropriate for the sites and organizations studied. In conjunction with his ideas on process, Wolf theorized the connection between theory and method by suggesting that anthropologists "build upon the past by using our concepts and models as discovery procedures, not as fixed representations, universally applicable"(1990:591). Just as organization is fluid, so is the study of organization a process that must change and adapt to fields of power.

Theorists of social movements note that the method of participant observation is necessary for the observation of significant social arenas of 'micromobilization' and 'micro-construction' that occur in "face-to-face interactions within a variety of group contexts"(Mueller, 1992:6). It is through an examination of intimate and continuous personal interactions that one can better understand how and where "grievances, resources, and opportunities as well as ideologies and symbolic representations of collective identities can be constructed and transmitted."(1992:13) Ethnographies written on social movements increase the diversity of the literature on organization and expose the power relations of organizations in explicit and interesting ways.

Anthropologists who have formulated their research while performing assigned jobs or roles in organizations (Fairholm and Geggie 1998, Parker 2001) have been able to illustrate their own relationships and those of colleagues at work in particularly nuanced and descriptive ways. When Parker (2001) was promoted to a prominent position in the Clap Clinic that she was researching, she observed rising tensions among her fellow workers. Parker was subsequently able to link their resentment of her promotion to long-running hostilities between the nurses who also wanted to apply for the post, and the administration that made the decision to value academic credentials over their years of experience (Parker 2001:146). In this case the division of power between members of the clinic became evident. Additionally, education and class differences among workers emerged as an important area of exploration. This ethnography shows that power that exists within an organization becomes clear when the researcher reflects on his or her own role. The emergence of power dynamics can alter the course of research and deepen analyses of the organization itself.

Enslin (1994) similarly reflects on her own role as activist in a women's literacy group in Nepal in order to describe the ways in which race, nationality and class become significant to organizational process. Enslin's status as a white Westerner and native English speaker afforded her prestige among Nepali co-workers, and also meant that she was expected to play prescribed roles in their organization. As she acted out these roles and observed her own significance within the mechanisms of the organization, she was able to come to conclusions regarding the ways in which ethnicity, language, and

alliance-building played into the strategies and goals of members of this particular activist group.

The theoretical and methodological trends and patterns described above inform my study of an activist collective that strives to incorporate migrant agricultural workers into Canada's social and political fabric. Theories from the various approaches described provide an outline for the ways in which the various components of organization can be viewed. Ultimately, however, these theories do not fully address the complexities of loosely structured collectives in that they assume the presence of fixed process and interactions. Recent ethnographies in the Anthropology of Organization come closer to portraying the unpredictability of the sites studied as they make use of methodologies that are not formally structured or determined prior to entering the field.

While many of these ethnographies still describe working life in the corporate arena (Pringle 1994, Chapman 2001), and the development sector (Marsden 1994, Mosse 2001), an increasingly large and diverse body of literature has begun to focus on less formal environments such as the Welfare Agency (Cullen 1994) or a Housing Aid Office (Edwards 2001). The styles of observation employed by ethnographers working in these less formal contexts are exemplary of the importance of viewing organizations and the anthropology of organizations as fluid and changing processes.

Local-level Politics

Part of understanding the fluctuations of organization is acknowledging the divergences, disagreements, and divisions that occur at the local and relational level.

Early literature on social networks (Barnes, 1954, Bott 1957), and conflict within social networks (Colson 1953, Gluckman 1954), introduced a formula for studying the range of social relationships that develop within collections of individuals who are in regular contact with one another. Although the degree of involvement of individuals and of fixity of the context varies tremendously within the literature, the commitment to an analytical process through which small and large-scale politicking is understood as a strategic process for group members as well as leaders, runs through the body of writing and remains significant to studies of activist collectives today.

The work of the “action theorists” (for example Barth, Boissevain, Mayer) who researched the ways in which individuals constructed and manipulated their relationships to serve specific ends, is particularly salient here as it addresses political structures as potential sites of the creation of social networks. By acknowledging policy issues as “anchorage” (Mitchell 1974:291) around which social links form and function, these theorists are describing the ways in which networks participate actively in politics without having to take on the character of a formalized group.

The “intensities”(Mitchell, 1974:283) of links has also been an important conceptual tool for examining social connections in the context of collective political action. By measuring the extent to which people are motivated to honour obligations or exercise rights within a network, Mitchell demonstrates that there are various levels of cohesion in networks that are directed towards a cause. Along with providing an analytical morphology on which organized political action both within the group and between the group and other actors could be mapped and studied, action theorists opened

up the possibility of discussing conflict and contradiction as revealing aspects of network interactions in a political group.

Gluckman's notion of "multiplex strands" also demonstrates that actors' cannot distinguish their roles outside the political sphere from those that they have within their political activities and networks. In his ethnography of the Coloured Community Civic Association in post-1948 South Africa, Wheeldon (1969) frames a leadership struggle as a contest wherein questions of morality, family status and participation in community-based leisure activities help to determine the range of an individual's social network and the likelihood that they will get coveted jobs and positions (1969:136). The leader's role in the political realm depends on the effectiveness and intensity of relationships outside that realm. Wheeldon's application of the concept of multiplex strands shows how individuals are politically strategic in the ways in which they construct and manipulate personal relationships.

As part of such manipulation, the concept of factionalism (Bailey 1977) emerged allowing theorists to draw connections between the complexities of interpersonal relationships and the strategic and conflict-ridden relationships that can develop between networks of people. Bailey departs from early structural-functionalist theories of conflict by stressing that network breakages do not occur solely for the purpose of solidifying or reinstating the prevailing structure. As "factions are to be recognized not by what they are, but by what they do"(Bailey, 1977:27), these breakages in fact represent a dynamic process.

The literature on factionalism provides a model for this ethnography as it emphasizes that the “interactions and confrontation of multiple non-corporate sub-groupings”(Salisbury and Silverman, 1977:6) are strategic actions that generate change. Ideas emerging from local-level political studies thus help to identify and analyze networks of activists, advocates, and service workers while theories on conflict and factionalism explain the interactions between these networks and help situate them in the broader context of political life.

The Cultural Politics of Collectives

A small but growing literature on collectives that reject the formalized rational-bureaucratic model of organization shows how the structure of a network can affect the local-level politics that play out within it. Studies of ‘democratic workplaces’ or worker co-ops (Lindenfeld 1977, Russell 1979, Ellerman 1979) that focussed on collective material ownership or collective financial responsibility as a primary measure of the democratic structure of organizations originally dominated this literature. However work on ‘self-managed collectives’ (Santa Barbara Legal Collective 1974, Shlesinger and Bart 1979) have framed the issue in a political light, making it easier to discuss collectives as engines of social service and social and political change, rather than as variations on a business model.

Joyce Rothschild-Whitt categorizes and theorizes what she sees as a growing number of “alternative institutions” in the United States. In the 1970’s these

organizations use a framework of “collectivist democracy”(1982:24) in order to address social needs without succumbing to the hierarchical, formalized, and alienating nature of bureaucratic institutions. Noting that they are no more pure in their substantive rationality than bureaucratic organizations are in their formal rationality, Rothschild-Whitt presents a model by which the “alternative practices and aspirations”(1982:23) of collectivist democracies can be mapped out and located on a continuum of organizational forms. The eight basic dimensions according to which one can observe and define collectivist organizations are the following, “authority, rules, social control, social relations, recruitment and advancement, incentive structures, social stratification, and differentiation” (1982:50-63). The limits or “constraints and social costs” of this structure come as a result of the stresses that “time, homogeneity, emotional intensity, environmental constraints, and individual differences” can impose on the internal workings of the collective (1982:64-70).

Research on feminist collectives in particular are useful as they describe groupings of women who identify as political in that they strive to be examples of the changes they wanted to see in broader reaches of society. Ristock (1987) notes that women’s social service organizations do not think of themselves only as service providers. They are integral parts of the “woman’s movement” as they “work for social change” and “empower feminist organizations” through their directed actions as well as through their very existence (1987:74). The literature on feminist ideology at work in collectives explains the primacy of organizational processes and models in creating politically significant groupings.

Literature on feminist collectives also reveals ambiguities in the construction and maintenance of organizational structures as it addresses issues of power, difference and exclusionary cultural politics. Ristock (1991) observes that feminist service organization emerged out of consciousness-raising discussion groups of the late sixties whose 'homogenous' characters were meant to eliminate hierarchical inequality and intimidation as it existed in most other patriarchal social institutions (1991:42).

Ristock shows how the absence of formal authority became a primary ideological pillar of feminist collectives, causing members to cling to the ideal that collective action could operate unadulterated by power struggles and contradictions. Despite the fact that leadership, authority, power, and conflict were clear and present elements of the organization and activity of these collectives, the imagined paradigm of equality and homogeneity came to dictate the ways in which collectives were presented to their own members and to members of other groups. Ristock explains that the "denial of contradictions and multiple locations within the collective...serves to mystify the power relations that operate" and effectively makes it impossible for uneven power relations to be adequately addressed and resolved (1991:48).

Other social researchers in the feminist tradition have critiqued the ways in which the "microphysics of power"(Raymond, 1985) is often obscured by idealism and the denial of conflict. It is noted in studies of some 'all-women groups' that power issues that are rendered invisible come to 'fester' and create long lasting tensions among members (Miller 1982, Woolsey and McBain 1987). The absence of authority in collectives, or the "tyranny of structurelessness" (Freeman, 1973), does not only act to

mask power, but also to render invisible its particular locations. Research in this vein claims that while a lack of structure is a goal of many collectives, it is in fact impossible to achieve. The desire for structurelessness can rather create internal strife, social exclusion and “political impotence” within the collective (Freeman 1973:203, Newton 1976:271).

This research provides a model for critical reflection on emerging activist collectives that are dedicated to ameliorating oppression and differentiation along racial, ethnic, national and class lines. A scant literature on such collectives uses similar styles of observation and critique to address organizational processes that are based on a variety of ideologies. Fairholm and Geggie (1998) note that “inclusivity” and “diversity” on international as well as local scales are “crucial element[s] within the greater environmental and social justice equation”(1998:10). They both praise and problematize the ways in which “the means used by young people to promote social change are as important to them as the social change messages they promote” (1998:14).

Research on the use of the internet and other cross-border communication tools in collectives in the ‘anti-globalization movement’ (Falconer 2001, Van Aelst and Walgrave 2002, Cronauer 2004) expands greatly on questions around the relationships between activists from differing countries and cultural backgrounds. And work outlining artist collectives engaged in activism around issues of health and sexuality (Butler 2001, Villarejo 2004) bring to the discussion issues of representation, collaboration, and the creation of ‘communities’ through the dissemination of public art.

Theoretical and empirical writings on internally diverse collectives have proven useful in that they discuss where activist networks come from, how they operate according to explicit or implicit principles, who engages in this work, and what sorts of goals those people are able to achieve. Critical perspectives on these collectives are also essential in that they demonstrate and theorize how the ideologically-based cultural politics of organized activist networks are subject to contradictions, conflict and change.

Social and Political Inclusion in the SAWP

An understanding of the specific context in which a collective operates provides perspective on the power and significance that a collective might have on the social world it is trying to change. In the past ten years, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program has emerged as an important site for research on the social and political inclusion of migrant workers in Canada. Important issues surrounding the inherently racist quality of foreign labour programs has been treated from both a historical perspective that traces the explicit and implicit reasoning for including certain countries in the program (Satzewich, 1991), and from a sociological, identity-focussed perspective (Cecil and Ebanks 1991, Wall 1992) that speaks to the personal experiences of workers as racialized subjects in the communities where they work. This research has followed the lives of Caribbean labourers in Ontario, pointing to the ways in which race, ethnicity and, later, language played a part in Canada's policy and treatment of foreign workers.

Basok (2002) reviews the participation of Mexican men in Canada's agricultural industry. Research on the difficulties that Canadian farmers have historically had in maintaining a labour-base of compliant and reliable local workers sets up Basok's main argument that SAWP participants are "structurally necessary" to farming because they constitute labour that is "captive and unfree"(2002:13-15). Basok shows that the temporary quality of seasonal labour is closely tied to the precarious legal status of migrant agricultural workers. As the work is provisional and dependent on the needs of the employer, workers who fear repatriation or an unfavourable end-of-contract 'evaluation' often become docile labouring subjects.

Questions about gendered experiences of migrant work and life have recently become a more primary focus of research as women are applying for the program in greater numbers. Ethnographic explorations of the effects of migrant labour regimes on female workers' bodies, sexualities, and personal relationships (Becerril 2003, Preibisch and Hermoso 2003) take a personalized, local perspective while economic analyses of how women are "feeding not only Mexicans and Canadians, but the global food system itself" (Barron, 1999:122) links the participation of women in this program to broader issues in global systems of labour, immigration and production.

Research on unequal power interactions that characterize behaviour in the program point out that employers' ability to select and divide workers based on race, ethnicity and gender can control or limit communication between workers (Preibisch, 2000, Encalada Grez 2005). An emerging discourse on social life and civil society in host communities has expanded the discussion of control to include important

observations into the social and political inclusion of migrant workers in Canadian society.

Basok (2004) notes that workers' lack of freedom is partly due to the socially isolating character of labour migration "far from home". The effect of separation from friends and family is two-fold. Firstly, workers with no obligation to close contacts will be more available to their employers and will be able to follow the flexible and demanding schedule that agricultural work can sometimes require. Secondly, workers who are apart from their social networks or personal support structures will be more vulnerable to intimidation and the dehumanizing effects of discrimination. Basok suggests that workers' social interactions off the farm may mediate the negative conditions of the SAWP. In bringing together the theories of 'post-national citizenship' and 'citizenship as practise', she proposes that migrant workers can seek out and achieve their legal entitlement to universalized human rights through community activities that give them social membership that compensates for their lack of citizenship (2004:51).

Further discussions of the "social inclusion and exclusion" of migrants in the towns where they live and work (Bauder, Preibisch, Sutherland and Nash 2003, Preibisch 2004) include descriptions of the roles played by labour activists, church groups, civil society advocates, and business owners in incorporating migrant workers into Canadian society. Preibisch defines social exclusions as the "axes of social difference that organize and shape the relations that develop between workers and the broader community" (2004:6). Social inclusions, however, challenge the "dominant narrative in the literature of the socially isolated migrant" (2004:11) by showing how relationships with faith

communities, civil organizations, and the labour movement constitute an increasingly important part of the experience of some migrants in Canada.

This body of literature illustrates the theory that even though the Canadian state denies 'social membership' to migrant workers, "[f]riendships help migrant workers exercise rights they are accorded and often denied...[and] work to reduce to some extent workers' dependent and paternalistic relationships with their employers"(2004:12). Basok and Preibisch consequently understand that the efforts of organizations working with migrant labourers can be understood as mechanisms in a kind of political lever.

While this research opens up the theme of civil engagement in the context of the SAWP, it stops short of explaining how activism or advocacy in particular organizations operate. Details about the conflicts and confusion among and between groups working for change in the SAWP are excluded from these studies, as are the complications that inevitably occur when diverse social memberships collide with one another in a specific geopolitical setting.

Conclusions, The Local-Level Politics of a Collective Organization Working for Change in the SAWP

In this thesis, I hope to contribute to organization studies by describing the structure, ideology, and interpersonal relationships that operate within a social justice collective working for change in the SAWP. The ethnography provides a way of understanding how the quality of the collective's organizational processes can affect, firstly, the local-level politics that characterize relationships within the collective, and

secondly, the power and significance that this collective carries with it in the broader social and political environment. An understanding of all organizations as fluctuating entities, combined with an understanding of ideology and internal conflict as a generating force for this fluctuation, informs my theoretical analysis of the social and political inclusion of migrant agricultural workers in Canada. Each body of literature discussed above contributes to this analysis in a different way.

Theories in organization studies provide examples of the ways in which the various components of organizations (styles of structure, management, personal interactions) can be studied and understood. The idea of organization as process, however, stresses that organizational relationships and structures are not fixed entities but dynamic processes. Ethnographies that reflect on this idea of process by using self-reflective and participatory methodologies to study loosely-structured organizations provide a way in which the components of AWARE's informal organization can be dissected and examined.

Ideas emerging from local-level political studies, and especially theories on conflict and factionalism, identify the relational component of AWARE by helping to identify and analyze the various networks at play within the collective and between the collective and other social service actors. An explanation of the interactions in networks also function to situate the collective in the broader context of political and social organization.

Literature on the cultural politics of collectives help to explain how and why the structural component of AWARE is a product of its ideological commitments. Examples

of the positive and negative experiences of individuals in feminist and other activist collectives indicate that an ambiguous relationship between structure and ideology is common among groups of people that organize around specific social justice causes. Critical perspectives on these collectives show that the cultural politics created by an ideologically-based organizational structure can be subject to contradictions and power struggles.

Finally, research on the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program situates the relational and structural operations of AWARE in the broader context of global migration and labour. Observations on the social and political participation of migrant workers in Canada discuss the unconventional ways in which workers understand and garner their rights. A gap in this literature, however, requires that the specific ideologies, practises, and roles of service and activist organizations be further explored and theorized.

The next chapters synthesize these four bodies of literature by showing the relationship between cultural politics and local-level politics in one loosely structured organization that fills a niche in SAWP activism and advocacy. Ethnographic data from meetings, outreach trips and general interactions between members elucidate how AWARE's ideology and structure, as well as its members interpretation of the connections between ideology and structure, foster complex and particular interpersonal relations within the collective. The case study and analysis that follows will make clear how the organizational unrest produced by such politics is itself useful for the social and political inclusion of migrant agricultural workers in Canada.

CHAPTER THREE

IDEOLOGY AS CULTURAL POLITICS: “BEING POLITICAL” THROUGH ACTIVIST ENGAGEMENTS FROM THE EMOTIONAL TO THE ECONOMIC

Ben is the youngest participating member of AWARE. He is an articulate and likeable 18-year old who lives with his mother, aunt and grandmother, all of whom were born in Dominica, in a social housing project in a north-western suburb of the Greater Toronto Area. He is known in the collective for his youthful enthusiasm, love of fast food and loud music, and an impressive list of experiences in politics. In his short life, Ben has interned with departments in the federal government, applied for jobs with the Canadian Labour Congress, volunteered with labour unions and activist collectives and generally participated in “every A, B, C, and Tom, Dick and Harry” of the student groups and youth coalitions that were open to him. He has published articles and letters, represented his high school in public events, and met high-level politicians on more than a few occasions. Not surprisingly, when I asked him what his hobbies were outside of activism he said he had “normal teenage boy interests...like music, sports, and also politics”.

For Ben, “political action” is “the number one thing” for the collective and the “jumping off point” for everything else that AWARE does. He believes that, in a perfect world, AWARE could put workers in a position to be heard and influence laws. He is firm in his conviction that “if we can change the program, it will be through politics”. Interestingly, Ben is most likely to participate in the collective’s outreach activities and

seems to avoid meetings of all kinds, even those that are structured around political action. He admits that he enjoys outreach the most out of all the activities that AWARE engages in, and he links the trips in rural Ontario to “necessary political work”, stating that a main strength of the collective is using outreach to facilitate worker involvement in their own struggle for justice.

Ben’s focus on the political character of the collective is not unusual. AWARE defines itself as a “volunteer driven, political non-profit collective” committed to the struggle for social justice and rights for migrant workers. This focus on “the political” as a label and a characteristic of work is deliberate, and is understood by members of the collective to make a bold and particular statement. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which ‘the political’ as ideology informs the actions of members of the collective as well as of the collective as a whole. From personal responses to grief and shock to pragmatic attempts at securing funds for the operations of the collective, the following will illustrate how ‘being political’ is understood and acted out by members of AWARE.

Where is Politics?

“There are always and everywhere persons with conflicting and competing interests, seeking to have disputes settled in their favour and to influence community decisions (policy) in accordance with their interests. This is politics” (Mair, in Vincent 1990:349) Mair’s definition of politics focuses on the relational core of the actions and attitudes that determine policy. Various other network theorists, for example, emphasize

this as well, interpreting the shapes and forms of political communities by mapping out the social links that connect one individual to another. Neither of these interpretations, however, serve to fully explain the ways in which members of AWARE conceive of the political realm.

The politics of individuals and groups is a major theme that has emerged throughout my fieldwork with AWARE. In the context of this collective and others, however, the term ‘political’ has a very specific meaning. While the political atmosphere of activism and advocacy with seasonal agricultural workers is full of tense and intricate interactions that could be understood using Mair’s relational definition of politics, the details of competition and conflict between individuals and groups are almost never discussed in these terms by members of AWARE.

Members use the language of politics to describe the qualities and characteristics of individuals and groups, defining these qualities sometimes in opposition to other individuals and groups, and sometimes in opposition to ideal forms of activism or personal behaviour. The ways in which members of AWARE think about and act upon their stated interests in the realm of the political therefore demands an analysis that addresses how “politics” is used to describe a state of being. If a person or group *is* political, then they are not only purposefully engaged in the process of changing the state of a social, historical, or economic condition at one particular time. They are in fact actively committed to sustainable change in full and complete ways, at all times.

Considering the importance members of AWARE give to sustainable social and political change, the act of being political by expressing and living one’s political desires

in as many ways as possible is understood by these members to be an essential part of working well and effectively in an activist context. Sara, a 26-year-old graduate student, originally from Ottawa, describes being political when she discusses her “own personal politics” as “a set of principles like equality, anti-racism, anti-sexism, that govern the way we see the world, both in our professional or academic lives, as well as our personal lives.” She understands personal politics not just as something that dictates an individual’s voting patterns but also as an ideal that affects “how we see ourselves and our positionalities, and how we interact with everyone around us.”

Other members of the collective seem to agree with this sentiment. Everyone whom I formally interviewed, and even those with whom I interacted in a more casual way, stressed that they strive to conduct themselves personally and professionally in a “political way”. The principles related to being political direct the behaviour of members and also propel a constant and unfailing awareness of what that behaviour is. Thus, the ways that activities play out and subsequently get discussed show how AWARE’s internal organization, individual behavioural standards and collective goals are all a product of what is framed as “being political”.

A Politics of One: Individual Expressions of Political Action

“Being political” on an individual basis and influencing others to do the same is a main feature of activism. When action is not being done at any particular moment, it must at least be suggested or implied by an actor’s words, demeanour, or personal style. A political activist will learn that even their emotions, and the ways in which they express

these emotions, can be circumscribed by the need to achieve a political end. This is because action and utility are the centre-points of all of what are considered important feelings or sentiments that an activist will have. Sara, sitting in a strange town and province, in a room full of about forty exhausted Mexican men, just off the fields from a full day of work, learned this lesson in a hard way.

She and I had come to Vancouver the day before on personal vacations and we had arranged to meet with Carmen and Veronica, two young women in their late twenties who had had only limited contact with AWARE at the time of our first meeting. A few months earlier, Carmen, a dedicated activist born in Vancouver to a Mexican mother and a French father, had emailed the collective to ask for advice on how she and Veronica, an Ecuadorian woman she had met through activist projects, could organize with migrant workers in British Columbia. Since this was a province that had been hosting seasonal agricultural workers for just two years, there were almost no organizations that had established to help the mostly Mexican men and women know their rights. The correspondence continued from that first email to the organizing listserve, and emails back and forth increased as more dramatic problems in B.C. attracted the attention of AWARE's Ontario membership. It was a fortunate coincidence that Sara and I happened to be in the area at the same time that Carmen and Veronica were planning a large meeting.

The gathering was scheduled to take place in a community recreation centre just north of Vancouver where there was a concentration of blueberry farms and large numbers of Mexican workers. Carmen and Veronica had contacted lawyers and legal

case workers from a nearby legal advocacy clinic, and had also requested the presence of representatives from Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). All were expected to explain to workers what their rights and entitlements were under the existing conditions of the SAWP. The women had also arranged for a colleague to bring enough samosas for the crowd, and they had spent most of the previous night preparing huge quantities of a traditional Mexican rice beverage that they transported with them to the hall on the day of the meeting.

Carmen and Veronica expressed to Sara and I that they were happy to have us with them at this meeting and that they felt our presence and our short presentations of how AWARE was operating in Ontario would give credibility to the work that they had done and would inspire hope in the workers. Throughout the meeting, we were called upon to offer comments and advice, and were encouraged to come into the discussion at any point to share our thoughts or feelings on the topic at hand. Sara and I sat at a table facing a large semi-circle of workers who were seated in chairs, backed up as far as possible against the three other walls around the room.

After introductions and presentations from the three HRSDC representatives, workers began to share their experiences and their grievances about injustices at work. Initially, comments were made calmly and in a matter-of-fact tone. However, once one or two workers became animated and passionate about the situation, others began to feel more comfortable and increasingly voiced their concerns in detailed and emotional ways. A few workers inquired about why they had no special status allowing them to easily apply for residency in Canada, and others asked angrily why they paid into public

systems and never got any benefits or tax returns from the money that was taken out of their paycheques.

Many others complained about poor to unacceptable working and living conditions, stating that they were happy to work but that they needed respect and dignity on the job because they were aware that this work was so integral to the Canadian economy. One man noted that he lived in a house with fifty other men but only one stove for cooking. This created problems when the entire group of workers came back from the fields at the same time, often close to 10 or 11 at night, and all needed access to the stove immediately so that they could eat and get some sleep before another early morning wake-up. He finished by saying that many nights he and his co-workers went to sleep hungry because they didn't have the energy or time to wait to use the stove.

Throughout this litany of problems and difficulties, Sara expressed disgust and anger with what was being described. She responded to each story in turn, and with a pained look on her face, commented to the men that this was truly unjust and that she felt deep sympathy for their situation. She lingered on these comments as some men chose to respond to her with short statements of agreement or with further explanations of the conditions they had been describing.

Carmen acted as facilitator for the conversation, making sure that everyone was heard and that comments were translated and summarized, in some cases even loosely filtered through these summaries into categories of grievances such as living conditions, working conditions, and structural problems with policy. She mentioned in a few heated moments that actions needed to be taken and that it would be most effective if such

actions came from the workers. Veronica and I remained silent most of the time save for one comment that I made regarding the fact that workers could take inspiration from small changes, in services available and media attention, that had occurred in Ontario.

After the meeting we were all tired, but we were also excited about how many people had managed to show up and how much information we had shared. Outside the recreation centre, Carmen, Veronica, Sara and I all chatted about our thoughts and ideas as we waited for a friend to arrive and give us a ride back to Vancouver. At one point, the conversation turned to how moving and upsetting the stories of the men had been. Carmen took this opportunity to tell Sara that she too felt upset, but that she did not think it had been appropriate for Sara to express such frustration in front of the workers.

Sara was visibly shocked by the comment and replied that she was only giving her honest reaction to the terrible things she was hearing. Carmen said that she did not feel activists had the luxury of getting frustrated, because this could be devastating to workers. We had to be strong because this would inspire hope and trust instead of despair and social divisions. Carmen linked the need to avoid sadness to an activist's understanding of his or her privilege, emphasizing that to understand one's privilege is to see that migrant workers do not have the option to become frustrated because they are oppressed by their conditions and lack of resources.

The conversation went onto a discussion of class and race privilege in the context of activist work, but Sara was extremely affected by the initial negative comment on her emotional reaction and continued to inquire about what could possibly have been an appropriate response to hearing these difficult stories. It was very late at night, and we

were all preparing to leave. Sara remained puzzled, but her concerns were not addressed again. We exchanged goodbyes and thank yous and each person went on her way.

Framing Feelings for a Politicized Self

The problem of expressing ‘inactive emotions’ in activist work is one that is discussed extensively in the literature on social movements. It is understood that “destructive emotions”(Taylor 1996) such as shame, fear, and depression must be transformed into more agentic or mobilizing emotions such as anger, in order to be fully acceptable in activist circles (Harrington and Flint 1997). Hercus finds that anger is a “central emotion for collective action” and that this centrality must be perpetuated by the ‘framing of feelings’ in social movements and activist groups (1999).

The situation described above confirms the specific centrality of anger and other emotions symbolic of personal agency in the activities of AWARE. More importantly, however, for this particular study of the ways in which AWARE operates, this example begins to suggest how members of the collective and the collective as a whole establish sets of “feeling rules” (Hochschild, 1979) that serve to frame an individual’s personal politics by circumscribing self-expression and also self-understanding. When these feeling rules impinge on an individual’s personal sense of self, they can be destructive and lead to alienation, overwhelming guilt and ultimately the desire to separate from the collective.

Like other activist groups, AWARE's "feeling rules" are set out in large part according to the practical boundaries that define the cause, the population with which the collective works, and the activists themselves. The contract signed by migrant workers and their employers indicates that they will stay on one farm for as long as the employer requires their labour. And the application of the contract ensures that workers have limited free time and must always obey the orders of the employer as he or she develops schedules around unpredictable seasonal weather patterns. Workers live under a constant threat of repatriation and feel that they cannot afford to lose work because their dependents in the home country will suffer the consequences. This threat means that making formal complaints is almost impossible as it is illegal for seasonal farm workers to form or join unions. Workers are explicitly warned by their respective consulates not to become involved in local politics while on contract.

For an activist working in this context, "being political" means firstly addressing the exploitative nature of many of these conditions as well as the historical foundations of such exploitation. Secondly, "being political" means constantly reinforcing the need for migrant workers themselves to take part in their own struggle for justice because they are the experts of their own suffering and will ultimately experience change in more profound ways than their Canadian citizen allies.

Thus the "feeling rules" that emerge from the working and living conditions, and the political responses to them, have to do with major differences in power between migrant workers and the allies that support them in Canada. Members of AWARE indicate that a deep sensitivity to the dangers and threats that are always present in the

lives of migrant workers is essential to their activist work, as is a profound respect for the fact that individuals should always make their own informed choices about whether or not to participate in political action. There is constant discussion within AWARE surrounding the fact that the consequences for workers' involvement in political action can be harsh and very damaging. The collective informs workers of their rights while ensuring as much as possible that these processes and interactions do not negatively affect their working relationship with employers.

As a further measure of respect, it is important for activists in AWARE not to judge workers' actions or lifestyles, for example their indulgence in drugs, alcohol or involvement in extra-marital relationships, and certainly not to condemn people for those actions as other social service actors who work with SAWP participants have been known to do.

Despite the dangers inherent in engaging in political activism, and the reluctance of members of the collective to impose their own views on migrant workers, members of AWARE try to convey to the workers that there does exist a possibility for organized collective action that leads to change. Since workers are inundated with information that runs contrary to this, activists in AWARE make it their responsibility to inform migrant workers that their struggles for social justice are fully supported by some Canadian citizens.

Anger is important as a tool for this purpose because it is believed to have the power to obscure or overpower fear and despair and lead to direct action. Angry workers will challenge their marginalized status instead of accepting it, and change will be

achieved because workers will be mobilized by their own sense of prevailing injustice. Additionally, unlike the fear and despair that comes from migrant workers' lack of mobility and power, anger is an emotion that activist allies may believe they share with migrant workers. As evidenced by the story just told, feeling rules within AWARE dictate that fear or frustration do not have the same binding effects as anger because they emphasize rather than diminish the differences of power between activist allies and migrant workers.

While it is evident to a casual observer that feeling rules serve to control and structure the important relationships between members of AWARE and the people whom they support, a closer examination of the effects of the rules show that the framing of feelings does not only have implications for these types of person-to-person interactions. Prescribed ways of feeling that become normalized within the collective also significantly shape the ways in which individuals are meant to relate to their own internal dialogues or personal sentiments. This additional element of emotional conditioning is important for understanding how individual activists can exist in collectives like AWARE.

In the story of the worker meeting, Carmen expresses that she finds it unacceptable for Sara to act "frustrated" in the presence of the migrant workers. She justifies this position by saying that workers need to feel inspired to act, indicating to Sara that the way she expresses her feelings directly affects the people with whom she interacts. Carmen also says, however, that Sara should think about feeling frustrated as a

luxury and a privilege. The discussion of expressing frustration turns into one about the quality of this frustration and the personal characteristics that have created or shaped it.

Carmen is, therefore, not just giving advice to Sara on how she should present herself to the workers; she is also commenting on the way in which Sara is, and should be, thinking about the emotions that produce such a presentation. As an activist, Sara's responsibilities to politicized emotional expression do not stop at showing anger instead of sympathy or frustration. She must also internalize a particular understanding of her emotional expressions of each of these feelings. In this particular case, these understandings must explicitly address her class and race positioning as privileged.

Klatch, writing in 2004 about the "negative affective bonds" and "production of emotions" within Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the 1960s, observes that activists often exert pressure on one another to feel emotions that reflect the individual's personal identity and way of relating to the self (2004:489). Her study highlights the ways in which the intensity and despair of particular political issues, when experienced through the lens of an activist group, can amplify an individual's sense that he or she should feel guilt and a need to sacrifice the self to a greater cause. A particularly traumatized informant describes how she felt after three months of being involved with SDS and witnessing the violent altercations between the group and the police. "There was this feeling...just let me put my body on the line. I'm so worthless. I'm so filled with guilt...You watch these massacres on TV every night...and it was so horrible that...you said, 'My experience is not so important as this experience.'" (2004:497)

Klatch discusses how affective ties within this activist group caused politics to “engulf the self”, making individuals temporarily ignore or discard their own identity for the purpose of becoming socialized into the group. Although the situation described here is an extreme one, parallels can be drawn between this behaviour and that of AWARE’s activists. In both cases, individual’s thoughts and feelings may become actively framed by the needs and ideas of other members of the collective, and by the needs and ideas of what is imagined to be the collective as a whole. In such a scenario, individual activists are likely to begin to feel useless, unimportant or disposable.

There is thus an “emotional culture”(Blee, 1998:382) at play whereby norms and conventions for feelings are created by group interactions. As patterns of socialization develop, individuals internalize these norms and conventions as well as the need to feel the same emotions as other members of the group. When guilt or the “continuous pressure from other activists to act in the correct political manner” (Klatch, 2004:495) is the primary feeling that characterises the emotional culture, however, the foundation for sustained political action is particularly precarious as members are likely to become disaffected and unable to continue interacting with the group (Klatch, 2004:499).

The story of Carmen and Sara’s interaction shows that as an activist in AWARE, one must always be political by expressing sentiments and emotions that demonstrate a constant awareness of injustice, privilege and power differences between migrant workers and allies. Feeling rules reinforce this need to always express political views. These feeling rules, however, are not only developed as a result of external pressures that exert themselves on members of the collective. They are also formed by the identity-

forming needs, desires and practises of members themselves as well as the collective as a whole. In AWARE, some members have become particularly invested in administering “feeling rules” due to their own interest in the reputation of the collective. The reputation of the collective, as these members understand it, depends on the behaviour of individual members, specifically the ability of individuals to always be “political” in mind, body and spirit.

A Politics of the Sum: Fundraising and Collective Expressions of Being Political

Just as there are ideas about how individuals should think, feel and “be political”, there is the expressed desire for the collective to have a form or internal structure that can be political. Like those feminist organizations that Ristock notes are striving to “challenge the notion of a dichotomy between context and aims”(1987:43), political activist groups have tried to conceptualize and build collective organizational structures that operate according to set principles. For AWARE, these principles are part of an ‘anti-oppression’ framework. It is an adherence to this framework, and the particular ways it is evoked within AWARE, which characterizes the collective as a political entity that lives its politics as a means to promoting them.

As a collective, AWARE is able to be political insofar as it practices what it preaches: equality, inclusion and social and political critique. To this end, AWARE is concerned with maintaining a non-hierarchical, collective structure and a membership that incorporates people from diverse racial, ethnic, professional and class backgrounds.

Decisions that are, or have previously been made, about the practical elements of the internal workings of the collective (those elements that have to be in place in order for AWARE to function at a basic level), are said to conform with the anti-oppression politics or political ideals that are shared by members.

The extent to which some members of AWARE insist that these abstract principles be kept in mind as the essential qualities of a political being is most obvious perhaps in the most practical of activities: fundraising. The collective's need to secure and maintain resources is clear and present in every action done and every meeting held. AWARE's outreach trips, awareness campaigns and emergency responses to worker injuries or deaths all cost money, often a scarce resource among the activist volunteers who make up the collective.

The amount of money needed for any given activity generally cannot or is not anticipated prior to that activity. AWARE has no consistent annual budget and few if any records of the costs incurred for events it has put on, or participated in, in the past. Some contributors, such as large unions, are approached repeatedly but no set protocol exists for dealing with these individual and organizational contributors. In general, fundraising initiatives such as applying to organizations and hosting events are discussed as they are needed.

Such discussions occur on a constant basis considering the unpredictability of the collective's capacities and also the unpredictability of the context in which the collective operates. Emergencies or the immediate need to financially assist workers employed by the SAWP are common in Southern Ontario during the growing season. These

emergencies may include a worker's need for medical or legal assistance, a worker's need for accommodation if he or she wants to appeal the early termination of a contract or threat of repatriation, or the need to send emergency funds to a worker's family following the workers' death or debilitating injury.

One particular fundraising initiative is part of AWARE's collective mythology. Planned over several months by a few very dedicated and available members of AWARE, this party was held in a popular downtown bar in Toronto. It brought \$3000 dollars into the collective at a time when outreach activities had depleted the treasury. Moreover, the discussions and interest that the event caused helped to make significant gains in creating awareness about the problems of migrant agricultural workers and the collective itself.

Still, the event is not remembered solely in these terms. When I was doing structured interviews with members of AWARE and asked about fundraising in general, Will immediately assumed that I was asking about the event that has now become a reference point for all other concerts and bar nights set up for fundraising. He thought for a while and then said: it was "successful but not [wheelchair] accessible," adding that he "wouldn't want it to happen again...we have to stick to principles, even if this isn't easy"

In response to the same question, Claire, a thirty-year-old social worker originally from Montreal, explained that, about a year into her involvement with the collective, she had really wanted to organize a big event that would match the scope of the one everyone always discusses. She raised this possibility when the subject of the collective needing more funds was brought up at a well-attended meeting. According to Claire, a big

brainstorming session ensued about “what the fundraiser should look like”. Throughout the discussion, there were many comments about “family inclusivity and accessibility in general.” Inclusivity in this sense involved the provision of child care, wheelchair accessibility and payment of musicians and, said Claire, some members of the collective were adamant that these conditions not be sacrificed for any reason. When a consensus could not be reached on the style of the event, it was decided that AWARE would hold two separate fundraisers. The first would be a party in an accessible bar, and the second a family-oriented rummage sale and BBQ.

The responsibility for finding a venue for the bar event fell to Claire. She recalled that she “must have telephoned fifty venues in Toronto” to inquire about overhead costs and wheelchair accessibility. In the end, only one venue could meet the criteria. She called several times without getting through to the person who could give her the information she needed. Finally, she went to the bar and spoke with the manager who quoted an overhead price that the collective was not willing to pay. Claire told me that this process alone probably took about two and half months, at the end of which “we kind of threw our arms up in defeat and went about other fundraising activities like grant writing.”

Claire identified the debates and discussions surrounding accessibility as a “serious roadblock in achieving our cash goals.” She remembers being frustrated as she “felt the need to do a little bit of analysis around the realities that be, and the end weighing out the means...” While Claire is a person who deeply appreciates the anti-oppression philosophy of the collective as it contributes to AWARE being “more sincere,

value-based, and political” than other groups and individuals working with migrant agricultural labourers, she also feels that fundraising opportunities are “never perfect...and some compromises should be made”.

Means and Ends in Politicized Identity Formation

Claire’s views reflect the ambivalence that most members of AWARE feel about the need to see things in a “realistic” way and to accept that the end may justify the means. While compromising on a number of issues would make it easier to secure resources and even accomplish political goals, such compromises would also change the ways in which members view both themselves and the identity of the collective, particularly in the broader social and political environment. When the fundraising conflict is understood in the context of AWARE’s relationship to other groups, it illustrates how principled stances on means and methods are essential to the identity of the collective and its place in the wider context of the SAWP. These principles, however, can create problems for the collective in that they often impede the achievement of stated goals.

Edwards outlines the “idioms of opposition” that are important identity markers for volunteer housing-aid workers who seek to distinguish themselves from the state bureaucracy which they see as discriminating and hierarchical (Edwards, 1994:196). By incorporating what they understand as uniquely informal styles of work, speech and organization in the office where they work, these volunteers are able to conceptualize and

enact “a moral community of individuals...members of which by definition support social change.”(1994:204) This community fills a particular niche in the social service sector, and as such has a sense of importance and worth that is integral to its identity.

Similar to the housing aid collective is the Santa Barbara Legal Collective (SBLC), a clinic offering low-cost services to people “whose lack of money and power severely limit their access to any form of legal assistance.”(1994:247) In an article written by the collective itself, SBLC defines itself as an association of lawyers and legal workers whose “primary goal is social and political reform”(1994:248) and distinguishes itself markedly from “poverty-oriented, socially-conscious law firms” by applying ideologically constructed methods and behaviour to their practice. In order to be politically motivated, the SBLC considers it necessary to change personal attitudes about money and redefine distinctions between lawyers and non-lawyers. Ultimately they understand that collectives like theirs “permit practitioners to be more *human*”(1994:255 emphasis theirs) in that they avoid egoism and strive to satisfy their consciences unlike their professional counterparts who are working in money-driven firms.

Like members of the housing aid office and the legal clinic, members of AWARE are apt to define the politics of the collective positively, and in opposition, methodologically and ideologically, to other groups which are engaged with seasonal agricultural workers. When Ben lists the strengths of AWARE, he says that the collective is “good at outreach, does things that are entirely new and groundbreaking, has stuck with the big giant puzzle that is the [SAWP] program, [and] has long term significance because no one else is willing to talk directly to workers about politics, etc.”

Adding an evaluative slant to these observations, Ben comments that AWARE as a collective represents “110 percent honest, pure, goal-driven work.”

These stated strengths, as well as the commitment to accessibility in the example of setting up a fundraiser, serve as AWARE’s own ‘idioms of opposition’ as they represent the ways in which members see the collective as being political in a context in which other groups are not. According to its members, AWARE is innovative, thinks critically and has a long-term vision that is focussed on making changes to the SAWP. Other groups which organize leisure events, language training or social outings for workers may be effective in easing the burden of loneliness or stress in the short-term, but members of AWARE believe that these other groups’ approach ultimately supports the status quo in that it is apolitical and unlikely to contribute to change that is sustainable.

Discussions about creating alliances and networks reinforce ‘idioms of opposition’ as they stress the driving force of perceived political incompatibilities. In reference, for example, to the very few campaigns or organizations that AWARE has chosen to work on or with, Claire notes that it is “important that they are political and very grassroots.” In reference to the greater number of groups that AWARE chooses *not* to work with, she says, “relationships are cordial, but politics hinders true partnerships.”

These distinctions and identity formations are not just rhetorical, in that they have a real consequence with respect to how the collective is able to pursue its work and achieve its stated goals and those of its individual members. AWARE’s commitment to certain ideological principles or means limits the effective ends that the collective can

have on other groups, the public, and policy at large. In other words, the act of framing actions is important to understanding how a collective of disparate actors comes together to cause intended as well as unintended effects. In the case of AWARE's organizational structure, this framing process is what has been called "collective action framing" (Snow et al. 1986). It is through this kind of frame that activists, and the collectives of which they are a part understand their cause, and justify and develop their role in ameliorating real-life conditions.

The social movement literature that sees framing as a product of resource mobilization (specifically rational choice theory, for example Olson 1965) seems irrelevant here, as the failure of AWARE to secure funds in the most efficient way illustrates how decision-making in collectives can run counter to meeting the practical needs of maximizing human and material resources. As Reese and Newcombe (2003) point out, collective action frames are often structured according to organizational ideologies that dictate whether a particular set of activists will exploit opportunities for growth or rather remain insular in order to retain ideological purity. Their study finds that activist groups with rigid, highly principled organizational ideologies are much less likely to be instrumental in their framing decisions than activists with loose and pragmatic ones (2003:298). AWARE's organizational ideology, like two of the social movements in Reese and Newcombe's study, is one that provides resources for collective action framing but simultaneously constrains the actions of the collective. It also acts to "ossify activists' framing processes and render them incapable of building broad-based support for their goals." (2003:314)

In the case of the SAWP, 'broad-based support' or alliances can be useful for both securing resources and pressuring the government to change the conditions of the work contract. AWARE's failure to set up a fundraising event that would help the collective gain recognition and establish important contacts must ultimately have negative effects on the marginalized population with which it works.

Conclusions, Political Culture as Cultural Politics: Shaping the Self and the Whole Through an Ideology and Culture of "Being Political"

This chapter shows how "being political" goes beyond engaging in activities that are directed toward policy. In AWARE, it is understood that political beings develop their identities and relate to everyday actions and feelings in ways that respond to, and emulate, behaviour in an ideal social world. According to many members of the collective, an individual *is* political if he or she thinks and feels in ways that entail active participation in the political world. Thus an internal system of emotional conditioning that circumscribes certain feelings (frustration, despair) while encouraging others (anger, desire for change) must be present in order to sustain a political self. However "being political" is as much public as it is personal for members of AWARE, as the sense of maintaining a collective political self comes from identity-forming processes that distinguish the collective from "apolitical" or politically incompatible others. Additionally, in order to "be political" as a collective, practical activities engaged in or promoted by AWARE as a whole must be in line with ideological principles that stress the importance of the means to achieving something over the ends that may be achieved.

To say that “being political” is defined by processes internal to the self or to the collective, however, is not to say that this internalization is not created in a social way. Members of AWARE, eager to “be the change they seek”, acknowledge that in order to produce a world in which equality and justice become sustainable social values, the collective itself must embody these values. Individual political selves are shaped by collective processes and efforts to embody these values. Members’ adherence to the ideological premises upon which the collective is based, thus ideally, creates, normalizes and institutionalizes patterns of behaviour that are collectively deemed appropriate.

This appropriate behaviour is not dictated directly by a single person, but rather develops as part of the collective’s political culture. AWARE’s commitment to ideology therefore creates a cultural politics within which “being political” can be defined and fostered, in the individual as well as in the collective, without having to be formally ingrained by way of stated rules and regulations.

The ideological commitment to “being political” that pervades all activities of the collective, as well as the activities of members within the collective, generates a cultural politics according to which behaviour becomes informally institutionalized. This ideologically-based cultural politics, established by the founders of AWARE, sets a precedent for personal, emotional behaviour as well as for public, identity-forming behaviour. It is effectively sustained by way of emotional cues or “feeling rules”, and group social cues or “idioms of opposition” that identify the purpose of the self and of the collective in the everyday activities of the individual and group.

Members' inclination to define "the political" as the ideological commitments or cultural politics of the collective and to distinguish this type of politics from the interpersonal interactions or local-level politics of the collective indicates a reluctance to acknowledge that ideology and conflict are linked. In fact, local-level politics are deeply related to the kind of culture that is created by attempts to form a unified identity and set of emotional habits. This chapter has shown how a particular cultural politics in AWARE lays the foundation for the development of networks and factions within the collective as well as within the wider context of activism in the SAWP. The following chapter will outline some of those local-level politics and link their emergence to the ideologically and culturally influenced structure that exists within AWARE.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOCAL-LEVEL POLITICS IN A LOOSELY STRUCTURED COLLECTIVE: DIFFERENTIAL MEMBERSHIP, EGALITARIANISM AND AUTHENTICITY IN AWARE

Andrea is a 31-year-old M.A. student from Toronto who returned to school after spending several years working in social justice organizations in Canada and Mexico. She is a serious student and a committed activist, spreading her time as evenly as possible among the various causes that she feels are important. When she was working in a small town in Mexico, Andrea met a woman whose husband had died in a bicycle accident while on contract in Canada. Her conversation with this woman, and her subsequent understanding of the frequency of bicycle accidents in Southern Ontario towns, inspired her to join AWARE and to organize a research project that would examine road safety for migrant workers participating in the SAWP.

Andrea characterizes herself as a “very active member” of the collective as she sits on most committees, attends most meetings and frequently facilitates outreach trips by driving and providing material supports. She does not, however, consider herself a “driving member” and, when I interviewed Andrea eight months into her involvement with AWARE, she had only recently considered herself to be more of a “suggester” in meetings and on the organizing listserv.

According to Andrea there are members who “drive action” in the collective, members who “support the agenda” of the collective, and members who “assist the agenda” of the collective. She says that fluctuation among roles is possible, though,

depending on whether individuals decide to take on more or less initiative, as the purported lack of structure in the collective allows for such flexibility and change. The decision to change one's role or participation level depends on a variety of factors that include "understanding, experience and comfort with the group and the issues".

While most members say that they would like AWARE to embody the principles of diversity, egalitarianism and a lack of structural authority and division of labour, a well-established informal system of differentiation has emerged among individuals within the collective. The surfacing of different "types of members" in a loosely structured collective is expected, according to Andrea. She has experienced such differential membership in her past endeavours with various activist groups and understands these divisions as common in the social world. Insofar as it functions to get things done in an efficient and timely manner, Andrea says that she does not feel any particular animosity toward the presence of an informal hierarchy or authoritative structure in the collective. When the existence of such an informal structure is denied or obscured, however, Andrea feels that members' relationships to the each other and to the work that they do can be confusing and unsettling.

The contradiction signalled by Andrea's categorization of "types of members" in what is meant to be an egalitarian collective calls into question the validity of AWARE's claims to structurelessness and non-hierarchical modes of operation. If all members share equally in the ownership of the collective, why do distinctions between members prevail in the practical matters of membership activity? Where do these differences come from? How do they play out in diverse circumstances? And how do they shape the

formal and informal workings of AWARE? In this chapter, I examine the structure of the collective, and the ways in which distinctive networks can emerge within this structure. In focussing on the differences in individuals' roles within AWARE and the effects that such differences have on sustaining and reproducing a dedicated membership, this chapter looks at how the cultural politics of claiming authenticity and egalitarianism can in fact produce very particular inequalities among members of the collective.

Ideological Parameters as Structural Building Blocks, Stressing Egalitarianism and Authenticity

In defining a 'collectivist-democratic organization', Rothschild and Whitt (1986) name characteristics of structure and practice that distinguish these organizations from bureaucratic ones. They note that shared authority, decision by consensus, egalitarianism and a generalization of jobs and functions are central to the operation of collectivist organizations. As they "turn on the logic of substantive rationality"(1986:72), collectivist democratic organizations are meant to offer an alternative to bureaucratic models of operation and base their importance and success on their ability to adhere to norms that emphasize the non-hierarchical character of their values and methods.

Rothschild and Whitt acknowledge, however, that differences often exist between the ideal collectivist organization and its practice. They describe a few factors that contribute to the ways in which "collectivist democracy, like bureaucracy, can be approximated, but not perfectly attained."(1986:64) According to their observations, the achievement of egalitarianism and collective decision-making can be limited or prevented

by such factors as time, emotional intensity, individual differences and environmental constraints (1986:70).

My own observations show that a cultural politics that favours ideological parameters can also be an important factor in perpetuating differential membership and limiting collective decision-making. When collectives define their structures according to ideological parameters they commit to having theoretical principles dictate how topics are to be discussed and acted upon in the practical realm. In AWARE the ideological parameters according to which the structure is set are based on anti-oppression principles. In specific terms, these principles emphasize that a social justice collective should be egalitarian or without authority. Additionally, collectives that define themselves as “grassroots”, as AWARE does, must be made up of a membership that is directly or authentically affected by the issue at hand.

Members of AWARE define the collective as ‘worker driven’, distinguishing it from other groups that they see as imposing an institutional will or agenda on participants in the SAWP. Rather than “developing a campaign and forcing workers to do it” in the way that ‘hierarchical organizations’ do, Will says that AWARE is “developing committees on the ground” in order to lay the foundation for workers to “create a movement themselves”. It was Will’s vision, as well as the vision of other founders, that migrant workers would be the primary members of AWARE and would direct the actions of the collective based on their needs and wants. However, because working and living conditions of the SAWP makes it so difficult for migrant workers to lead their own movement, allies and friends of workers would be needed to supplement these efforts.

As AWARE's Toronto membership is made up almost entirely of allies, this authenticity is compromised. The next sections will show how an informal structure of differential membership within the collective acts to reinforce that authenticity in fragile and often superficial ways. Members' failure to acknowledge that this is occurring, and that the collective is not egalitarian, however, means that it is impossible to implement specific policies that will officially and sustainably change the composition of the collective's membership.

Not Owning up: Egalitarianism, Members' Rights and the Inconsistencies of Collective Ownership

Rothschild and Whitt observe that, "[p]erhaps more than anything else, it is the basis of authority that distinguishes the collectivist organization from any variant of bureaucracy" (1986:51). In AWARE, a commitment to a lack of authority figures and an authority-based structure is discussed in two ways: through references to the principle of no hierarchy and through references to the concept of ownership. The term ownership is used frequently by members of AWARE in reference to the sense of responsibility, participation, or pride that any individual might feel for and in a collective activity. Will has said in a variety of ways that it is essential for workers to have ownership over their struggle for rights and also that it is important for all members of the collective to feel ownership over consensus building and decision-making.

Ownership of AWARE's present and future, however, seems also to be based on ownership of its past, including the events immediately preceding the founding of the

collective. The treatment of one “research problem” in AWARE demonstrates the primacy of history in members’ sense of authenticity, and the understanding of their individual rights to ownership of the collective.

In late July, on the way to a meeting in a small Southern Ontario town, my MA research became the subject of yet another tense conversation about the capacity and desire of the collective to allow members to write about AWARE and its activities. While much of the discussion around research that had occurred up to this point had been directed towards the argument that workers could be put in danger if research were done with them as ‘subjects’, this conversation was solely and explicitly about my research on the collective itself and therefore demanded a different kind of response.

The discussion began when Renata, a 24-year-old who waitress and former labour union organizer active in AWARE for three years, brought up the fact that people had talked to her privately about being uncomfortable about research being done on the collective. She then asked for the opinions of the others in order to confirm that this was true. Three other people in the car engaged in this discussion in different ways while Will sat silently in the front seat, evading any reference to him or his opinion and/or joking or changing the subject when questions were directed at him specifically. Upon arriving at the site of the event, everyone got out of the car and continued what had become a rather heated discussion outside. Will said that he was angry about the discussion because he felt that time and energy was being taken away from the meeting and the workers themselves. He wanted to share his opinion and then proceed with the meeting that had been planned.

Will told me that he sometimes felt concerned about me publishing anything on the collective, firstly because this gave rise to suspicion that I was 'using' AWARE and the workers with whom the collective interacted for my own personal gain and, secondly, because the whole process detracted attention from the work that needed to be done. I explained again that my research was in fact inspired by my sincere intentions to be an activist in my full capacity while simultaneously completing an academic degree. I wanted to write about something I cared about and I wanted to care about what I was writing.

I also said to the group, now convened around the car in the parking lot of the community centre, that I felt my intentions were as pure as those of others who had previously written about AWARE. In fact, Will himself had written about or referenced the collective and its activities for papers that were required for his degree, as had Gabriella. Renata, too, had sent me a paper that she had written on two other activist collectives of which she had been a part. In addition, Gabriella was planning on doing research as a member of the collective in the future, and others had expressed interest in similar ideas.

Will did not pause before giving me a simple and concise answer. He said that I had to consider who the people were, and how long they had been involved with AWARE when thinking about the fact that some members had previously written about the collective. He reminded me that he had been one of the founders of AWARE and that others who were hoping to act as researchers had also taken part in establishing the collective. The actions of people who had invested in this way, and who had access to

information and history about the collective, did not raise the same questions or concerns as did my own.

Will's statement went by with no subsequent analysis or discussion about its validity. It seemed that others agreed that it was a concern that my relative newness to the collective increased the likelihood of my not depicting the activities or its members in a positive light. This concern is a logical one and after listening to members articulate it in various ways over the course of my research time, I discovered that it was a concern that was not entirely focussed on AWARE, but on grassroots collective organizations as a whole. It was often commented to me in concerned tones that the academic and political world did not need more research that showed the weaknesses of collectives. It was felt by members of AWARE that academic work which critiques the processes of collectives legitimizes and strengthens the dismissal of such collectives by mainstream society.

In this way, the manner in which my research was being questioned and problematized, reflected the care that members of AWARE take to protect the collective and the ideology for which it stands. However, the ways in which my membership *rights* were being questioned or problematized reflects a value system that relegates real ownership over the collective to founding members and not to those who had come in at any point subsequent to that moment in history. Only members who have seen the development of AWARE from before it had been founded were understood to be authentic or pure members and to have real ownership over decisions made and activities initiated.

Later, in meetings dedicated to this topic, the concern that my research could potentially rob members of ownership over what was being written about them was brought up. The use of the ownership principle in this case was another indication of membership differentiation. It also represented a palpable irony. My ownership over the collective itself, as well as its decisions about research and membership, was being usurped at the very moment that I was being accused of depriving others of ownership over the academic work in question.

Enclosures and the Power of Knowledge

In her discussion of feminist collectives that work on the premise of structurelessness and non-hierarchy, Freeman identifies the presence of “informal elites” (Freeman 1974:205) as obstacles to real and sustained collectivist democracy. These members, distinguished only by way of unspoken social norms, have pre-existing social ties and continue to be friends with each other outside the realm of their political relationships. When they engage in collective political action with people considered external to their own initial circle, they come to occupy a position of privilege and power facilitated by their continued communication outside the arena of collectivist politics. Freeman notes that elitism created by social divisions among members is masked by a “myth of structurelessness” that makes power limitless and “capricious” within the context of collective activity (207).

In AWARE, social connections between members do exist but are generally rooted in relationships of prior activism or in perceptions of shared social and political educations, histories, and experiences. A communication-set (Mitchell 1969:36) comprised of founding members who identify as people of colour make up this elite group of people. These people, coming together as an elite in the context of this collective, can be considered members with a unique set of privileges as they have developed the capacity to unduly influence decisions that determine the direction of the actions or policies of AWARE. In other words, elitism in the collective is not perpetuated as much by “networks of communication” that occur simultaneously “outside any regular channels that may have been set up by a group” (Freeman, 1974:205), as it is by networks of communication that occurred *prior* to the establishment of the collective and at the time of the collective’s founding.

Influence that develops as a result of elitism of this kind can also be understood as personal power (Wolf 1990:586). Personal power can become limitless, as Freeman explains, because while the concept of structural power is a focal point of collectives that avoid hierarchy, the “endowment of persons in the play of power”(Wolf 1990:586) is a concept that is easy to ignore. In the case of AWARE, the anti-oppression ideology ironically plays a part in the way that individuals’ personal power or influence is ignored. In emphasizing the effects that one’s race, gender, class and other factors have on their power in society, the ideology plays down, or even makes invisible, the effects that more individualized attributes or sets of experiences have on one’s “potency or capability”(Wolf 1990:586) in a group setting. The unchanging or inherent quality of the

connections that create an elite within AWARE also enhances the possibility that personal power, and the elitism it creates, will continue.

Observers of feminist groups have noted that elitism endures in those collectives for some of the same reasons that it is likely to endure in AWARE. As it is obscured and denied by a myth of structurelessness, the personal power of elites, and the uneven membership that it creates, is likely to persist unchecked, “fester”(Miller, 1982), and impede progress. This is because underlying tensions related to a resentment of informal elitism can create a “web of conflict” (Ristock, 1991:42), helping to accentuate the generally prevalent feelings of frustration and powerlessness.

The research incident described above reinforces my argument that the founders of the collective comprise an elite communication-set, the composition of which is highly unlikely to change considering the fact that the historical moment on which it is based is already fixed in the minds and memories of those members. This historical moment and period, culminating in the founding members of the collective coming together to break off from the labour movement and create an alternative organization, has serious implications for the ways in which the collective is structured and meant to operate. As such, an understanding of it is an essential piece of knowledge for any new member who hopes to grasp and eventually feel ownership over the anti-oppression and collectivist principles that drive AWARE and characterize its distinctiveness from labour, faith and service groups.

A few months after I became involved in the collective, Laila, another founding member in her late twenties who is a legal case worker at a clinic in Scarborough, seemed

particularly interested in setting up an orientation to help disseminate information about the history of the collective and the ways in which its members currently handle themselves and the collective's activities. After I had been a member for close to four months in the collective, two other people joined the organizing listserv and became members. Three months after they began to participate in the activities of AWARE, Laila decided to initiate an orientation meeting for "new members". After much negotiation over the listserv an afternoon in July was set out for this orientation.

Each of the three new members arrived at a busy café in downtown Toronto within fifteen minutes of each other. As we waited for the coffees we ordered to come to the table we chatted about the weather and the poor conditions for bicycle-riders in the city during summer months. Laila introduced an agenda that she had developed. She explained that although she had prepared this, she was interested in keeping the agenda open so that whatever issues that concerned the new members would be dealt with accordingly.

Laila distributed two sheets of paper to each of us and mentioned that they were pieces of meetings that she had saved from previous years and perhaps they would be helpful. One computer-typed document had the heading 'Next Steps and Key Principles' in bold lettering with 'July 2002' in parenthesis and hand-written next to the title. About half way down this same page another title in bold read 'Building an organizing and worker-driven approach'. The other page, about half the size of the first, was also computer-typed and had the title 'Notes from Tuesday's Meeting' with the names of four participants written in pen underneath. Laila told us that this smaller document was from

2003, when the collective had brought in someone from outside AWARE to facilitate a visioning meeting. She said that she had brought these materials to give us an idea of what AWARE had done in the past to orientate new members.

When the meeting was opened up for more questions, I asked Laila to describe the history of the collective's founding. I said that the reason I thought it was so important for new members to understand this, was because in my four months of participation I had already had an experience whereby my lack of knowledge of the collective's historic make-up and practises had put me in a difficult and uncomfortable position.

I explained that AWARE had been contacted to speak in front of a university group and since no one else was available, I was encouraged to go. At the event, I commented to the crowd that a worker had been banned from the SAWP for complaining about living conditions. Although this worker's situation had been discussed at a previous meeting, I found out later that the worker himself had not sanctioned the public dissemination of that information. It was suggested to me that it was not ethical to share a worker's personal information with other people or organizations because AWARE was a worker-driven collective that did not publicize information unless the worker requested this action. It was the suspicion of at least one member of AWARE that representatives of other organizations that were present at the speaking engagement might use or abuse the information without consulting further with the worker. This suspicion was based on history that I knew almost nothing about at the time of the speaking engagement.

When I finished describing this incident at the meeting, Laila said that she understood my problem. For this reason she had always thought it would be good to have some kind of document that explained the history and current concerns of the collective so that new members could read this and be cognizant of conflicts that had occurred in the past. Unfortunately AWARE did not have such a document as yet.

While the orientation that she held was informative and helpful in getting a picture of the collective's ideologies and methods, it could not be entirely effective in getting across all the information that would have been important and even essential for new members hoping to become full and knowledgeable participants in the collective. As one person, Laila can not describe the array of opinions and histories that are significant to individual members of AWARE and, consequently, to the collective as a whole.

The gaps in understanding that plague non-founding members of AWARE are evidenced by the discontinuity and disorganization of orientation practices and materials, and by my own experience in breaking a code of the collective without even knowing that I had done so. Despite a concerted and sincere effort to espouse collective ownership of knowledge, the founding members not only comprise a communication-set, but also a panel of experts who have necessary information about the history and inner workings of AWARE that is not always shared with members who are not founders.

In their article on "political power beyond the state", Rose and Miller discuss the ways in which expertise operating in political interactions can generate 'enclosures'. Enclosures are "bounded locales or types of judgement within which their [experts']

power and authority is concentrated, intensified and defended.”(Rose and Miller 1992:188) Enclosures can be created when information or access to information is in the hands of a few and is kept in some way from other political actors working in the same organization.

In the case of AWARE, enclosures have been established as a result of the ways in which knowledge of the collective’s history, including the events preceding its founding as well as past personal conflicts within the collective, is not discussed, explained, or known to all members. The example of the orientation meeting shows how introductions into the collective are often incomplete, or come too late to empower a new member to take initiatives on his or her own. Laila opened the meeting up for questions, but did not acknowledge that new members, under the impression that the collective was truly egalitarian, would not know how to ask about whose influence was most valued, which members had signing power over the collective’s cheques, or who was in possession of contact information for lawyers and doctors known to the collective.

Before giving out sensitive information at the public event, I did not know that I should ask about the collective’s untrusting relationships with certain organizations, or my own ability to discuss the problems of workers in public. My lack of knowledge, as I discovered, became a liability not just to the collective but to the worker who the collective was struggling to help. Members were sympathetic to my sense of guilt over the incident, but ultimately did not produce documents to record the problem and prevent it from happening again.

Ownership over the knowledge of informal relationships, patterns of influence and roles played within the collective is bounded within enclosures and is therefore not enjoyed by all members of the collective. Consequently, ownership over the decision-making and participation in the collective which necessitates such knowledge is also bounded within enclosures and is also not enjoyed equally by all members. Indeed, as Rose and Miller note, certain kinds of knowledge as well as established positions within political groups, constitute “crucial resources which others cannot easily countermand or appropriate”(1992:188). These are not resources that are available for the taking and are consequently only ever owned by elite experts and the enclosures that they generate.

Not Bearing Down: Race, Representational Authenticity and Loose Membership Policies

Enclosures in AWARE are not just created by a concentration of knowledge, but also by perceptions of what constitutes an authentic or valuable member of the collective in racial terms. In AWARE, founding members identify as people of colour. Many non-founding members identify as white. The implication of these identity distinctions is that founding members’ communication-set, and the subsequent enclosures generated by it, is not just based on “history”, but also on “race”. Founders understand their mutually sympathetic communication with each other and with migrant workers as being predicated on the fact that they are not white. While members of the collective do not use the term ‘authentic’, an unspoken definition of what makes an authentic grassroots

activist underlies claims that AWARE should be a collective made up of members of colour.

As it is bound up in ideological parameters that emphasize histories of oppression and injustice, race is a guiding force in structuring AWARE. The collective is described by its founders, and on its website, as having been developed in order to bring together people of colour and migrant farm workers in an activist space distinct from that of the advocacy groups and union that had previously denied racialized minorities and migrant workers full participation in the struggle for rights. It is because of this that almost every discussion of membership policy and practice addresses issues of race and representation.

One issue that emerged in structured interviews with individual members is the utility or usefulness of race for the collective. Responding to a question about the racial diversity of the collective, Will, who is black and born to Jamaican parents, notes: “white allies are integral to broadening entitlements.” However, “white and black members have different roles in relationships with workers.” Sara, a white member whose family has a long history in Grenada, is also convinced that “when workers see people of their own background, this engenders trust and familiarity...which is important for the work that we do”. Carmen, the daughter of a French father and a Mexican mother, believes that the part of the collective dealing with Mexican workers must be exclusively Latino since migrant workers are most effectively understood by people of their same linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Contradictions and complications regarding categories of race, nationality and culture are significant in any discussion of race and utility in the collective. Informal

interactions between members of the collective make clear to an observer that definitions of individuals' authentic colour and class are contested, malleable and generally cannot be taken for granted. For example, some members who welcome the membership of Chileans and Bolivians to the collective, and who infer that as 'latinos' they have similar cultural backgrounds to Mexicans, are still not accepting of white Caribbeans as sharing in the culture of their black and brown co-nationals. Similarly contradictory is the fact that white or mestizo Mexicans who live in Canada and come from big cities in Mexico are valued as members of colour who can "relate" to workers despite the fact that Mexicans who participate in the program are campesinos who live in rural areas and may be dark-skinned, or indigenous.

The following summaries of two membership committee meetings will highlight the ways in which race and representation are discussed in more formalized group settings within AWARE. At the first membership meeting in early summer 2005, the need to diversify membership became the main focus. It was important to most of AWARE's founding members to make sure that the collective was not just made up of students and, furthermore, that it remain comprised of at least two thirds people of colour. The justification for the second criterion impacts of course, on recruiting members. The rationale was that workers would be better able to relate to people with whom they could identify in racial terms.

The justification for the first criterion, that of not being an entirely student-based collective, was derived from an argument for incorporating into the collective people of varying socio-economic backgrounds as well as of diverse physical and mental abilities

into the collective. It was argued, however, that students were the people most likely to have the time, financial stability or funding, and flexibility of schedule to focus on the activities to which AWARE was committed. The discussion that emerged from that point centred around the collective's inability to maintain paid staff positions. If AWARE could be like other groups and offer this type of financial incentive to working-class people, then it would not only attract students. The conclusion of the meeting was that the idea of incorporating new members into the organizing group of the collective would be brought up at the next visioning meeting. Existing members would be asked to recommend people whom they knew either had resources to offer the group or were from areas that reflected the racial make-up of the migrant farm workers.

The membership question continued to be at the forefront of many discussions at both meetings, and informally it became clear that the volume of trips was taking its toll on member's morale and also on the resources of the collective. Members proved to be extremely busy, and, collectively, could not find a meeting time that would suit everyone. There also seemed to be a high level of burn-out. Important outreach organizational tasks, such as making contacts and arranging meeting times and places were not getting done because all the responsibilities were falling on the shoulders of one or two people. It was constantly being said on outreach trips and in small committee meetings that having more members would help ease the burden of personal funds being spent and personal social lives being sacrificed.

The meeting that was called to discuss membership policies more conclusively was held a few months later at Gabriela's workplace, a space which she was able to

secure for the meeting in the office's off hours. Five women were in attendance, only two of whom had been at the previous meeting. Laila agreed to facilitate the meeting and asked that we begin with a go-around to get each person to say what he or she felt the nature of the collective was, and what their visions were for upcoming activities and the recruitment process.

Gabriela began. She stated that she felt that the group needed to have diversity. This was complicated, however, because she did not see the Latin American community coming forward to participate in this work. It was also important, she said, to acknowledge that minority status does not mean that an individual has good racial analysis. AWARE should strive to have a membership that reflected the workers but should also be careful not to be paralysed by these.

Kim, a 27-year-old public educator from Toronto, was next and said that she wanted to pick up on the issue of physical looks being a primary criterion for membership. She agreed that looks do not indicate much about a person necessarily and that, if other members really felt that they did, we should also be more concerned about an obvious gender imbalance within the collective which had many more women than men. Her feeling was that the collective needed people who had the time to spend on meeting and doing outreach. It would also be a great asset if they had a car. Academics have the time to do this kind of activist work, and in her mind, they would be good people to incorporate. Otherwise the question would become: do we want to start doing the work of opening minds to this kind of activism. This would entail taking in people

specifically because of their race or class and then committing to helping them understand the anti-oppression analysis that drives our work.

Many of the comments following this intervention centred around finding people “representative of the communities” that the SAWP employs. Historically and currently, AWARE’s most common discursive reference to people of colour has been to people “representative of the communities from which migrant workers come.” This terminology was criticized, however, for not being straightforward enough, and for causing confusion in terms of how representation works - on a national level or only on a racial level – given that white members of the group have family backgrounds in Mexico and the Caribbean. The reference point for desirable members was then restated as “people who have experienced oppression”.

The tension between recruiting such people, and also needing to recruit people with access to resources such as a car and money to pay for gas, was mentioned by Lana, a 29-year-old researcher with roots in Trinidad. She also pointed out that the way that AWARE meets and organizes already privileges a certain kind of person. Since all meetings are either on the University of Toronto campus or within a few blocks of it, and since most outreach trips begin in the middle of the afternoon on Fridays, AWARE could not hope to incorporate people who are working class, single parents, or living in low-income neighbourhoods situated far away from the city centre, unless the collective structurally changed the way that things were done. Lana finally suggested that the meeting proceed with people being frank and clear, finally “saying what they mean”, and not being afraid to be challenged.

Members' ensuing comments reflected the perceived impossibility of finding new members who were both resource-wealthy and simultaneously able to relate to workers based on a shared sense of oppression. After some time the discussion transformed into one that dealt with the wording of an email that members agreed should be sent out over the general listserv in attempts to recruit new members. It was decided that the basic principle, that the collective be worker-led, be stated clearly, but that no explicit language about race be included. Instead, individuals interested in becoming members would be asked the following questions: How did you hear about AWARE? How are you interested in participating? What motivates you to work with migrant workers?

A date was set for the orientation that would follow the initial email sent out to the general membership, and a tentative date was set for a 'community event' that would be advertised and held in an area of the city where many Caribbean or Mexican people lived. Some time then passed with little activity, at which point it was determined by the people who had been at the meeting that no one was able to organize the community event and that membership recruitment would have to happen over the listserv.

The call-out to the listserv led to an orientation meeting in which four white women showed up to express interest in joining the collective. Only the four self-identifying white members of the collective and one of the founding members, who identifies as a person of colour, were present at the orientation. Several months later, the discussion of a problematic racial imbalance - that is too many white people in the collective - persisted in AWARE's meetings. It continues to be the cause of great

tensions and a primary point of contention for those striving to increase membership and to alleviate burn-out.

Practice as a means to promoting grassroots participation

The membership policy meeting, described at length above, gives a sense of the range of ideas around race and membership policies in AWARE. The subsequent brief description of an orientation meeting however, indicates that ideas and ideologies do not always translate into action or practice that can be formally instituted into the structure of the collective.

Despite the ways in which members strive to have the racial make-up of the collective fit into ideological parameters, no set policy exists to make this happen in practice. The collective as a whole, led by the founders who identify as people of colour, has failed to devise an explicit system by which race will determine one's type of membership. This is because members hold fast to ideological premises that define the collective as non-hierarchical and egalitarian.

The irony of this cause and effect construction is that ideological principles, including the meaning of race and racism, may be most effectively preserved by active policies that put ideas into practice. Scott's (2000) study of two anti-racist feminist service organizations in Los Angeles substantiates this irony by challenging old social movement literature which concludes that meaning-making can only be a product of deliberate, culturally sanctioned intellectual work. She finds that, in fact, "actions

represent a critical site of meaning work”(2000:788) as “practice shapes meaning in subtle and sometimes unexpected ways.”(2000:789) Her work is significant in this context as it points to the importance of action, showing how it can be an effective tool for shaping and maintaining ideologies. This leads to the possibility that AWARE’s interests in creating and sustaining particular ideologies might be served better by the implementation of policy rather than by constant discussions meant to produce consensus.

Regarding the hiring practices of the two organizations, Scott notes that “the clearest expression of a structural analysis of racism was not in the discourse but in the practices, the organizational strategies of affirmative action” (2000:796). While this created a truly diverse staff base for the organizations, it tended to stimulate conflict over meanings of racism and racial diversity. Scott observed that problems defining race and racism manifested themselves in difficulties arriving at a consensus over which racial/ethnic group should be given priority in hiring, or which ‘woman of colour’ is most appropriate to the demographic needs of the organization’s clientele (2000:799).

While policy-encoded practices of anti-racism in many cases slowed down the process of hiring, in the two organizations Scott studied, it also accomplished two important and divergent goals. First, the organizations became more diverse and were able to reproduce a membership that remained at least half people of colour. This strengthened the organization from the perspective of clients and staff and also made a powerful statement about the structural causes of racism and the structural ways in which racism can be combated. Secondly, and perhaps more unexpectedly, an explicit and

practically instituted system of hiring privileged women of colour effectively opened up discussion about the meanings of race and the organization's responses to it. This had a positive effect on the organization in that it stimulated honest interactions and allowed the issue of race to be confronted directly.

In her efforts to prove that meaning-making can come from practice, Scott makes an interesting statement about the prevalence of democratic decision-making and openness in organizations that are explicit about implementing stated ideologies. She shows how, "...in the area of action, members visibly expressed, contested and negotiated meanings of racism and anti-racism."(2000:802)

Although Scott is writing about the hiring of employees and not the recruiting of volunteers, her theorizing of the structural dynamics of creating a membership policy still resonate. The study shows how clear lines of power, and open and explicit methods of decision-making and action, can facilitate honesty, egalitarianism, and diversity within a membership. Not only has active recruitment and hiring of people of colour "provided more perceptible evidence of [a structural] understanding of racism than the written statements of principles and policies one would have to seek out and read" (2000:803), it has also created a space where negotiation, discussion, and truly collective meaning-making and consensus could take place.

The organizations described, much like AWARE, have a keen interest in having clear lines of communication and allowing all members collectively to engage in meaning-making and critical thought. However, the founding members of AWARE, averse to acknowledging a hierarchy that might allow them to make informed and

significant decisions, have not prioritized or sought to implement a proactive stance on recruiting more people of colour. This has increased the number of white people operating as members while simultaneously creating negative tensions surrounding issues of race and racism.

Because of the unwillingness to implement set membership policies, white members in AWARE constitute a reluctant subgroup of the collective. Discussions about the racial make-up of the collective's membership indirectly reference the fact that white members are less desirable than members of colour. Additionally, white members are often called upon by the collective to fulfill AWARE's duties at speaking engagements or on outreach trips when members of colour are too busy or not interested in participating. In later meetings, when complaints are made on the parts of both white members and members of colour about the ways in which AWARE does not appear to outsiders as being composed primarily of people of colour, white members who have done work and spent time representing the collective feel that their efforts are undervalued or that their membership is tenuous or damaging to the whole.

In Scott's terms, the fact that limiting white membership is discussed but not enacted in AWARE means that the collective is missing out on an essential site for meaning-making. As they neglect to prioritize the realm of action and the formalization of a policy and structure that privileges people of colour, founding members of AWARE are not able to express anti-racism as effectively as possible.

Conclusions, Seeing Local-Level Politics as the Products of an Ideologically-Structured Collective

This chapter has examined members' roles, rights and privileges in AWARE, highlighting the ways in which an informal hierarchy of membership is perpetuated, first, by the denial of difference in members' equality, and secondly, by the emphasis of difference in members' authenticity. While the ideological commitments of AWARE emphasize the importance of an organizational structure that is characterized by egalitarianism, an informal but distinctive hierarchy exists within the collective. Informal elitism is based on the time an individual has spent with AWARE as well as the perceived authenticity of that individual's connection to the grassroots.

Thus, founding members, members of colour, white members, and "new" members all constitute overlapping subgroups within AWARE. These divisions are likely to continue as the failure to acknowledge or explore them means that no single person will take the responsibility to set membership policy and formalize the collective's structure in a way that is acceptable to all members. In this way, the only structural elements that will be perpetuated within AWARE are those informal ones that are based on ideological parameters and cultural politics. In the ways in which they espouse egalitarianism and authenticity, this informal structure, and the people that are continuously refining that structure, help to create divisiveness within the collective.

Informal elites, exclusive communication sets, enclosures of knowledge and ownership, and racial subgroups, can all be characterized as local-level political networks

that are particular to collectives such as AWARE. The tensions, conflicts, and even factionalism that build within the collective do so as a result of unacknowledged relations of power. Specific kinds of local-level politics, therefore, are encouraged by a cultural politics that fuse ideology and structure into an entity that pervades all interactions between members of the collective.

While members of AWARE note that external pressures on the collective (such as limited funding and the limited time of volunteers) have a negative effect on interpersonal relationships between members, they do not look to ideology, cultural politics, and structure as potential sources of tension or difficulty. When these sources of tension are not fully understood or recognized, they can become ubiquitous and create problems for the reproduction of the collective. When they are understood and recognized, however, these sources of tension could perhaps be mediated by the development of certain conventions and behavioural mechanisms that would not necessarily change the ideology, cultural politics and structure of the collective, but rather work around them to create open lines of communication.

Discussions of the formative and divisive capabilities of ideology and cultural politics bring to the fore the collective's inconsistent relationship to structure. Members' reluctance to acknowledge the informal structure at play in AWARE prevents them from instituting a formalized structure that might ensure the collective's continued stability and strength. This chapter shows how the specific kinds of local-level politics that develop within the collective help to perpetuate this paradox. The following case study and

analysis will describe and discuss the various contradictions that define divisions and conflicts within AWARE.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH IN THE COLLECTIVE: A CASE STUDY OF IDEOLOGY AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Experiences in the field as ethnographic data

The act of combining the roles of activist and academic (anthropologist) is not a challenge that is new to AWARE, nor is it at all unique in terms of the current membership. However in the time period in which my research was presented, discussed, and eventually carried out, the category “academics” surfaced as a problem that was particularly significant to the collective’s internal organization. The dilemma of researchers as members of AWARE became the primary subject of several meetings.

As Blee notes, “emotions evoked in the researcher in the process of collecting qualitative data can themselves be sources of useful data.”(1998:382) Indeed, as the topics of research and academic engagement became focal points of much discussion, contention, and action in the collective over the course of my time ‘in the field’, my emotional responses to these conflicts (as well as those of others) became rich sources of information and data, suitable for analysis and deep reflection.

From obtaining consent to negotiating a method, my process in doing research with and on AWARE has been an important avenue through which issues of openness, decision-making and authority have emerged as sources of conflict and contradiction within the collective. This chapter is comprised of several ethnographic sections that

describe a variety of different kinds of interactions that take place within AWARE. It is through these detailed descriptions that I will link my experiences with fieldwork to analyses of the contradictory nature of the collective's operations. The meetings and incidences outlined in the following chapter will explain recurring difficulties related to the ways in which the collective functions and often fails to achieve stated goals, and also to the fears and concerns of some individual member activists in the collective.

Understanding the ins and outs of AWARE, the beginnings of an MA thesis

Over the first weeks of my involvement on the organizing listserve, I began to notice the importance of interactions between members of the collective and other actors working with participants in the SAWP. These interactions were not always easy or pleasant, despite the fact that all those doing activism or advocacy with migrant workers seemed motivated to make positive change. Proposals for meetings and speaking engagements often elicited suspicion. I did not engage in these discussions, but I was able to observe the bad feelings that others on the organizing listserve had with respect to AWARE's contact with academics, unions, and other interest groups that were working with seasonal agricultural workers.

At the beginning of my involvement, I would occasionally write to the organizing listserve asking a question or making a suggestion, but generally I did not receive responses to these emails and my self-consciousness as a new member prevented me from participating in discussions as fully as I might otherwise have done. I attended as

many meetings as were proposed through the listserv and tried to understand how the collective functioned and how individuals functioned within it. Initially I did this to help myself become engaged in AWARE's activities and appear less new and inexperienced. It seemed to me that attending meetings and trying to learn how the collective operated and how I might be integrated into those operations was the best way to mediate the awkwardness of my new membership.

One of the first large meetings that I attended was classified as a 'visioning meeting'. I understood that this kind of meeting provided an opportunity to go over strategies for the future and to develop ways of discussing the goals and ideas of members of the collective. When I arrived, I noticed that there were a few people there whom I had never met. We did a 'go-around' in order to introduce ourselves and comment on what we were feeling, thinking about, or hoping to accomplish on that day. It was in this initial go-around that I took the opportunity to present myself as a student researcher.

I was asked by Elena, a friendly and enthusiastic Mexican-Canadian woman who was one of the founders of the collective, what my research was going to be about. I told her, and the group of people assembled around the table at the café, that the recent discussions over the listserv, as well as through previous experiences, had inspired an interest in the politics of service, advocacy and activism. I said that I was thinking about writing about all the different groups that were involved with the SAWP, but added it seemed like it would be too much work to cover all these disparate groups. She laughed, said that it sounded very interesting to her as well, and thought it would be a rich area of

study because she had also perceived that “so much went on behind the scenes” of activism and social service.

Two other people at the meeting were also identified as new members. Sara introduced herself as a Masters student hoping to do research on road safety in rural Canada as it related to the SAWP. She mentioned that she was happy to have so much time to dedicate to the workings of the group since student life offered this type of flexibility. A second new member, Julian, also identified as a student but was not doing research specifically on the program or the workers. There then followed enthusiastic remarks made by members about the new energy that additional people would bring. I too felt excited about the apparent dedication and enthusiasm that long standing members seemed to have, and was content to know that they appreciated the new membership

Shortly after this visioning meeting, it was proposed via the organizing email that new members of the collective should have an orientation to acquaint themselves with the history of the collective and the modes of operation that fuelled AWARE. While initial emails were sent out in early May, the actual meeting did not take place until early June. As discussed earlier, this meeting was attended by three new members and one founding member of the collective, and took place in a popular café in the afternoon. The meeting’s agenda was presented by Laila. It included an explanation of the history and principles of the group, as well as a brief summary of the anti-oppression framework according to which the group operated. The three new members were encouraged to ask questions throughout.

Much of the time was spent discussing the ways in which AWARE is different from other groups working in the same contexts. The splitting off from the union as it was understood by original members of the collective was described, as were more current decisions that the collective had made regarding alliances and collaborative relationships. It was mentioned that the group wanted to maintain a balance of volunteers who were “community members” and volunteers who were students.

At this point, Sara commented that she wanted to meet with someone to discuss doing research as a member of the collective. “What would be important issues to discuss in terms of ethics and what might be the conflicts of interest?” I added that I had similar questions and would also want a meeting to discuss them. Julian asked me what I was planning to research. I said that I was organizing my research around the collective itself and the ways in which it operated in a political and social context. After thinking for a moment, Laila responded saying that the role of researchers would be discussed at an upcoming visioning meeting so that all members could express their opinions on the topic and have their say.

Towards the end of the meeting Laila wanted to decide how we could develop a summary of what had been discussed so that members of the organizing listserve could be privy to it. Sara brought up again that she was worried about the research question and wanted to know how everyone’s voice could be heard on the topic. I suggested that an email to the listserve would be a good way to get people’s opinions.

Laila told Sara that she appreciated the fact that she was reflecting on the issues since it showed that she felt real concern. Laila explained that based on the

understanding that the collective had of anti-oppression principles, members were committed to constantly challenging assumptions, choices, and behaviour and that this type of discussion fit in well with that framework. Although there had never been full discussions about research in the collective, it would be good to talk about it once we all got together for a visioning meeting. Email discussions over the listserv did not seem adequate to Laila because the exchanges could not be informed by “all the subtleties of meeting in person and talking face-to-face.” It was determined that concerns over research ethics would be a topic for the next meeting of all the organizing members of the collective.

Tensions, Contradictions and Conflicts in the Collective

By the end of June small groups or committees were forming to discuss outreach, political action, fundraising, and membership policies. This was because many people were expressing the view that it was important to think about solidifying the organizational structure of the collective while still focussing on the workers and their particular problems with housing, work, and so on. The committee structure was talked about as an attempt to give people an opportunity to address differing aspects of AWARE’s responsibilities to itself and to the workers. It was significant, however, that the same group of around five people were on all the committees and were attending all the meetings and going on all the outreach trips. This signalled the absence of organization and, to my mind, a need for more members in the collective. It was this

feeling of being 'burnt-out' and without direction which in fact gave rise to discussions about committee structures and which also led to an underlying tension in the meetings and outreach trips.

In mid-July a meeting was called to deal with 'worker involvement'. Eight people were present, including Vishal, who I had not yet met. This was an exceptionally good turn-out for a meeting (as more than the usual five were present), and the mood was light as the group of members congregated to eat together at a popular restaurant in the downtown area. Several general issues related to political action initiatives and outreach strategies were discussed. Then there was a recap of the most recent outreach trip where it was recounted that a movie had been shown in the library of a small agricultural town in Ontario.

Renata, one of the members of AWARE who was sitting on all the committees, briefly mentioned that she had been uncomfortable with note-taking by "certain members" of the collective in the library while the meeting was going on. Vishal immediately added that he thought that note-taking and research in general objectified the workers and was damaging to the reputation of the collective. Since this happened rather quickly, and since a speaker's list was building based on comments on subjects introduced earlier, the subject was soon replaced with another and the problems expressed were not immediately elaborated upon.

One member had to leave early to get back to her workplace, and another also left just before the meeting broke up. When the bill was paid, the group members stood up from the table and I left. About a half hour later, I was grocery shopping in the area near

the restaurant and ran into Andrea, also present at the meeting, who had stayed for a few minutes after the meeting to ask Will a question. She was there with the remaining four people who were continuing to discuss the problems associated with the worker meeting and movie that had been conducted the previous week.

When I told her I had felt uncomfortable because I had been the one taking notes that day, Andrea told me that she thought I should know that the issue had come up after I had left the meeting. Apparently it was said that taking notes was problematic since it was understood as an act that would give the workers the impression that the collective was made up of researchers. This was deemed unacceptable by those who were discussing the situation because it was clear to them that AWARE had a membership that was diverse across occupational lines. Andrea said that she had only taken notes because she had been told to do so by Will. These records were meant to be shared with the other members so that the event could be recounted and discussed at a later time. Renata said that she understood this response from Andrea but then asked why I had been taking notes. Since I had left the restaurant several minutes before, no one was able to give an answer to this, and everyone agreed that it had been inappropriate to take notes without asking the workers for their permission.

I was upset to hear this, first because I did not want other members of AWARE to think that I had behaved poorly or in a way that exploited the workers. In addition, I was nervous because the discussion had gone on after I had left, and this was an indication that other similar discussions concerning my behaviour could be going on at any time. At this point in the summer, I had spent much of my time with various members of

AWARE. I viewed them as my friends and colleagues and cared very much about what they thought of me, and how they were understanding my research and activism.

When the minutes of the restaurant meeting came out a few days later, it was specified that in the ‘debrief’ of the library meeting (which had taken place with only a few members of the collective who were driving back to Toronto together) it had been decided that there should be a protocol for note-taking. One idea was that these records should be shared with workers by displaying them on a large piece of paper or flip chart at the front of the room. Nothing else about note-taking had been included in the meetings.

Andrea sent out an email shortly after the minutes came over the listserv with her detailed notes of what had occurred on the outreach trip and a brief explanation that she felt the critique of note-taking was well-placed and that she fully agreed that a protocol about this issue should be set up so that misunderstandings would not occur in the future. She expressed the view that she wanted to always ask workers or anyone present if they were comfortable with note-taking before proceeding to do so, and that she would be happy to copy the notes already taken to share with workers who had been present at the previous meeting.

Silence as a Response, Communication in the Collective

While the issue of note-taking was not discussed over the listserv again, the comments made by Vishal at the meeting signalled the animosity that some members were feeling towards research and the prospect of other members engaging in research

with workers. It was unfortunate timing, then, that at this time I received formal notice, after an unexplained delay, that my ethics proposal at the university had been approved and that my consent forms were ready to present to research participants. At this point I had to get the forms signed so I could do formal interviewing.

An early August meeting, scheduled to deal with membership, was the earliest opportunity I had to ask people face-to-face about signing consent forms. After two hours of intense debate over questions of race, representation, and membership policies, four of the five women who had attended the meeting and had stayed to this point began to organize their things and prepare to leave. I asked them to give me a moment to present something to them. Everyone directed their attention towards me. I told them that I had discussed my project before with most people that I had met in AWARE, but for those who were unclear I wanted to state again that I was interested in writing about the operations of the collective and many of the structural issues that had been addressed in that particular meeting. I specified that I was happy to talk more about it with people who were interested in finding out more. I said that I recognized that it was slightly awkward, but that I wanted to bring all this up in a larger meeting but since there hadn't been one I had decided to bring it up in this one. I now had consent forms prepared and I wanted to know if people would help me by signing them and agreeing to do interviews with me individually.

When I finished speaking, there was no answer immediately. I began to take the forms out of my bag and Laila said that she thought that it was a good idea to bring it up but that I should wait for a visioning meeting so that more members would be present to

weigh in on the issue. I said that I did not know when the collective would get to a visioning meeting and that this was a time sensitive issue that I wanted to deal with as soon as possible. Gabriela then added that she wouldn't feel comfortable signing as an individual and would want the support of the whole collective. I said that I understood that sentiment but that I wanted to know what others thought about how I could possibly get a response from a majority of members and proceed with my research project.

The conversation continued while people went back to preparing themselves to leave the building. Someone suggested that I send out an email over the organizing listserv explaining my research and that I include a copy of the consent form as an attachment. It was thought that this way I could get some discussion going around getting signatures. Another person said that this was not the best way to go about it, but that it would have to do in the meantime. I expressed concern over not getting any response, and I was told that all I could do was to get the information out there, and therefore, that is what I should do. I acquiesced and left the meeting with the others.

Two days later, I sent out an email to the listserv with the subject heading 'My research, please read and respond'. The email was written in a casual and informal tone and outlined in detail the process I hoped to take with my research as well as my ideas about how I hoped to make it relevant and useful to the collective. I explained the tradition of anthropology and the ways in which I believed the exploitative tendencies of social research had recently dissipated as result of healthy critique and discussion that was present in the discipline. I was brief and wrote in common language, and I invited as much feedback and discussion as anyone felt would be useful or desirable. I included a

copy of my consent form, and asked those on the listserv to write to me if they were available for interviews.

I did not receive any response whatsoever to this email until four weeks later when one member of the collective wrote to tell me that she would be out of town for the next several months and was therefore not going to comment on the issue and could not help me with an interview. She wished me luck and told me that she would accept and support any decision or action that the rest of the collective made. Beyond this, none of the other thirty people on the organizing listserv spoke to me or wrote to me to discuss or question the research, to offer to give an interview, or to sign a form. Accordingly, I proceeded to take notes on meetings and events, and I began to envision my project without interviews.

‘Academic’ Meetings, Fears, Concerns and the Differing Perspectives of Members of AWARE

About five weeks after sending out the email, a dramatic altercation during one outreach trip revealed to me that a few members of AWARE had been questioning among themselves whether in fact I had permission to do any research with the collective. Renata suggested that the collective organize a meeting to discuss the participation of academics in AWARE.

The first ‘academic’ meeting was held at a café just outside the University of Toronto campus in late September, 2005. At 7:00 p.m. I arrived to find five members already in attendance. The email had specified that all those interested in participating in

this discussion were responsible for making time to do so. No one wanted to chair the meeting initially, but Will ultimately agreed to do so. The members established that there was to be a speakers' list. The agenda was decided upon before the meeting began. It stated that the first part of the meeting was to be devoted to explaining the history of academic work and the concerns about it within the collective, the second part was to be a debate and conclusion as to whether the collective was prepared to accept academics, and the third part was to allow each of the three people in need of consent to present their cases and have the members of the collective respond.

Laila began by telling the story of Paul's research. Paul was an MA candidate in Anthropology from New York who wanted to do a project in which workers would participate in creative activities and produce a collection of artwork that would represent their thoughts and feelings regarding the program. At the time that Paul presented this idea to the collective, he was only asking to be partially affiliated with AWARE and was not an acting member. He was prepared to do the research with or without the connections and advice that AWARE could provide. One member of the collective, upon hearing this logic, decided that she objected to the project on the grounds that it did not include Caribbean workers and that Paul was not willing to engage in an adequate discussion of race as a part of his project. She was also apparently put off by Paul's discussion of academics as 'experts', because it was her idea that the workers themselves were the experts. Emma, it was told, had quit membership of AWARE because the collective was entertaining the possibility of engaging with this researcher.

While this story was being told at the meeting, at least two members interrupted to make clear that Emma was also having “personal problems” with other members of the collective and left as a result of this as much as from her objection to the research. Gabriela then picked up and continued the story, saying that everyone was tired at the time when Paul showed up and that the collective needed “new life” in it to sustain the activities in which it was involved. There was in fact a positive response to Paul’s research and a hope that it could provide the workers with a sense of power over their situations as participants in the program.

The main concerns at the end of Paul’s project were that the collective was used to get to workers, that workers were used without getting follow-up on their participation (due to a job offer Paul left Toronto and did not publish a copy of his collection of artwork for all the people who contributed to it), that they did not feel any ownership over the project, and that the participants would have been in danger if the media were to get hold of Paul’s work. Will stated that, in the past, research had been ‘ad hoc’ and that it did not adequately address the fact that it could put workers in danger.

Laila clarified that workers had also complained about researchers. They were concerned that they “did not know what had happened to their voices”, and this had caused them to mistrust AWARE because they had associated the research with the collective’s outreach initiatives. Eventually, Laila herself contacted Paul to get his materials and put together her own version of his project to distribute to the workers who

had participated.⁶ This had been a difficult and costly endeavour, and was done primarily to regain support and trust from the people whom Laila and other members thought Paul had disappointed.

Gabriela, who had also recently decided that she wanted to work with the collective while doing doctoral research with migrant workers, noted that there was a need for self-criticism in the story since it might not have been Paul's method that was the problem, but rather AWARE's reaction to it and AWARE's inability to make timely decisions regarding collaboration with the project. At that point, Will wanted to summarize the issue. He gave three main reasons for concern over academic work in collaboration with the collective. First, how might research affect the focus of the group - which role takes precedence, researcher or activist? Second, how are workers involved with the process? Would there be follow-up that was satisfactory? Third, do the workers benefit from this research? Or does it objectify them without giving anything back?

Speaking about the first issue, Will said that he did not know whose interests came first with activists who also were researchers. It was unacceptable for the interests of the workers to be compromised or for there not to be a concrete outcome for research over which workers could take ownership. I asked if it might not be better for researchers to work with activist groups since this would make for a more informed and more sensitive researcher. Wouldn't it benefit the worker in the end if the person who was engaging in the research put time and energy into the collective and also learned

⁶ Over the course of my fieldwork with AWARE, Paul's research project was used several times. The booklet that he produced with the Mexican farm workers was brought to meetings with local government officials to help portray the viewpoint of these migrants on issues such as housing, working conditions, and social life in rural Ontario.

from the style of engagement to which AWARE was committed? Will responded by saying that the argument reminded him of another one. He asked if there was a difference between “a colonizer who cares and one who doesn’t care”.

Gabriela was next on the speakers’ list. She used her turn to first respond to Will to say that all activists got something personal out of their work. Researchers and other members not only take but also gave to the process. The question for her was one of process and not intentions. On a more general note, she said, if Will was stating a problem with all activists and the broader principle of colonization, then perhaps the collective needed to clear up some basic goals and policies before being properly equipped to decide on researchers and research.

Julian then spoke for the first time. He suggested that we look at specific examples in order to move things along and get to the heart of the issue. Laila suggested that the members come up with positive criteria that research must have first before turning to actual cases. I was next on the speakers’ list and I asked that we consider the fact that people who do research must first undergo an ethics review that was quite rigorous. We shouldn’t assume that people were not considering ethical issues before they embarked on this work.

Will added that ethics reviews likely missed a lot of things that were important to the collective. Since it is read by middle-class, white people, ethics reviews do not pay attention to issues of race and anti-oppression. Renata agreed and brought up the idea that the researchers’ approach be scrutinized as well. Since social phenomena is fluid

and everchanging, this would need to be taken into consideration. The perspective of each individual is only partial, and cannot be understood to represent the whole.

The group of people assembled eventually agreed to begin to put together criteria for research that would be acceptable to AWARE. It was agreed, through suggestions, that the first criterion would be that the research be in line with AWARE's goals and mandates. Another criterion would be that research participants should have power over the results and process of the research. Some questions, however, were brought up at this point. What does "power over results" mean in this context? Would this be complete power or partial power? Did we know if this kind of power or "ownership" was necessarily a good thing? Were we foolishly idealizing the workers in saying that they would care about research, or desire to/have time to participate in formulating it? While it was nice to talk about workers as though they would eagerly be involved in research, we knew that this would more than likely not be the case.

Sara pointed out that she was not willing to tailor the results of her research to suit the interests of the farmers or politicians that she would interview. According to the criteria developed, those people as participants of her research would need to have ownership over her work, and she did not want to allow this to happen. I asked what would happen in my own case, where the members of the collective were the subjects of the research.

My question lead to a criterion stating that collaborative work on AWARE would have to be done with an eye towards not compromising the interests of the collective. I said that I felt that this was implied in the earlier language which we had been using for

the workers. Will responded that he felt uncomfortable knowing that when we went on outreach trips or attended demonstrations there would be someone documenting, as “this is a gaze that objectifies the activists as well”. Julian took this opportunity to ask about my research since it had become the topic of discussion. He was wondering if I was proposing a project, or if I had already started. He felt that this was important since it had to do with the collective’s ideas on procedure for securing informed consent.

I told everyone that I had been clear about my research and that people knew that I was doing research in the form of participant observation. At this moment, I needed formalized and written consent to do interviews. Since the issue had not been dealt with for so long, despite my requests to have it addressed, I was now asking for a favour because general inefficiency and lack of communication had put me in a tight spot with timing. I also reminded people that, as an M.A. thesis, my research would be shorter term, and very likely not as extensive as doctoral research.

Gabriela spoke next. She said that she felt that the collective should take some responsibility for not being effective with timing. If a meeting was called, then we should hold one, or, we should state explicitly that we were giving authority to others to make a decision. This point was soon lost when Will, following the speakers’ list, said that I should never consider research insignificant or make the mistake of supposing it was. Considering the media attention on this issue and the many people involved in service and political work surrounding the SAWP, Will said that I should expect that there would be eyes on my paper regardless of its level of study.

Sara was next on the list and spoke to the particulars of anthropological fieldwork. The formal aspect of research involved explicit consent and process she said, but the informal aspects of it were much more ambiguous, fluid and had to be constantly negotiated. Participant observation was not a concrete thing that always went according to plans, timelines and protocol.

Julian interrupted to say that still there should be the “right to say no”. He thought, however, that out of respect for me as a colleague, the collective should give me the benefit of the doubt. He also felt that the responsibility for not executing a good process in terms of consent did not only fall on me but on everyone. Laila seconded the motion to give me the benefit of the doubt and allow me to proceed.

Gabriela said that she thought that as a collective “we should take care of our own”. This was because AWARE was nothing without the people who made it work. She asked “Who is AWARE? What is it?” She then answered her own questions saying “We are all our own resources...it is not just money that makes us run, but the individuals who do the work.”

Sara responded saying that she fully agreed with this statement and that, because it was “past the point of no return” for me in my research, the collective should take what had been learned from this case and move on. This comment led to a new criterion that stated that informed consent must be obtained before research begins. I added that another criterion should relate to the responsibilities of the collective and that it should be made clear to researchers what the criteria are before they begin to get involved with the collective as researchers and activists.

A discussion emerged dealing with the issue of the researcher as member. If the collective was approached by a researcher, should it be mandatory that s/he become a member of the organizing listserv as well? Sara suggested that the collective not be so strict about that. Not everyone could commit to joining the group, and research was still valuable even if not done in the way that we determined it should be done.

Will responded to this by saying that he did not believe that all research was valuable. He said that researchers who publish most on the SAWP are able to get their work funded because they do not discuss issues of race. The lack of race analysis had become a problem in the literature and contributed to the reason he got so angry about workshops that were organized to bring together people working on the issue. Will stated that he often felt the collective was being “used” by academics and research institutes. He did not want the collective and its members to contribute to research without getting anything in return. Gabriela then stated that she thought it was important to get the collective’s message out in whatever way possible and suitable. “Should AWARE keep their ideas to themselves just because the collective is afraid of what people will use it for?”

Laila had requested to be put on the speakers’ list in order to address the previously discussed issues of consent and ownership for the participants. She wanted to add to the criteria that participants be able to review their comments and the ways they were being interpreted. It was important for people to contribute to that process. Other members discussed this point for a few minutes, at which point Julian announced that he

had to leave. Will also said that he wanted to talk with his friend who had been sitting at the café waiting for him to finish the meeting.

There was some lamenting over the fact that in three hours the members had not been able to come to a consensus on what I should do about carrying out my formal interviews. I asked if it was even possible to arrive at agreement and how it would work to do this. “Would it be possible for people to agree or disagree to participate in the research on an individual basis?” Laila responded that she was not willing to compromise on consensus, and that it would be unacceptable for individuals to make these decisions since AWARE was a collective and should not trust any other model but a democratic one. I said that I had not seen a proper consensus agreed-upon up to this point and wondered if it had existed in the past. Laila said that it had.

Will and Julian left the café and the remainder of the members tried to organize the bill while discussing how I could get an answer from the collective and proceed with my research project. Gabriela said that she thought that the people present should consider the fact that my work could help, and had in fact already helped, to make the collective consider and discuss research and organizational issues. Renata did not think that we could make a decision at that point and said that she thought it was necessary to have a follow-up meeting. Everyone agreed and resolved to be in touch over the listserv.

The Second 'Academic' Meeting, Establishing Rules

A week later the collective held its second 'academic' meeting, this time at the Graduate Students Lounge at the University of Toronto. The meeting was to be held after the 'political action' meeting that had been called to discuss a press release that a few members were hoping to send out in the same week. The seven members present settled into a large room with three couches and a blackboard in the basement at around 8:40 p.m.

Will said he wanted to bring two issues to the attention of the people assembled. First, there had been news recently that two workers had been killed on their bicycles on a road in Delhi, Ontario. It was known that three workers were riding into town from their farm, that all three had been hit by a passing car, and two were pronounced dead. Secondly, Will wanted to discuss that the President of Mexico would be visiting British Columbia and that he was interested in organizing an action related to that visit. After a period of ten minutes discussion on this issue, Laila decided that she would write up the criteria for research that had been decided upon at the last meeting. This would be posted on the board for everyone to see, and the members could come to a consensus on the details of it together.

The criteria were written up as follows:

- 1.) Commitment to anti-oppression principles, including training and an agreement by researchers to look at power and privilege.

- 2.) Workers and AWARE would be partners in the research and consequently feel ownership over its processes and outcomes. This would include the ability of an individual to veto text attributed to him or her if the name is used, the ability to negotiate over text at every stage possible, the ability to negotiate process, outcomes.
- 3.) People must agree to collaborate with the research before research begins.
- 4.) Outcomes of research must contribute to AWARE's organizing goals and mandate.
- 5.) Commitment to follow-up with workers.
- 6.) Communicate commitment to group in the long-term.
- 7.) Commitment to worker-driven organizing.

When discussion on these criteria was set to begin, Renata asked to establish the ground rule that people should not take things personally since "emotions were running high" due to low sleep and worker deaths.

I asked first if other members could define the meaning of "ownership" as it was referred to in the second criterion. Laila said that "ownership" meant that process and outcomes of research would be shared property, that decision-making would be shared, and that interviews and quotes would have to be re-checked with individuals to whom they would be attributed. Renata made the point that the collective could not assume that participants would want to be involved in such an active way. Julian said that if the researcher saw that people were interested, then those people "are owed involvement."

Sara then asked if the “levels of collaboration” could be discussed. Laila said that AWARE could be “a facilitator, or a complete partner of the research.” Either way, however, she thought that the researcher would have to send out a draft of the write-up at the end of the project. At this point I stated that I had observed that there were important differences between my research with the collective itself, and the research of other members who would be interviewing migrant workers. When Laila said that she wanted drafts of the written work to be sent out to participants, I felt that it was implied that she was talking about my research in particular. I suggested that if there were in fact differences, then we should treat the research projects separately.

Renata was next on the speakers list and said she wanted to get back to discuss the migrant workers in particular. As an example, she referenced the group of workers in Tillsonburg, Ontario that AWARE had been visiting, as an example. She said that workers needed to be fully informed about the research being done by members of AWARE. These members would have to be responsible for always “introducing themselves and the collective” before every meeting that would take place. Renata said that it was problematic that workers did not know “who members of AWARE were” or what they did outside their activism.

Renata then described how her comments were based on feelings she had had on her most recent outreach trip to Tillsonburg. She said that she had sent an email to the collective about what had happened that day, but since she understood that some people had not read it, she recounted the story. AWARE had arrived in the parking lot in Tillsonburg to find a group of workers talking with each other. They confronted Renata

and Will, saying that they were angry that the collective had not come for two weeks prior to that Friday. Apparently the group of workers that had assembled there then said that they had decided amongst themselves that it was probable that the members of AWARE were researchers who had completed their projects and were consequently no longer interested in talking with migrant workers. Renata was visibly disturbed while telling the story and spoke to the people in the meeting, saying that “it was intense when workers were thinking we had no use for them anymore.”

Renata thought that this incident signalled a bigger issue of “the group vs. the individual”, and that “when workers know that one person is doing research, they think the whole group is doing research.” Renata said that the problem at hand seemed not to be the research itself, but more the fact that AWARE had not been clear enough about “who we are and what we do”. Sara said that she saw this scenario as representative of a problem with keeping commitments to workers: “We said we would come back in a week, and we took three...the difficulty is not with research here.” Besides this, Sara also commented that she was upset that research was being held responsible, since up to the point of this confrontation she had not been doing research at all, and therefore had not said anything to the workers in Tillsonburg about the possibility of research. I interjected to say that, on a trip a few months before, one worker in Tillsonburg had asked me if I was using the workers as research subjects. I said that I wasn’t, but rather that I was doing research on activists. I then told him that I was in Tillsonburg as an activist with AWARE.

Renata added that regardless of individual incidences, the workers “still seem to think that research is being done.” She wondered that if this was in fact the case, where exactly was ‘the problem’ with how the collective was presenting itself. Will was next on the speakers’ list and took a deep breath before he said that “the relationship with workers is a two-way street.” He said that it was AWARE’s fault that a promise was made that could not be, or was not, kept, but workers should not be dependent on the collective for guidance. The goal was to get workers to organize without AWARE having to be present. Another big problem, according to Will, was image. The perception that members of AWARE are students is there “just because of how we are, what we look like as a group.” He agreed that Sara and I as researchers had not complicated the issue, but that the idea that AWARE was a research group had been there for a while and would likely stay because “management of perception is not about words, but about image.”

Julian said that he thought that the collective needed to address the decision of whether or not it wanted to work with researchers. He looked around and said that even though he could see in some people’s faces that they felt that this decision had already been made, in fact he was certain that this decision had not yet been made. I said that I disagreed because we would not have been talking about criteria for researcher involvement all this time if we had not already agreed that the potential for this participation existed. Sara and Renata both said that they agreed with my assessment of the situation. Julian responded that the collective had not made the decision and that it

still needed to be dealt with. Specifically, he said, he wanted to think about the consequences of being a collective with some members who were researchers.

A few members said that they were confused over what those consequences were, and Sara said again that she felt the decision to include researchers in the collective had already been made. Laila decided that all those present would do a “go-around” to see what people thought of the question: “Are we open to having a ‘criteria process’ at all?” Laila suggested that the go-around begin with Julian since he was the one to bring up an objection.

Julian stated that he was uncomfortable with collaboration insofar as the researcher would also be a member of the collective. He didn’t think it was appropriate to do research at the same time as organizing. He was comfortable, on the other hand, with collaboration at the level of AWARE being a facilitator for researchers. In the rest of the go-around the other members said that they were in agreement that criteria for researchers as members should be developed. Laila mentioned that this implicitly meant that AWARE would have to have a decision-making process in place to set up criteria and then make sure that it was followed. Gabriella asked what would happen if someone “comes in, agrees to the criteria and then it is all a lie.” Julian responded by saying “then we will take them to ethics and fuck them up.”

Will, who was next on the speakers list, commented that AWARE did not want to be patronizing or overprotective of workers since they were not children and should have the ability to agree or not agree to participate in research. He asked to add to the list of criteria that AWARE had the right to decide/make judgement on the level of

collaboration with researchers on a case-by-case basis. I added that I thought the wording should reflect the responsibilities of the collective in the process of incorporating a member who would like to do research. I suggested that the criteria state that AWARE had the “obligation” to make a judgement for every case. Laila said that she did not feel that AWARE had any obligation to researchers at all. The obligation of the collective was rather to its members. She proposed that the wording be changed to “AWARE has the right to make judgements on a case-by-case basis in a timely manner.” Laila also said that she did not approve of a decision being made by a vote. She insisted that any decision made should be through consensus.

Since it was quite late at this point and the meeting had been called to hear explanations of three research projects, it was decided by all the members present that the meeting move ahead with my case summary and a subsequent evaluation of it. I had sent out my proposal over the organizing listserv the week before, in response to a request at the previous meeting. When I referred to what had been written in the proposal, I was told that many people had not read it. I went over the main points of what the research project was about and I said that the one specific thing that I wanted the collective to decide on was the issue of anonymity. Did AWARE want to be named, or did the members want to have pseudonyms for the collective and for the individual participants?

Laila said that she thought it would be good to do another go-around to allow people to ask me specific questions about the research. The questions came from each member and included: “How would your work contribute to the collective and its goals? How long will you be around working with the collective – will your participation end

when the research is finished? How do you feel about anti-oppression and how will you make it part of your work? Will you expose the collective's 'dirty laundry'? To what extent does AWARE have ownership over the product of this research? When are you a researcher and when are you a member? Can your research cause disruption in the work done by the collective? Will the research change the dynamics of the collective in that it might make people feel self-conscious?"

The questions were answered in turn and from this discussion it was determined that members of the collective wanted drafts of the work to be available to them. I said that I was of course willing to do this but that I did not want to have to wait for approval before proceeding since it had taken so long initially for people to respond to me, and even then there had been no clear answers. Laila suggested that the collective put together a "monitoring group" to follow-up on responding to me about my research proceedings, but that ultimately I needed to understand that every individual had a say since it was a collective. Additionally, Renata suggested that I could incorporate focus groups into my interviews so that there would be a range of opinions expressed on any one item at a time. I said that I thought that this was a great idea, but that I felt it was unlikely that I could get a group together since it took months to even get people together for AWARE's meetings.

After more suggestions and follow-up to the questions asked, it was suggested that I leave the room for five minutes so that the remaining members could discuss how they felt about my participation. I went to the stairwell, in a room next to where the meeting was taking place but separated by a closed door. After approximately twenty-

five minutes of waiting, Julian came outside, joked that it had been decided that I should leave the collective, and then became serious again, saying that the other members were ready to speak to me.

Renata spoke and told me that those present accepted me as a researcher and member in the collective but that I would have to observe certain conditions that they were about to name for me. I said that I was not recording these conditions because some people had said that it made them uncomfortable at the end of the preceding discussion that I had been taking notes. Laila told me that she would send out the notes to me after the meeting. The conditions were explained and the meeting ended with a discussion of when we would get together to talk about others' research projects and their involvement in the collective. I never received the notes outlining the conditions discussed. At a meeting a few months later I reminded Laila that she had offered to send them to me. She said she would find them and send them to me, but again I didn't receive an email from her or anyone else.

Analyzing the Problem with Research, The Contradictions and Inconsistencies of Collective Politics

The meetings and interactions surrounding the question of researchers in AWARE provide a way for me to discuss the web of contradictions that characterises the collective. This web is comprised of implicit and explicit inconsistencies that intersect, overlap, and come together on an analytical map of AWARE's formal and informal operations. When expressed as oppositional pairings, these contradictions and

inconsistencies can be understood within the context of three categorical types: contradictions in modes of identification, contradictions in modes of communication, and contradictions in modes of operation.

The qualities of each oppositional pairing and category point to larger issues in the operations of AWARE and other collectives whose complex local-level politics come about as a direct result of strict cultural and ideological politics. In the following section I will analyze and categorize contradictions in AWARE and then link these contradictions to an explanation of AWARE's ambivalent relationship to the distinction between structure and ideology.

Contradictions in modes of identification

Contradictions in modes of identification refer, first, to the incongruous ways in which individual members are understood and characterized by others in the collective and second, to the incongruous ways in which the collective as a whole is understood by members. In 'academic' meetings as well as in general discussion in the collective, members commonly draw a distinction between authenticity and pretence with respect to activists and grassroots activism. While the term authentic is not explicitly used, the valid or genuine character of some people or groups and the false character of other people and groups is implied through members' definitions of research, race, and grassroots activism.

Students, researchers or academics, for example, are understood by founding members in particular to lack an authentic motivation to do grassroots activism. This is because research itself is defined as self-serving, short term, and relegated to a population that is white and middle class. Comments made in ‘academic’ meetings as well as “research criteria” that emerged from discussion indicate that the participation of researchers is suspect for founding members of AWARE because it is assumed that researchers’ priorities are professional advancement and not the well-being of workers.

An additional element of the authentic vs. false distinction with regards to researchers is that the institutions that facilitate, support or fund research are defined as elitist, predominantly white, and reluctant to acknowledge racism. According to the anti-oppression principles with which founders have shaped AWARE, white people are defined as individuals whose privilege and social class have allowed them to be inherently oppressive to others who have not enjoyed the same privilege.

Events described in chapter four that deal with membership policy indicate that white members are perceived by members of colour as less authentic in terms of their relationship to understanding and relating to migrant workers. In making distinctions between members of colour that “represent the communities” of workers, or who “understand the oppression” of workers, such members are implicitly suggesting that white members cannot be real grassroots activists. White students who are members of the collective are thus doubly inauthentic. Perceptions of their intentions and feelings as students, and their privilege and experiences as white people, relegate these members to a position of distant removal from migrant workers.

The authentic vs. false distinction made by some members of the collective runs parallel to a distinction that the same members make between activist and student researcher. Because of the way research is defined in AWARE, it has been implied that the role of activist and researcher cannot coexist. What is especially contradictory about this particular distinction is that many of the members of AWARE who are the most active and involved in outreach trips, political action and organizational structuring are themselves students. This is because students often have the time, money and motivation to engage in activist work. Of the members mentioned in this ethnography, five are students, and two are planning on returning to university to continue their studies. Three current members and one former member have engaged in research projects to do with the SAWP, one member has expressed interest in doing so in the future, six members have written academic papers about the SAWP, and two members have formally published this work.

Despite the prevalence of members who are studying at various levels of university, AWARE's website indicates that the collective is not student-driven. Additionally, despite the fact that some of members who are currently the most active with the collective are white, AWARE's website states that the collective is made up primarily of people of colour. In emphasizing diversity of profession and race, members of AWARE are implicitly asserting that membership in AWARE is authentically grassroots.

Indeed it is not just the individual members who are meant to be authentic. The authenticity of the collective as a whole is in question when dealing with membership,

and particularly student researcher, issues. This is because AWARE's collective identity depends on the distinctions upheld between "us and them", or AWARE as a grassroots collective and other groups that are perceived as hierarchical, elitist and removed from what is happening "on the ground." The 'academic' meetings emphasize the fear of having white students represent AWARE to the workers and to other social justice actors.

The issue of a collective image brings up yet another contradiction in modes of identification, that of distinguishing between the individual self and the collective whole. The lack of clarity in separating the self from the whole lies in the fact that sometimes this distinction is made, and at other times it is not. Founding members want to operate as a unified entity, but also want to incorporate diversity and a range of opinions. A similar tension exists for individual members who want to promote the collective and its ideals, and yet feel that they cannot fully represent the range of members and perspectives in AWARE.

One problem with getting consent forms signed for my research project was that no individual person wanted to make a decision that they perceived would affect the collective. There was in fact no distinction made by individuals between their ability to participate individually, and the necessity of the collective as a whole to come to consensus on such participation. My own individuality, however, was emphasized at every moment of the 'academic' meetings. While I was a member of the collective, I did not have a voice, or even a physical presence, in the final decision-making process of the research question. Additionally, after the collective as a whole supposedly reached consensus, I was still required to approach people individually to ask them to participate.

Contradictions in modes of communication

Contradictions in modes of communication affect the exchange of information within the collective and complicate social matters accordingly. One particularly ironic incongruity is that organizing members of AWARE are constantly in communication and yet seldom communicate directly or effectively with one another. The internet as a main space of interaction for members of AWARE is perhaps the simplest and most direct explanation for this contradiction. Internet use occurs in isolation, demands access to specific technologies, and does not provide the clarity and immediacy of face-to-face interactions. Additionally, listserves are communal spaces of interaction where emails are sent to a group of people. The responsibility of responding to individual messages, requests, or queries is therefore diffused among people in that group.

In the initial stages of my involvement with the collective, I came to realize that a huge volume of emails and listserve communiqués were exchanged between members every day. Still, my attempts to join AWARE as well as my first introduction to the listserve elicited no responses. Later, requests for feedback on my research and consent forms also went unacknowledged. It became evident to me that silence in the collective was itself a response. The quality of that response, however, was never clear. Whether emails to the listserve are not read by individuals, or alternatively are read and then deleted, a failure to respond could signal consent, the absence of dissent, disagreement, agreement, or the decision by receivers that the email is not a priority. In the case of my

research, it was never clear to me what statement was being made by other members' failure to respond.

While there are inherent difficulties in interacting effectively over listserves and the internet, contradictions in modes of communication in AWARE are exacerbated by other factors that go beyond technical barriers. The clash of open discussions vs. closed discussions is one that was also prevalent in the research problem described above. While the collective is meant to be a safe space for honest communication, small networks of individuals, whose social linkages represent varying degrees of intensity, will always be in greater or more frequent communication with one another. In the case of the issue with note-taking, my absence from the discussion about my own participation in taking notes effectively closed my access to communication on this issue. Because I wasn't there, others could speculate over my response and arrive at conclusions about that participation that were partial or false.

Solemn interactions vs. joking interactions is another incongruity that permeates interactions between members of AWARE. It is equally appropriate and probable for members to engage with each other in a teasing or light manner as it is for them to engage in a serious manner. The situations in which different styles of communication are used, however, are rather unpredictable. When he came to retrieve me from the stairwell and bring me back into the academic meeting where others were waiting to tell me about their decision regarding my desire to start interviews, Julian joked that it had been decided that I should leave the collective forever. What was especially strange about this interaction was that Julian and I had never had a joking relationship even in very casual social

situations. The fact that he chose to communicate with me in an informal, but ambiguously joking way, however, at precisely the moment that the collective was engaged in a formal, and rather unfriendly, meeting about my research with them, demonstrates another one of the inconsistent ways in which communication between members is understood in AWARE.

Contradictions in modes of operation

Contradictions in modes of identification and communication invariably lead to contradictions in the operations of the collective. A major barrier to clear and fixed process in AWARE is the gap between thought and action. While members prioritize reflecting on process, there is often a problem with following through on that reflection and translating the ideas generated into change in the collective's policy or operations. As evidenced by the academic meetings, members of the collective felt it was important to spend a lot of time contemplating and eventually developing criteria and conditions for the participation of student researchers in the collective. In the end, however, those criteria and conditions were not formally recorded or even emailed to the people for whom they were created.

What this means is that the clash between thought and action in the collective represents the fact that, for members, thinking and acting are at once intrinsically related and mutually exclusive. AWARE is defined as an activist collective committed to winning real change and establishing itself as an example of anti-oppression principles. Much thought work and analysis go into the development of a collective that has this

kind of ideology and political action at its centre. That is why every collective operation in which members of AWARE engage is carefully weighed and discussed among members. It is implicit in patterned behaviour such as always meeting before outreach trips and political actions, and always debriefing afterward; in short every action requires constant thought and reflection.

The time and energy devoted to this thinking, however, negatively affects action in several ways. First, as volunteers, members of the collective only have so much time to devote to their activism. When thought-time predominates both inside and outside of meetings, action-time can suffer as a result. Second, constant thinking produces complicated and varied ideas. A singular and definitive action, however, requires direction from a singular and definitive thought. Third, the prevalence of thoughtful, diverse and sometimes argumentative discussion between members on any one action, can make it daunting, difficult or undesirable for one member to carry the thought forward and translate it into action.

The thought-action clash in AWARE can also be framed as an inconsistency between the collective's tight external structure and loose internal structure. This is to say that AWARE has firm boundaries with respect to how it represents itself to outsiders and soft or flexible boundaries with respect to how insiders relate to one another. The 'academic' meetings show that members of AWARE are extremely protective of the collective and its members, including migrant workers. When perceived as outsiders, student researchers and their work were scrutinized as other members wanted to make sure that these researchers' motives, processes and final products were in line with anti-

oppression principles. The same scrutiny of motives, process and final product, however, were not applied to the 'academic' meetings themselves or to members who were understood to be insiders in the collective when those meetings took place.

The insider vs. outsider distinction is applied to individuals as well as to groups. Some members of AWARE are thus in a difficult position when they have to distinguish themselves from others outside the collective, but often don't have a clear idea of their role or positioning within the collective. At the time that research was being questioned and interrogated within the collective, I was also involved in the planning of a conference that would bring together activists and advocates working on issues of migrant workers in Canada. Throughout the planning period, I opted to identify myself as a general volunteer and not a representative of AWARE, as I was not sure of my place within the collective. When it came to contentious issues on which AWARE had firm positions, however, I also felt the need, with encouragement from other members, to assert those positions and challenge the views of groups considered outsiders to the collective.

Conclusions, Viewing Contradictions in Light of the Relationship Between Ideology and Structure

Contradictions in modes of identification, communication and operation overlap in multiple and complex ways. The practical, everyday causes and effects of these contradictions, as well as their general, organizational causes and effects, are closely linked to one another. It is perhaps yet another contradiction that deep reflection in AWARE means that many members of the collective recognize that contradictory and

inconsistent behaviour often takes its toll on individuals and on the group. Members' protective sentiments and enthusiasm for certain principles, however, mean that this behaviour and the contradictions that inspire it are not fully acknowledged or dealt with in meaningful ways. Problems are discussed and analyzed, but never resolved. What is behind this lack of meaningful engagement with, and resolution of contradictions in the collective, is the failure to distinguish between the abstract and the material, or ideology and structure.

Contradictions in modes of identification, or in the ways in which members of the collective and the collective itself is defined, are significant to the structure of the AWARE because they represent a problem in gaining and maintaining human resources. In order to do the kinds of outreach and alliance-building that is important for political work, AWARE needs new members whom all current members feel can adequately represent the collective. As Gabriela says, "we are our own resources". The dedication that many members make to finding new recruits that are "authentic" and singularly committed to activism by the standards of the anti-oppression ideology, however, can often impede the capacity of the collective to have a large membership and engage in expensive or labour-intensive practical activities. While it is relatively easy to find white students who have time, energy, and desire to represent the collective, members of AWARE refuse to change the contradictory ways in which members are treated to accommodate this reality.

Most members of AWARE feel that the practical concerns of recruiting more members and doing more political work are meaningless if the composition of the

collective does not respond directly to anti-oppression principles. In other words, the structure of AWARE's membership and collective identification means nothing without the ideology. There is in fact no difference between members themselves and the ways that they identify, as the ideologically-based authenticity and distinctiveness of the collective are integral parts of its very existence.

Contradictions in modes of communication point to the ways in which means of communication that allow for democratic participation and no formal rules for interaction are favoured in AWARE. While the prevalence of indirect listserv communication and joking or informal relationships can arguably hinder the ability of the collective to make efficient choices and actions, there is resistance on the part of members of AWARE to change the quality or type of these interactions. Members believe that creating a point-person who could act with authority on matters of decision-making and the delegation of responsibility would run counter to the non-hierarchical principles according to which AWARE operates. In this way, establishing structured communication in the collective is understood by most members to be in direct conflict with maintaining ideological purity. As such, there is in fact no distinction between the fact that members communicate and the ways in which they communicate.

Contradictions in modes of operation perhaps provide the clearest examples of AWARE's reluctance to distinguish between structure and ideology. For members of the collective, doing and thinking are inseparable acts. In other words, creating a structure cannot be done without first thinking about and considering the ideology that will shape that structure. The insistence on consensus on the part of members makes the point that

democratic communication is key, but it also indicates that intense, and often unending, discussion is a necessary prerequisite for any action.

The contradiction between a tight structure vis-a-vis outsiders and a loose structure vis-a-vis insiders also alludes to the lack of a distinction between structure and ideology. AWARE's members assert that the collective as structurally different from other organizations is based on the fact that the ideology that informs that structure is unique and uniquely applied to practical matters. As they construct the collective in opposition to other organizations in this way, members actively erase any line between ideology and structure. Within the collective, the structure is loose because the assumption is that the ideology is shared and that rules enforcing structural differences between individuals are not needed.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS – TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Previous chapters have outlined the ways in which issues in ideology and structure play themselves out in AWARE. Members' commitments to "being political", and to asserting the diverse and egalitarian nature of the collective, are prime examples of the indistinct line between the principles upon which the collective is based, and the organizational arrangement according to which the collective operates. In fact, my separation of ideology and structure into two distinct chapters in this thesis is an analytical exercise only. In the social world of the collective these two aspects of organization are not distinguishable.

AWARE's founders have created a collective in which a cultural politics based on anti-oppression principles affect everything from members' emotions to the ways in which funds are garnered and managed. As the collective is set to have no formal hierarchy, policy, or division of labour, the ideology that permeates AWARE's cultural politics also creates and maintains its structure. This structure, inconsistent and difficult to understand by members and non-members alike, effectively sets the stage for a range of local-level tensions, conflicts and relational clashes. These clashes in turn perpetuate inconsistencies and a lack of clarity in the organizational processes of the collective. The integration of structure and ideology therefore affects, and is affected by, the various contradictions that permeate AWARE's operations.

To say that an organization or collective is characterized primarily by the contradictions that make it up, however, is not to say that these contradictions necessarily render the organization ineffective. The contradictory nature of AWARE is the prime symbol of its reflective and critical core. Local-level politics produced by this constant reflection and critique act to change the individual as it changes the social landscape. Members emerge from interactions within the collective with a critical and questioning nature that inspires them to constantly challenge their own assumptions and those of others. This tendency to not take definitions of race and power, in particular, for granted has the potential to serve social justice work in the long term as it encourages positive change and discourages maintaining the status quo.

The commitment to grassroots work by members of the collective is significant and constitutes an important aspect of AWARE's image in the broader context of the SAWP. While much of this thesis has addressed and outlined the difficult nature of activist work in this context, it is also my belief, after almost two years with the collective, that the instability of conflicts, diversity, and a failure to distinguish between structure and ideology does not just represent the consequences of failed organization, but also represents the useful effects and processes of a cultural politics and sustainability ideology that promotes the social and political inclusion of marginalized groups.

Sustainability, a popular buzzword in activist circles, is a concept that encompasses a set of related social justice projects. The "sustainability movement", understood as "a broader approach to social change...[which] embraces a wide variety of issues such as poverty, environmental destruction and deteriorating

communities”(Fairholm and Geggie, 1998:2), focuses on the enduring effects of structural or systemic problems.

Often concerned in some way with the environment, activists in the sustainability movement insist that addressing the root causes of local issues and challenging the large-scale forces that contribute to those issues, is the way to achieving a long-term solution to global problems such as inequality and the destruction of the physical environment. A sustainable perspective is one that looks beyond one isolated problem. It is broad in its understanding of the cause of the problem, the effect of the problem, and the time necessary to mediate or resolve the problem.

Principles of sustainability, therefore, contextualize the ways in which ideology is applied to activism in AWARE. While contradictions characterize much of the operations of the collective, it is possible to envision these contradictions as necessary elements of a long-term project to alter deeply rooted perceptions and ideas of communication, race and political engagement.

Change in the Long-term: Positioning Contradictions in a Broader Context

The meetings and interactions described above, as well as the analyses of contradictions, ideology and structure, speak to the validity and importance of understanding organization as process (Wolf 1990). Rather than “reify organizational results into the building blocks of hypostatized social architectures”(1990:591), Wolf notes that it is essential in organizational studies to envision organizations as “flows of action” that are difficult, conflict-ridden and dynamic. An approach that emphasizes

process in this way gets to the heart of how organization and organizational power, in particular, operate on individuals.

According to Wolf, however, the power generated by organizations does not just have an internal focus or effect. Outlining the processes of organization can reveal the contour and character of the ways in which organizations operate and exert influence in broader systems of power. As “networks of various sizes and shapes...possess very different organizational potentials”, an investigation of these networks paves the way for understanding the question of “how all these sets of people and instrumentalities can be aggregated, hooked together [and] articulated under different kinds of structural power...”(1990:591)

Analyzing the identification, communication and operational contradictions that make up AWARE is a way of describing the fluidity and dynamism of organization. Determining that these contradictions emanate from, and contribute to, a difficulty in distinguishing between ideology and structure expands upon such an analysis to point to the ways in which a given process can produce both deliberate and accidental results. What remains to be explored is the quality and articulation of organizational processes in the broader context of SAWP activism and advocacy. This section shows how the contradictions described throughout this thesis do not just represent what AWARE *does*, but also what AWARE *is*. As a fluid and informal organization, AWARE’s role and power in activist and advocacy circles is not damaged by, but in fact depends upon, its own dynamic inconsistencies and conflicts.

Wolf's call for research that treats organization as process ironically does not address the kinds of organizations that purposefully revolve around process, and in fact view their cultural politics and ideology as formative of organizational structures. These organizations, most often self-defined as collectives, stress values such as diversity, consensus and democratic communication. The 'academic' meetings described above indicate that the internal operations of one of these collectives can be complicated and riddled with conflict and contradiction. Rothschild-Whitt observes that "collectivist democracies" can be constrained by "individual difference" and also by "emotional intensity" that come as a result of differential abilities, knowledge and opinions (1986:65,70). Rothschild-Whitt also notes that such conflict should not be attributed to one person, but rather to the "structurally induced, inherent cost of participatory democracy". As their organizational process is based on a cultural politics that stresses intense interactions among a diverse group of people, collectives are sites where local-level politics should not be understood as a consequence of interactions, but should be acknowledged as an inherently constitutive feature of them.

The inherent respect for a range of ideas and approaches in collectivist democracies, combined with the zeal for enforcing and promoting this ideology, in fact facilitates the emergence of internal political relationships that are complex and multi-stranded. Networks of varying sizes and intensities develop within the collective as differing opinions bring some people together and pull others apart. Collapsing structure and ideology into one entity, as AWARE has done, makes the contradictions, conflicts, and inconsistencies that are always a feature of local-level politics especially prevalent in

everyday interactions. This is because the principles of the collective, as well as the ways in which people and activities are organized, encourage constant self-reflection and critique and discourage the development of formally fixed rules and regulations. Sometimes critique occurs openly in meetings or over the listserv, and other times it comes through in the more private conversations and interactions of members whose links are social and extend beyond the confines of the collective. However it happens, members' tendency to constantly challenge the structures of AWARE and of other actors operating in the context of the SAWP, serves to keep the collective unstable internally and externally.

While local-level politics and instability that emerge as a result of a particular cultural politics may impede the achievement of practical and immediate goals, the complexity and instability of various clusters, compartments and small networks can in fact have a positive effect on social and political life in a broader context. Bailey writes on factionalism in order to accentuate that it is less a sign of "immoral decay" than a feature of all politics that is "certainly frequent, [and] also normal...and that it is not a uniquely aberrant thing" (1977:21) He notes that factionalism as it plays out in the breakage of networks is part of a dynamic process that does not just reinstate the prevailing structure but rather can have the capacity to affect change (1977).

These observations are applicable to AWARE on two levels. Firstly, the note-taking and research issues described above, show how private discussions that occurred between members of the collective had the effect of bringing tensions internal to AWARE out into the open to be dealt with in a public meeting setting. Secondly, an

analysis that emphasizes AWARE's refusal to distinguish between ideology and structure points to the ways in which existing in opposition to other organizations is part of the collective's primary role in the context of SAWP activism and advocacy.

Bailey's definition of factionalism as an agent of change can be applied to the establishment of AWARE. As founding members split off from the labour movement to create what they hoped would be an ideologically pure collective based on principles of anti-oppression, the social balance of advocacy politics in the SAWP shifted just slightly. The collective, intent on contributing to the social and political inclusion of migrant agricultural workers, became a reminder to its own members as well as to members of other organizations of the need to continuously challenge power dynamics in advocacy work. Bailey might consider AWARE a clique, or proto-faction in this case, as their involvement in the political process began as defensive and ineffective pragmatically (1977:32). However, the development of AWARE as a watch-dog and grassroots symbol within the broader context of SAWP advocacy indicates that the political influence the collective exerts is in fact significant.

Conflicts, contradictions, and factionalism within AWARE and within the larger activist and advocacy circle surrounding migrant agricultural workers, can be understood as essential parts of the creation of long-term and broad-based social and political inclusion. Basok (2004) discusses the "social membership" of Mexican seasonal workers in Canada as a vital aspect of "this category" of migrants' ability to "acquire knowledge, learn skills, or secure support to claim the legal rights to which they are entitled."(2004:51) Basok notes that until recently Mexican workers, who are non-

citizens with limited legal entitlements in Canada, participated in community life only as producers and consumers (2004:55). With the emergence of non-state actors who advocate for SAWP participants, however, migrant workers are building their political capacities and amplifying their voices. Preibisch (2004) similarly observes the ways in which Mexican and Caribbean workers' "encuentros" or encounters with a variety of social and political organizations have the potential to affect long-term changes in workers' political rights.

While both of these scholars name and describe the range of actors whose social and political presence have changed the relationship of migrant workers to the communities in which they live, neither interrogates the different ways in which organizations approach and engage with migrant workers, and neither discuss the effects those engagements have on the interactions between various activist, labour, faith and community groups. This analysis suggests that the cultural politics, and indeed contradiction, that characterises AWARE makes the collective an important player within this community of activists, advocates, service workers, and researchers. AWARE, with its organizational structure that is focussed around grassroots activism and anti-oppression principles, advocates by virtue of its very existence for the participation of workers themselves in the struggle to improve conditions and political rights. While the collective may not be successful in making direct or immediate changes to the SAWP, the fact of AWARE's refusal to separate ideology and structure, and its insistence on continually trying to incorporate workers into the political process, accomplishes a more

long-term goal: that of keeping the ideal of sustainable grassroots engagement in the forefront of advocacy work.

The grassroots movement and the paradox of sustainability

Escobar (1992), in a continued critique of development discourse, paints a picture of the Third World emerging from under the cloak of this discourse “to open up in a more explicit manner the possibility for a difference regime of truth and perception within which a new practice of concern and action would be possible.”(Escobar, 1992:412) He identifies a broad set of social movements which are “contributing to redefine the nature of politics and social change.”

These grassroots movements, according to Escobar, have in common that the “aim of their struggle is not power per se...but the establishment of conditions (which usually include non-formal or non-conventional forms of power) in which they can have greater autonomy over the decisions that affect their lives.”(1992:421) The struggles “distrust organized politics and conventional political organizations”...and “politicize the rights of the poor”(1992:422)

Grassroots activism has been defined as actions taken by “direct stakeholders” who “are negotiating the adverse impacts of economic changes in their own homes, communities and lives” (Batliwala, 2002:395). The movement or “new mode” of activism is touted as a form that is redefining conventional politics (Escobar, 1992:422)

as it represents the political participation of marginalized groups, and creates hope for sustainability in activism.

The meetings and discussions portrayed in this thesis indicate that AWARE is part of the sustainability movement in that it advocates for long-term change to problems that have been caused by historical and structural inequalities. The anti-oppression principles according to which the collective operates are focussed on making an impact on social life and behaviour, not just for the present but for the future as well. Members of AWARE, as well as people working in organizations outside the collective, have certainly been educated in some way by the cultural politics of inclusion, diversity and rejection of formal hierarchy that AWARE promotes and exemplifies. Members of AWARE are continually invited to conference panels, university classes, workshops, meetings and committees to share their views on the SAWP as representatives of the grassroots and sustainability movement and perspective.

What the meetings and discussions portrayed in this thesis also indicate, however, is that there is a paradox in the goal for sustainability. While the principles of AWARE have long-term effects on the people who learn and practice it, the collective itself has difficulty reproducing an efficient and committed membership. Once again, the abstract and the material clash as the collective must confront the fact of being ideologically strong but structurally weak. The paradox of sustainability is that the message is clear but the means to get the message out is fragile and subject to a wide range of contradictions that emerge on local levels. The collective inspires and educates members within its boundaries, and advocates outside its boundaries, to conceive of the world

through the lens of anti-oppression principles in the long term. The disorderly nature of the collective's organizational structure, however, also discourages and alienates individuals from the activist process in the short term.

The true sustainability of AWARE and its principles remain to be seen. Currently, the extremely dedicated founders of AWARE can celebrate the fact that they have maintained the collective, and some aspect of its grassroots integrity, for over four years. AWARE has a reputation among advocates for participants in the SAWP as a diverse volunteer-run organization, committed to working closely with agricultural migrants and their families. This commitment is not to be taken lightly. As many organizations struggle to develop mechanisms for inclusivity and connection to "direct stakeholders", AWARE has the prioritizing of migrant workers' social and political inclusion built into the collective's ideology and organizational culture. Advocates for the rights of SAWP participants can only hope that the long-term sustainability approach will contribute in real terms to the political capacity-building of the thousands of men and women who labour in Canada's fields.

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