The Perils of Institutionalization in Neoliberal Times: Results of a National Survey of Canadian Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis Centres

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Abstract. This article reports on a national survey of Canadian rape crisis and sexual assault centres conducted in 2005. We situate our results in relation to feminist literature on the perils of institutionalization. We argue that institutionalization takes on new forms in the context of neoliberalism and we emphasize the resistance of centres to underfunding and to individualized victims' services policy frameworks. Despite significant pressures to redefine as social service delivery agencies, Canadian centres continue to engage in social change activism and define themselves as specifically feminist/pro-woman/equality-seeking organizations. Our respondents vary significantly in size and resources, yet nearly all emphasize the significant obstacle of inadequate funding and all continue to rely heavily on the unpaid work of (usually women) volunteers to do more with less.

Key Words: feminist organizations; sexual assault centres; rape; neoliberalism; institutionalization

Résumé. Cet article porte sur une enquête bilingue tenue en 2005 au niveau national sur les centres contre le viol au Canada. Nos résultats sont examinés dans le cadre de la littérature féministe sur les dangers de l'institutionnalisation. Nous

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maintenons que celle-ci présente de nouvelles formes dans le contexte du néo-libéralisme et nous mettons l'accent sur la résistance des centres au manque de fonds/ressources et à la politique d'encadrement des services individuels aux victimes. Malgré les pressions importantes pour redéfinir certaines agences comme des services sociaux, les centres canadiens continuent de promouvoir un activisme axé sur le changement social et de se définir comme des organismes spécifiquement égalitaires/féministes/pro-femme. Nos répondantes varient considérablement selon la taille et le budget. Toutefois, elles insistent presque toutes sur la problématique du manque de fonds et elles continuent de dépendre systématiquement du travail non rémunéré des volontaires (généralement des femmes) pour faire plus avec moins.

Mots clefs: organismes féministes; centres contre le viol; viol; néolibéralisme; institutionalisation

Asked to elaborate on the current challenges facing her sexual assault/rape crisis centre [SAC/RCC],[2] one respondent succinctly articulated the multiple obstacles (structural, political, financial) that were expressed over and over by participants in our national survey.

> Erosion of gender analysis…funding and restrictions — law and order agenda — victim services — poverty of women — erosion of women only space — too much work too much violence — too many women living in poverty.

SAC/RCCs constitute a vital network across Canada, providing support and advocacy for survivors, and crucially, engaging in social and political struggles against sexual violence. While there has been much feminist scholarship analyzing the implications of neoliberalism for Canadian feminist politics (Brodie 1995, 2002; Fudge and Cossman 2002), there has been little empirical investigation of women's movement organizations in this context. With the ascendance to power of a neoconservative federal government, firmly committed to a law and order agenda but

2. In 1983, the crime of rape (defined as "sexual intercourse by a male with a female who is not his wife without her consent") was abolished and replaced with a gender-neutral three-tier offence of "sexual assault" that distinguishes between varying degrees of violence used in commission of the crime and that criminalizes all nonconsensual sexual acts. This reform initiative was influenced by a visible and vocal feminist lobby seeking to refocus the legal determination of rape away from "sex" and towards "violence." While widely supported by feminist organizations, some feminist critics contended that gender neutrality would obscure the gendered relations of power manifested in sexual violence (Fudge 1989). Whether a centre labels itself a "sexual assault centre" or a "rape crisis centre" could be tied to these older debates. In general, however, it is our sense that there is now little political meaning attached to whether centres self-designate as "rape crisis" or "sexual assault" centres and that self-designation probably has more to do with the centre's age. Centres formed after 1983 almost universally self-designate as "sexual assault centres," while some older centres (for example, Vancouver Rape Relief) retain the label "rape crisis centre."

blind to the realities of gender-based violence, feminist scholars need investigate how and under what conditions Canadian antiviolence activists and frontline workers may continue their important struggles.

This study is one small step in this direction. In 2005, we undertook the very first national survey of Canadian SAC/RCCs. Initially, we embarked on this research with the specific goal of investigating how frontline workers and activists evaluate the efficacy of significant sexual assault law reforms that were enacted in the 1990s. Our questionnaire expanded beyond this initial focus on criminal justice reforms to include questions on the structure, activities, functions, and self-definitions of Canadian SAC/RCCs, as well as assessments of current challenges facing centres and the diverse strategies deployed to meet these challenges. It is this latter focus that we report in this article.

As there has so been little research on the politics and roles of Canadian SAC/RCCs (Masson 1998, 2000; Lakeman 2004:17–55; Du Mont and Parnis 2003), our findings must be seen as preliminary, suggestive, and providing the seeds of future research. Because the population and thus our sample is small, there was insufficient statistical power to conduct parametric statistics. Nonetheless, our results convey a rich picture of Canadian, community-based, antirape activism, confirming that SAC/RCCs continue to play vital roles in communities across Canada. Here we highlight two key findings. First, despite significant pressures to redefine as social service delivery agencies, SAC/RCCs engage in social change and social justice activism and often define themselves as specifically feminist/pro-woman/equality-seeking organizations. Second, while there is no typical SAC/RCC and our respondents vary significantly in size and resources, nearly all emphasize the significant obstacle of inadequate funding and all continue to rely heavily on the underpaid and unpaid work of (usually women) staff volunteers to do more with less. In effect, the results of this survey suggest that Canadian SAC/RCCs are negotiating and resisting technologies of neoliberal governance that, through funding restrictions and the elaboration of degendered and depoliticized policy frameworks, undermine the activist role of centres and privatize and individualize the problem of sexual violence.

CONTEXT AND EXISTING RESEARCH

Canadian community-based SAC/RCCs originated in the 1970s, with establishment of Vancouver Rape Relief in 1973 and the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre in 1974 (O'Connor 2005:28). At present, there are over

105 community-based centres.[3] Early SAC/RCCs emerged through grassroots organizing to provide support for raped women and to create social change (Matthews 1994; Bevacqua 2000:73–74; Campbell, Baker, and Mazurek 1998:458). Based upon radical feminist analysis, the emphasis of early centres was explicitly political (Crow 2000). Centres embraced women-centred organizational forms, such as collectives and peer support models; they engaged in direct activism, including *Take Back the Night* marches; and they saw the provision of support to survivors as a means of creating empowerment and political resistance (Campbell, Baker, and Mazurek 1998:459). The goals of the antirape movement were to challenge the structures that enable sexual violence and women's oppression and to provide havens where women would be believed and, through the process of mutual aid, strengthened both individually and collectively (Matthews 1994; Collins and Whalen 1989:61). In 1978, the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres [CASAC] was formed as the political voice of the Canadian antirape movement. CASAC is committed to an explicitly feminist analysis of sexual violence,[4] focusing on social change, consciousness-raising, direct action, ensuring women's access to justice and social services, and lobbying governments for policies to address sexual violence and oppression (Lakeman 2004:17).

While many early Canadian and American SAC/RCCs were strongly committed to grassroots organizing, most moved into more cooperative relationships with state actors as the range of their activities expanded, and as they sought and obtained governmental funding. In the 1970s and 1980s, at the federal level, the Secretary of State Women's Program provided operational funding to Canadian women's organizations for movement activities, and grassroots organizations, including SAC/RCCs,

3. It is very difficult to determine the exact number of community-based SAC/RCCs as centres relocate, close, and are sometimes reborn with different names. Statistics Canada's 2003 Victim Services Survey, attempting to measure all crime victims' uses of services on a single day, indicated that there were 105 SAC/RCCs (see Johnson 2006:46).

4. CASAC (nd) describes itself in the following terms and requires members to embrace a feminist analysis of sexual violence: "We are a Pan Canadian group of sexual assault centres who have come together to implement the legal, social and attitudinal changes necessary to prevent, and ultimately eradicate, rape and sexual assault. As feminists we recognize that violence against women is one of the strongest indicators of prevailing societal attitudes towards women. The intent of the Canadian Association is to act as a force for social change regarding violence against women at the individual, the institutional and the political level. Together we will provide a mechanism for communication, education and mobilization to alleviate the political and geographical isolation of centres in Canada. We will also support and encourage efforts to create a society in which all members of that society have the rights of social, economic and political equality."

benefited from this funding (Morrow, Hankinsky, and Varcoe 2004; Burt and Hardman 2002). In addition, as a manifestation of "state feminism," the federal government provided public funding for national feminist organizations such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women [NAC] and the National Association of Women and the Law [NAWL]. These organizations, alongside CASAC, contributed to feminist antiviolence activism as part of the broader agenda of the Canadian women's movement, raising consciousness about sexual violence and demanding state action on numerous fronts, including social policy and criminal law reform (Brodie 1995; Gotell 1997).

Local SAC/RCCs came to rely most extensively on provincial funding for their day-to-day activities, as most areas of centre activity fall within provincial areas of jurisdiction. Public funding of SAC/RCCs varies enormously from province to province. Some provinces, such as Ontario and Quebec, provide core funding to SAC/RCCs (Masson 2000; Rankin and Vickers 2001:44; OCRCC 2005). As the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC 2005) documents, Ontario provincial funding evolved from a small, grants-based program initiated in 1980, to core-funding allocations in 1992/1993, to a more recent shift funding the province's 34 centres under the Attorney General's Office for Victims of Crime. Other provinces such as Alberta, however, failed to provide sustainable funding for centres, relying instead on project or grant-based funding arrangements (Tutty et al. 2005:45). More research is necessary to explore both the nature and implications of diverse provincial funding arrangements, and some of our data on budgets and funding sources begin this examination.

In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist analysts began to investigate the paradoxical implications of closer relationships with the state (O'Sullivan 1978; Amir and Amir 1979; Collins and Whalen 1989). As Maria Bevacqua (2000:74) explains, centres had "located themselves within a movement to transform society and its institutions by advocating change in the gender relations that allow rape to occur." Yet, in order to be able to secure funding, attract volunteers, and enjoy a collegial relationship with law enforcement and hospital personnel, centres had to "collaborate with the very structures they sought to transform" (2000:74). Securing state funding, in particular, placed SAC/RCCs in a highly contradictory position. Government funding did enable centres to hire paid staff and to expand their support activities/activisms beyond crisis lines and direct activism. As described by the OCRCC, and underlined in this study, many centres developed and grew to employ staff and develop programs for crisis intervention; individual counseling and support; group counseling; advocacy; accompaniment to police, courts, and hospitals; public

education and prevention; and raising awareness about sexual violence in the struggle for women's equality (OCRCC 2005).

Even though centres clearly benefited from increased financial supports, many feminists were concerned that a reliance on state funding would lead to a deradicalization and depoliticization of the rape crisis centre movement, transforming explicitly feminist organizations into professionalized social service organizations (O'Sullivan 1978; Amir and Amir 1979; Collins and Whalen 1989). Most of the scholarly work documenting the dangers of institutionalization has been American. Nancy Matthews' (1994) important research studied the paradox of institutionalization by undertaking an analysis of six Los Angeles area rape crisis centres. This study confirmed a shift in orientation away from the political agenda of changing consciousness and towards a social service orientation, marked by reduced autonomy and the subordination of political goals to bureaucratic agendas, backed up by the ultimate threat of loss of funding (1994:149). Matthews highlights how, despite these trends, there continued to exist a "strong thread of resistance from the feminist political elements within the movement" (1994:150). Rebecca Campbell, Charlene Baker, and Terri Mazurek (1998) used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the structure and functions of 168 American rape crisis centres. Like Matthews' earlier study, this research confirmed that rape crisis centres, while not monolithic, have undergone significant changes since their birth. Charting such measures as the extent to which centres report engaging in social and political activism (public demonstrations and lobbying) and in prevention programming, this study also found that centres remain politically active, with older centres and centres with participatory decision-making structures more likely to be committed to a social change orientation.

In Canada, Diane Lamoureux's (1997) research on the shelter movement in Quebec emphasized the negative implications of institutionalization, with radicalism declining and professionalization and bureaucratization increasing as state funding grew. In a study of women's service groups including shelters, women's centres, and rape crisis centres in one Quebec region, Dominique Masson (1998, 2000) comes to conclusions that echo Matthews' (1994) and Campbell, Baker, and Mazurek's findings (1998). She contends that institutionalized relationships with the state can, but do not necessarily, undermine feminist goals; women's groups "played the state," influencing the transformation of the Quebec welfare state and sustaining opportunities for a gender equality agenda. Debates about institutionalization remain alive among Canadian activists as well. An article in *Herizons* marking the 30th anniversary of the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape re-

vealed the diversity of frontline workers' views on professionalization (O'Connor 2005). Some SAC/RCC representatives emphasized their resistance to the dilution of grassroots orientations, collective decision-making models and peer-counseling models; others stressed the benefits of professional training for counselors and argued that participatory decision-making can still occur when centres are forced to embrace hierarchical organizational models. By asking Canadian centres questions about their self-definitions, their participation in social change activities such as demonstrations and antirape education, and their organizational and decision-making models, our study contributes to the scholarly literature on institutionalization, charting the extent to which political commitments might remain in the face of increased reliance on state funding.

A distinct limitation of much scholarly analysis of institutionalization, however, is the way it isolates questions of state funding and bureaucratic ties from an analysis of changing state forms.[5] The erosion of the Canadian welfare state and its replacement with a neoliberal state form has had profound consequences for Canadian feminist organizing (Brodie 1995; Fudge and Cossman 2002). Beginning with the election of the Mulroney Conservatives and continuing under Liberal governments of the 1990s, massive budget cuts weakened social supports to women and decreased funding for antiviolence initiatives (Morrow, Hankivsky, and Varcoe 2004). These cuts coincided with a series of reductions and finally the elimination of the Secretary of State Women's Program that had provided operational funding for women's movement organizing (Jenson and Phillips 1996:123–124; Morrow, Hankivsky, and Varcoe 2004). For much of the late 1980s and 1990s, federal government actors mounted a steady rhetorical attack on the women's movement, delegitimizing feminist voices and dismantling programs designed to enhance women's equality (Brodie 2002). Provincial governments also embraced neoliberal agendas, reducing funding for women's centres and organizations and precipitating the elimination of state agencies devoted to women's equality (Harder 2003; Morrow, Hankivsky, and Varcoe 2004). In only a few years, Janine Brodie (2002:91) observes, gender and the equality agenda were virtually erased from public discourse. As she emphasizes, the ascendance of neoliberalism as a mode of governance represents a containment of political spaces. Within neoliberal technologies

5. Masson's (2000) work is unusual in this respect. Her explicit concern is to analyze the involvement of rape crisis centres (and women's shelters and women's centres) in the constitution of "post-welfare state" welfare arrangements in Quebec. Marina Morrow, Olena Hankivisky, and Colleen Varcoe (2004), in a broad analysis of violence against women in the context of neoliberalism, contend that the dismantling of the welfare state has undermined the feminist antiviolence movement. They do not specifically analyze the implications for SAC/RCCs.

of governance, a glorification of individual self-help and responsibility is combined with the renunciation of the state's role in reducing inequalities, leading to a fundamental delegitimization of claims-making on the basis of social disadvantage (Brodie 2007).

If empirical research on rape crisis centres has ignored the critical implications of this transition, feminist analyses of neoliberalism have been largely inattentive to its complex implications for rape crisis centres and antirape activism. As Lise Gotell (2007:179) has argued, at a time when federal funding of women's groups was being rapidly withdrawn and when national feminist organizations like NAC were being pushed to the margins of political influence, "violence against women" briefly emerged as a window for inserting feminist demands into the political agenda. In the period after the Montreal Massacre,[6] there was a flurry of government attention to the problem of violence against women. The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women was initiated as a quasi-royal commission in 1991 and some suggest that during this period, the policy problem of "violence against women" gained wider currency (Levan 1996). Despite rhetorical attention to gendered violence, it is also evident that state agendas shifted increasingly towards research and criminalization, at the expense of supports for women and grassroots antiviolence work (Gotell 2007). A significant dimension of the transformation in relations of governance that has marked the past two decades of Canadian politics is the enhancement of the state's coercive powers, occurring in tandem with the erosion of social welfare (Gotell 2007).

For the Canadian antirape movement, this context provided both political opportunities and constraints. Spearheaded by national organizations like the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund and CASAC, and involving frontline workers, antiviolence activists participated in innovative consultations with the federal government on sexual violence, culminating in significant *Criminal Code* reforms in 1992 and 1997 (McIntyre 2002; Gotell 2007).[7] The law reforms that emerged out of these processes stand as significant feminist achievements in a period otherwise characterized by the delegitimization of the women's movement. In 1992, after the Supreme Court struck down restrictions on sexual his-

6. On December 6, 1989, Marc Lepine entered an engineering building at the University of Montreal, ordered the men to leave, and shot fourteen young women to death, screaming that they were a "bunch of feminists." He then killed himself. In a note, he described the murders as a political act and blamed feminism for ruining his life. In 1991, the federal government established December 6th as an annual National Day of Remembrance on Violence Against Women. For analysis of the policy impact of the Montreal Massacre, see Gotell (1997).

7. For a detailed analysis of these reforms, see Gotell (2007) and McIntyre (2002).

tory evidence as a violation of defendants' constitutional legal rights, the federal government enacted new "rape shield provisions." Largely due to feminist influence, this reform initiative also clarified the law of consent in a manner intended to reduce the possible uses of sexual history evidence. For the first time, a statutory definition of consent as voluntary agreement was embedded in the *Criminal Code*; situations of forced submission that do not constitute consent were enumerated; and finally, the defense of mistaken belief was limited by a new requirement that defendants must have taken "reasonable steps" to ensure consent. Together these provisions moved Canadian law towards an affirmative consent standard (Gotell 2007). In 1997, the government again responded to feminist pressures with legislation addressing the widespread defense tactic of seeking complainants' personal records; this reform created a legislative regime regulating and restricting access to therapeutic, medical, and other private records (Gotell 2007). Widely seen as feminist victories, these reforms were intended to improve the experience of sexual assault complainants within the criminal justice system, to reduce the circulation of rape myths in law, and to increase police reporting rates. At the same time, however, these reforms exemplify how governmental agendas increasingly contained sexual violence within a framework of criminal law in a manner that reinforced broader trends towards the individualization of social responsibility; criminal law frames sexual assault as a discrete and isolated incident — a violent sexual incident and a matter of individual deviance (Pitch 1990:107).

While defending the important objective of justice for women who experience sexual violation, the agenda advanced by feminist antirape activists extended far beyond criminal law reform and enhanced protections for complainants. During government consultations held during the 1990s, feminist antiviolence activists and front line SAC/RCC workers repeatedly challenged the narrow focus on the criminal justice system, framed sexualized coercion as a systemic problem deeply rooted in gendered and racialized inequalities, and demanded state action on a number of fronts, including social policy, public education, and crucially, the provision of a stable funding base for independent, women-controlled, frontline work and activism (McIntyre 2002).[8] Advocates used these consultations to contest the gendered implications of neoliberalism, including the hollowing out of the social welfare state, the defunding of feminist activism, and intensified gender, race, and class disadvantage. This broad agenda, tying sexual violence to social disadvantage and demanding a broad range of social policy interventions, was effectively

8. This position is articulated in CASAC (1993).

repressed through a myopic governmental emphasis on criminal law reform.

Today, the recognition of sexual assault as a policy problem, even through the limited and individualized lens of criminal law, has all but disappeared (Gotell 2007). In policy rhetoric, "violence against women" has been reframed through a new degendered discourse of "victims' issues." At the federal level, the ascendance of a victims' rights model as the predominant policy framework was established with the "Policy Centre for Victims Issues," an office within the Department of Justice charged with "raising awareness of the needs of victims of crime" and policy development to address these needs (Lakeman 2004:127). With the election of the Harper Conservatives, erasure of sexual violence as a social problem is evident. While embracing an explicit right-wing "law and order" agenda, the gendered dimensions of "crime" have disappeared from federal rhetoric. At the provincial level, the erasure of sexualized violence through the embrace of degendered victims' rights policy frameworks defines a radically altered context for SAC/RCCs. Provincial funding arrangements have become contingent on the provision of services, such as counseling and court accompaniment (Canada, Policy Centre for Victims Issues 2003; Lakeman 2004:127). Provinces have devoted increased funding for gender-neutral victims' services that are tied to police reporting, while funding for SAC/RCCs, especially as they provide support for women who do not seek criminal justice interventions, has been limited. The OCRCC (2005) captures the illogicality of funding through victims' services portfolios in Ontario:

> … 86% of government funding is being spent on bureaucracy and the 6% of women who use the criminal system and less than 14% is being spent on the majority (94%) who have experienced sexual violence.

Collectively, these shifts establish a radically altered terrain for feminist antirape activism. The disappearing act embedded within these interrelated moves does not signal a victory over sexualized violence, merely its disappearance as an object of policy and public discourse. Decreased supports for women's movement organizing, the delegitimization of feminist voices, the containment of sexual assault within the framework of criminal law, and the evacuation of the policy field signified by "violence against women" must be viewed within and alongside the ascendance of neoliberal governance. Once constituted a "social problem" and a legitimate object of government intervention, sexual violence has been reprivatized and individualized, redefined through degendered discourses of abstract risk and individuated criminal responsibility. State responsibility for addressing sexualized violence has been increasingly

disavowed and, in this context, community-based SAC/RCCs are being reconfigured as agencies providing depoliticized supports, enabling "clients" to overcome the effects of random violence.

Much previous research on feminist antirape organizing has explored the implications of institutionalization in a context of welfarist regimes characterized by increasing funding and the embrace of institutionalized policy responses to sexual violence (Matthews 2004:150–151). Our survey results show how Canadian SAC/RCCs negotiate the paradoxes of institutionalization in a neoliberal environment marked by restricted funding and the ascendance of a degendered victims' services model.

Despite the disappearance of sexual violence from policy rhetoric and public discourse, sexual assault shows no signs of diminishing. In 1993, Statistics Canada's Violence Against Women Survey found that 39% of Canadian women reported having experienced sexual assault since the age of 16 (Johnson 2006:24). In 2005, there were more than 23,000 reported cases of sexual assault (Gannon 2006:15); yet police reporting rates remain the lowest of any violent crime at only 8% (Johnson 2006:26), suggesting the continuation of extremely high overall incidence rates. Given the persistence of sexual violence, we hypothesized that sexual assault centres would struggle to continue to provide much needed support and advocacy. Thus, despite funding constraints, we anticipated that instead of reducing services, SAC/RCCs would find innovative ways of continuing their work, and we asked them to describe these strategies. In addition, we asked centres a series of open-ended questions about the challenges they face and about the kinds of government policies that would facilitate their important work. Through such questions, this survey seeks to capture centres' perceptions of the current political context and to reveal the strategies they deploy to manage and sometimes resist.

The Survey

In 2002, we asked CASAC to participate in a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funded research project on "Canadian Sexual Assault Law and the Contested Boundaries of Consent." We attended CASAC's national conference and met with Lee Lakeman, a long-term antirape and feminist activist, and regional representative from British Columbia. We received permission to use the CASAC membership list for a survey of Canadian SAC/RCCs. To ensure inclusion of the widest range of centres and the participation of centres not affiliated with CASAC, we also conducted a number of web searches to locate and

identify other community-based SAC/RCCs. These two strategies produced the names and addresses of 135 centres.[9]

In constructing the mail-out questionnaire that is the basis for this survey, we undertook a series of paid consultations with Lakeman and with Tamara Gorin of Vancouver Rape Relief. A member of our research team also spent a day at Vancouver Rape Relief to gain a sense of day-to-day work in a Canadian, community-based, and explicitly feminist SAC/RCC; another member used her experience as a volunteer and paid worker in a campus SAC/RCC to inform the development of our survey. Lakeman consulted with members of the CASAC national executive about the proposed survey and its content. As underlined by countless "violence against women" researchers, collaborations with activists and frontline workers are more likely to identify important research questions, find answers that are useful in the field, and foster a social change orientation in research. As Linda Williams (2004) has emphasized, successful collaborations can facilitate links between activism and research and ensure that activism and scholarship work in collaboration rather than in separate spheres. Through our consultations with Lakeman and Gorin, a detailed questionnaire combining qualitative and quantitative measures was developed and revised between 2002 and late 2004. The final survey was divided into several sections including: background information; funding; centre structure; experiences of those using services; suggestions for change; and a number of sections dealing with the impact of sexual assault law reforms that we will analyze in a subsequent article. To compensate for the time and energy involved in completing this long questionnaire, we offered centres a $100 honorarium for survey completion.

A mail-out was conducted in January 2005. Several packets were returned because centres had closed or changed addresses; others had multiple mailing addresses. We searched for new addresses and deleted duplicates, bringing our final mail-out to 115 centres. We sent two mailings, followed up with telephone calls and emails, for a final sample of 53 completed questionnaires (46% response rate). We consider this a significant return given the limited resources of many centres and the time required to complete our extensive survey. Centres from all provinces (except Prince Edward Island),[10] located in both urban and rural areas, are represented in this survey. SAC/RCCs who responded varied enormous-

9. Our focus was on self-identified community-based SAC/RCCs. We did not include hospital-based rape crisis units, shelters, transition houses, and women's centres, even though we know that these sites do antirape and sexual assault work.

10. Several centres contacted through telephone follow-up were supportive of the survey, but did not have sufficient time/personnel to complete the questionnaire.

ly, reporting between 0 and 17 paid employees (M=5.9, SD=4.11), between 0 and 455 volunteers (M=39.23, SD=70.67), and annual budgets between $20,000 to $1,350,000 (M=$349,516, SD=$265,521).[11] These large variations were in part due to the fact that some SAC/RCCs are part of multiservice organizations, including roles and activities other than those related exclusively to the sexual assault centre (such as operating a women's shelter or a health clinic). Whether relatively small, or relatively large, however, most centres rely heavily on volunteer labour. The emphasis on volunteer labour enables those who wish to contribute to the struggle against sexual assault to participate as activists, fundraisers, peer counselors, and educators. Using volunteer workers also allows SAC/RCCs to continue to do crucial work in communities across Canada in the face of budget constraints. But it is also clear that at a societal level, the systemic social problem of sexual violence continues to be relegated to the unpaid and underpaid work of women (McMillan 2004). This reliance on the voluntary labour of women exemplifies the individualizing and decentralizing and thrust of neoliberal governance. As Brodie (2007:103) argues, individualization is a "dividing practice" that "places steeply rising demands on people" (in this case, women volunteers in centres), to generate responses to what are, in effect, "collective social problems."

COMMITMENT TO FEMINIST POLITICS AND TO A SOCIAL CHANGE ORIENTATION

As we have emphasized, substantial federal cuts to women's organizations have resulted from a shift towards funding SAC/RCCs through victims' services regimes, and a political climate that prefers market/privatized solutions over social justice interventions. Several researchers have argued that reliance on state funding, pressures to "professionalize" services, and the need to attract charitable donations combine to push SAC/RCCs away from specifically feminist and social change orientations, towards a depoliticized service provision model (Matthews 1994; Campbell, Baker, and Mazurek 1998). In the current political context, as feminist actors and organizations are politically marginalized and reconstructed as "unrepresentative" special interests (Brodie 1995), there could be an increasing impetus to disavow feminist self-definitions in order to secure and maintain declining levels of public and private funding

11. One centre reported an annual budget of $5,426,000. We removed this from the analysis because it included a women's shelter in addition to a sexual assault centre.

and community support. Given this climate, we were interested in how Canadian SAC/RCCs define themselves and see their roles.

We asked respondents a series of questions about how they "primarily" describe themselves to the community, to those who seek assistance, and to funders, as well as how staff and volunteers see their work and what people expect when they contact centres. Against pressures to reconfigure themselves as depoliticized victim assistance agencies, Canadian centres continued to describe themselves as "feminist," "pro-woman," or "equality-seeking," thereby signaling their adherence to a politics of social change.[12]

Over 50% of centres described themselves to the community as primarily "feminist" (27, 51%) or have workers who identify as "feminist" (28, 53%) respectively). "Primarily feminist" was how 23 (43%) centres

Table 1: Description of Centres as Feminist

	Older centres (%) (founded in 1985 or earlier)	*Younger centres (%) (founded after 1985)*
To the community	14 (52)	13 (48)
How workers and volunteers see their work	15 (54)	13 (48)
To those who seek assistance	14 (52)	9 (39)
To funders	13 (48)	8 (38)

described themselves to their clients, and 21 (40%) described themselves to funding agencies. In contrast, only 10 (19%) centres said that their clients expect the centres to be feminist organizations. Longer established centres (those beginning in 1985 or earlier)[13] that described themselves as feminist were more consistent in using this description to funders and to those who seek assistance compared to younger centres.

Between 13 (25%) and 9 (17%) respondents described themselves or view their work as primarily "equality-seeking" while between 10 (19%) and 6 (11%) described themselves as primarily "pro-woman." Between 6 (11%) and 17 (32%) of centres at least sometimes identified as other than "feminist," "pro-woman," or "equality-seeking." Of these, many described themselves in terms that are consistent with "feminist," "pro-woman," or "equality-seeking" orientations. Descriptions provided included: "fighting sexual assault"; "fighting sexual assault and patriarchy"; "social/women's justice"; and "defending the rights of victims of sexual assault."

12. Lesley McMillan's (2004:130) study of the motivations of 359 volunteers in rape crisis centres and refuges in the UK and Sweden found that most (97%) identified as feminist. Our findings underline this at an organizational, rather than an individual level.

13. As Campbell, Baker, and Mazurek (1998:461) found, older centres, formed in the heyday of the feminist antirape movement, tend to place more institutional value on social justice activism than those which emerged in a more conservative era of US politics.

The development of community-based, grassroots struggles against sexual violence, including the development of a cross-Canada network of SAC/RCCs, played a formative role in second-wave women's movement activism (Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail 1988:192–193). Historians Constance Backhouse and David Flaherty (1992) contend that the springing up of community-based rape crisis centres and battered women's shelters out of the first consciousness-raising groups in Canada heralded the coming of age of the contemporary feminist movement. Feminism was quite clearly central to the politics and self-definitions of early Canadian SAC/RCCs. Our results could suggest that contemporary centres are moving away from an explicitly feminist orientation; we believe that a more nuanced interpretation is required. While half of the centres in our sample continued to define as feminist, other self-definitions, such as "pro-woman" or "equality-seeking" also gesture towards a social justice orientation, suggesting that centres see themselves engaged in struggles to transform the conditions that produce sexual violence. None of the centres responding to our survey described themselves as primarily "counseling" or "victim service" agencies, self-definitions that would be more consistent with ascendant degendered and individualized discourses and policy frameworks. Many centres choosing to describe themselves as "other" defined their orientation in ways that firmly indicate feminist politics. One centre, for example, described itself as being engaged in a "feminist fight against sexual assault." Another centre, identifying itself as "other" provided the following elaboration of how workers and volunteers see their work:

> The fight against sexual assault, against all forms of violence perpetrated against women, to improve the condition and lives of women, and most certainly, for methods of social change in relation to gender equality.

Such responses suggest that by choosing "other," some centres sought to specify what feminism means in the context of their work or the politics of their workers and volunteers, rather than to disavow feminist self-definitions.

It is also possible that choosing not to self-identify as feminist is linked to a rejection of particular positions and/or the conflation of feminism with radical feminist practices. For a few survey respondents, the label "feminist" seemed to be associated with adherence to women-only politics and they distinguished their own practices by choosing "other" and qualifying their positions as "survivor-focus[sed]" or "feminist — but that does not mean 'born female only.'" Among the centres responding to our survey, 26 (50%) reported having formal women-only volunteer/staffing policies, 2 (4%) reported having informal women-

only staffing/volunteer policies, and 15 (28%) reported providing support and assistance exclusively to women/girl survivors. The women-only and radical feminist-influenced politics of rape crisis centre activism has been the subject of intense controversy in recent years. The high profile human rights challenge to Vancouver Rape Relief's women-only policies has drawn attention to the questions of whether SAC/RCC activism should be inclusive of transgendered people and men and whether centres should have the right to define their politics and membership. Vancouver Rape Relief's decision to exclude a transgendered woman from volunteer training has been condemned as essentialist, biologist, and exclusionary by those who advance poststructural and third-wave feminist positions committed to the inclusion of all genders within feminism and to the deconstruction of the rigid disciplining of sex and gender categories (Chambers 2008; Elliot 2004). In response, Vancouver Rape Relief has strongly defended women-only organizing as both necessary and defensible in a context of pervasive male violence against women (Lakeman 2006). In 2005, the British Columbia Court of Appeal found that while Vancouver Rape Relief acted in a discriminatory manner by excluding Kimberly Nixon from volunteer training, the centre was protected by a provision of the human rights code exempting non-profit groups whose objective is the promotion of an identifiable group's interests (for a discussion, see Chambers 2008). This decision recognizes the autonomy of SAC/RCCs in determining their membership and politics. A number of our respondents reporting women-only policies (4/26, 15%) indicated that trans-inclusion was actively being debated within their centres, suggesting the presence of internal "third wave" feminist-inspired challenges and the possible evolution of antirape activism away from radical feminist, women-only models.

Integral to the politics of early antirape organizing was a commitment to democratic feminist practices through collective organizational structures. When founded by feminists in the 1970s, many SAC/RCCs embraced collective decision-making structures designed to minimize hierarchies, enable participatory decision-making, and empower collective members (Pittman, Burt, and Gornick 1984). Underlying alternative organizational structures were beliefs in egalitarianism and a commitment to the idea that feminist processes empowering group members were essential to build feminist movements and politics. Many Canadian SAC/RCCs have evolved to include paid staff, professional counselors, and more hierarchical organizational structures (such as boards of directors and executive directors) (O'Connor 2005); these developments are clearly linked with funder demands for institutional structures ensuring accountability (Campbell, Baker, and Mazurek 1998:458). Against pres-

sures to adopt hierarchical decision-making structures, continued adherence to participatory decision-making structures minimizing power differentials between those with various forms of involvement in a SAC/RCC (for example, as paid workers, volunteers, or board members), can be seen as indication of a commitment to feminist organizing principles.

Thirty of the fifty-three centre respondents (57%) began as collectives, and nineteen (36%) continue to operate with these politics of governance. Centres belonging to CASAC are slightly more likely to have begun as a collective (X^2 (1,46)=4.278, p<.05) and to continue to operate as a collective (X^2 (1,47)=4.748, p<.05). Older centres (those beginning in 1985 or earlier) were also more likely to continue to operate collectively (X^2 (1,52)=4.544, p<.05). Although most respondents no longer adhere to collective organizational structures, some still use participatory strategies, including consensus decision-making. As one centre described its decision-making practices, "[d]espite the fact that we do not operate as a collective, we put much emphasis on coming to a consensus in our decision-making." Other centres specifically described their structures as "modified collectives": "We operate as a 'modified collective' because we have 3 paid staff members. However *all* decisions are made by consensus and are board-directed" (emphasis in original).

Canadian SAC/RCCs also view their roles as extending beyond the provision of services to victims. Campbell, Baker, and Mazurek (1998:460) see activities that move beyond direct service, including engaging in community-level strategies (such as focusing on the prevention and elimination of sexual assault, organizing public demonstrations, and engaging in political lobbying) as indicators of a social change orientation. We asked centres a number of questions meant to capture the extent to which they engage in social and political activism, alongside direct service provision. In addition to providing "services" to those who have experienced sexual assault, (advocacy, counseling, police and court

Table 2: Frequency of Activities

Activities	*Number of centres that provide it (%)*
Counseling	52 (98)
Advocacy	51 (96)
Public education	50 (94)
Police and court accompaniment	47 (89)
Referrals	47 (89)
Producing public education materials and programs	46 (87)
Emergency intervention	43 (81)
Organizing for political/social change	36 (68)
Keeping records for clients	35 (66)

accompaniment, referrals, emergency intervention, keeping records for clients), our results confirm that Canadian centres also engage in activities to raise awareness about sexual assault and prevention (public education, producing public education materials, and programs).

Of course, it is not always easy define a line between service provision and social change. Through helping those who have experienced sexual violence and raising public awareness, direct service creates social change (Campbell, Baker, and Mazurek 1998:459). A large majority of centres (68%) also report participating in strategies to address sexism and the structures that contribute to sexual violence (organizing for social and political change; see Table 2). In addition, most Canadian centres engage in direct political activism. Centres were asked if their community had a "Take Back the Night March," if their community had "International Women's Day" activities, and if their centre participated in these forms of feminist protest and activism. Forty-one (77%) centres reported that their communities have a "Take Back the Night" march and forty-five (85%) reported that their community has "International Women's Day" activities. Forty-five (89%) centres reported participating in these activities. Moreover, seventeen (32%) respondents are members of CASAC, a national network of antirape organizations embracing a specifically feminist analysis of sexual violence as a practice of domination that is rooted in women's disadvantage. CASAC works politically to "amplify the voice of anti-violence workers" and has been involved in multiple campaigns to demand policies that would address the conditions that render women vulnerable to violence, including poverty and racism, to improve legal treatment of women who are victims of sexual violence and to ensure governmental support for independent community-based SAC/RCCs (Lakeman 2004:39).

In sum, our data indicates that despite significant pressures to redefine as victims' service agencies, Canadian SAC/RCCs continue to see themselves as agents of social change; many embrace feminist principles of organizing, and most engage in diverse forms of social/political/feminist activism to raise awareness about sexual violence and fight for its elimination. There is no doubt that SAC/RCCs have undergone significant changes since the first Canadian centres emerged in the 1970s. Many centres have incorporated more hierarchical structures and there are debates about the continued necessity of women-only organizing. Yet our results clearly suggest that most SAC/RCCs still adhere to a political analysis of sexual violence and resist the reconstruction of centres as depoliticized providers of services to victims.

BUDGETARY PRESSURES: NEGOTIATING INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN NEOLIBERAL TIMES

Canadian SAC/RCCs play crucial roles in raising awareness of sexual violence and as agents of antiviolence activism. Given the enduring pervasiveness of sexual assault in the lives of Canadian women and girls, centres also play an enormously important social role in counseling, assisting, and supporting those who experience sexual violence. The impact of SAC/RCCs is reflected in their own accounting of numbers of people contacting and making use of centre services and supports. Fifty (94%) centres responding to this survey kept records of the number of people who access their programs and services. Individual centres reported up to 882 walk-ins, over 10,000 people attending public education campaigns and serving over 23,000 crisis lines calls over a one-year period. According to the vast majority of survey respondents, however, reduced or stagnant levels of government funding for community-based and feminist organizations impedes this important and relentless work. The shift towards project-specific funding, and the funding of SAC/RCCs through gender-neutral victims' services frameworks, have exacerbated the budgetary pressures faced by centres and reduced their autonomy. In effect, despite the resistant politics described above, negotiating institutionalization in neoliberal times poses serious challenges for the important work of Canadian SAC/RCCs.

We asked centres what their budgets had been the previous complete fiscal year and what percentage of funds had come from the following sources: municipal government; gaming/lotteries through provincial government; other provincial government funds; federal government; nonprofit (e.g. United Way); private sector; independent centre fundraising. Budgets for the centres completing our questionnaire ranged from $20,000 to $5,426,000. The larger budgets included roles and activities other than those related exclusively to the SAC/RCC (operating a women's shelter or health centre, for example). Because centre activities fall mainly within provincial areas of jurisdiction, most centres obtain the majority of their funding from provincial governments. Thirty-eight centres (72%) reported that more than 50% of their funding was from provincial governments. Three centres (6%) received the majority of their funding from municipal governments. Overall, there was limited national funding support for SAC/RCCs, with only three centres (6%) receiving more than 20% of their funds from federal sources. Finally, all centres received less than 20% of funding from the private sector. Twenty-three centres (43%) reported that their budgets had increased in the past fiscal year, while 14 centres (26%) said their budgets had stayed

the same and 15 (28%) reported decreases in funding. Of those whose budget remained the same, some still reported that services were being scaled back because of increased costs. Some centres reported both budget and deficit increases.

Underfunding and budgetary constraints were serious concerns expressed by nearly all respondents and we asked whether centres had experienced pressure to cut services, whether they had reorganized in an effort to continue to provide programming, whether they had reduced paid staff or operating costs: 42% of respondents had experienced pressure to cut services; 40% had reorganized or restructured; 20% had cut or reduced paid staff; and 19% had reduced operating costs. Significantly, even centres facing cuts and budgetary constraints reported being able to continue some of their programs based on worker/volunteer commitment and community support.

Many respondents elaborated on the specific and serious implications of budget constraints. A number of centres described reductions in core services, affecting their capacity to respond to survivors with even essential services, such as crisis lines or counseling: "We have had to reduce counseling staff and 24-hour crisis response services"; "[We have] changed [reduced] our hours of operation"; "We went from providing 24/7 crisis service to 3 days/week office hours for counseling and support groups." Several centres also had to cut staff because of budgetary shortfalls. One respondent described how budgetary pressures had drastically reduced staffing resources at her centre. For ten years, her centre had operated with a staff complement of "one full time and ten part-time (on call) staff"; at the time she completed her questionnaire, however, there was only "one part time, 20 hrs/week staff, plus one group facilitator 3–4 hours per week." Centres have responded creatively in the face of such pressures; as one respondent insisted, "the same work still needs to be done." Some described "amalgamat[ing] programs" and "invest[ing] in fundraising." Canadian RCC/SACs rely heavily on volunteer workers to meet the needs of survivors and engage in prevention programming and social change activism. Centres responding to questions about the impact of budgetary pressures emphasized that activities formerly the responsibility of paid staff were increasingly being shifted onto unpaid, volunteer workers: "Accompaniment to police station, hospital, court is often done by volunteers because of lack of resources."

Not surprisingly, budgetary constraints have had tangible and negative consequences for paid workers and volunteers. Many centres emphasized that the struggle to provide services and engage in social change activism in an atmosphere of budgetary constraint and uncertainty has required paid staff to take on punishing workloads without wage in-

creases. One respondent described how her centre has faced "increased requests for service"; despite this, paid staff at her centre "have had no salary increase in 14 years." The implications of intensified workloads were described by one respondent in the following terms:

> [We have] 2 full-time staff that are required to train, evaluate and supervise 50+ volunteers, take on a client case load, adhere to administrative duties, conduct trainings for service providers across the province, provide public education, sit on committees within the agency and externally etc. which makes less time for organizing for political change.

Another centre highlighted the particular implications of workload intensification in a rural context:

> [We have] 3 paid staff serving 96,000 people over a 7000 square km. county with no public transportation. High turnover rates for volunteers, paid work takes priority. Burn out of long-term staff — 10+ years in the field of sexual violence with little change and no pay increase.

These responses illustrate how funding constraints inhibit the political and support work of SAC/RCCs, producing worker exhaustion and "burnout." In effect, SAC/RCC workers, both paid and unpaid, have mediated the gap between stagnant and inadequate budgets and unending demands for survivor support, prevention work, and advocacy.

Shifting funding priorities have exacerbated pressures on staff and volunteers, affected planning, and inhibited centre autonomy. Many respondents were concerned that available funding sources were unstable, episodic, project-specific, and driven more by funder demands than by the needs of centres. As one centre emphasized, "[a]ccessing funds for 'new and innovative' projects is easy for our organization — the difficulty is to maintain core funding for proven effective programs." The unreliability of project-based funding has meant devoting time and resources to fundraising and administration. We asked centres to assess the percentage of time they spent on activism/direct service, fundraising, and administration in 1998 and 2003. Overall SAC/RCCs spent less time on activism and direct service in 2003 than they did in 1998 and slightly more time on fundraising, administration, and report writing. Fourteen centres (27%) reported a decrease in the amount of time they spend on direct client service and activism over the five-year period while eight centres (15.4%) reported an increase in the time spent on administration and report writing over the same time period. While time spent fundraising remained relatively constant over this period, many centres highlighted how increased reliance on project-based funding drains centre resources; as described by one respondent, "[project funding] is not sus-

tainable and is very energy intensive and there is no guarantee you will get the money." Others emphasized how the demands of grant writing and grant administration have meant that "time is taken away from client services." Efforts to fund core activities through project-based grants also means that centres must constantly reconfigure their activities to respond to the emphases of funding programs. One centre, for example, underlined "the challenge" of trying to "figure out how we will keep offering the services we do with a different configuration of money." From the perspective of centres completing this survey, the shift towards project-based funding has drained centre resources, inhibited long-term planning, and limited centre autonomy. In the face of this, some respondents made the political decision to avoid project-based grants, even though this means a greater reliance on community, donor-based fundraising: "[w]e do not want funding for specific services or projects that limit our autonomy, our freedom to act, or our community plan."

While we did not specifically ask SAC/RCCs about the implications of ascendant "victims' services" funding and policy frameworks, many respondents in qualitative responses describing the current challenges facing their centres emphasized the negative implications of this policy shift. Both federal and provincial governments are devoting increasing attention and levels of resources to funding programs for generic victims of crime. According to the OCRCC (2005), this approach means that the gendered nature of sexual assault is no longer politically recognized, victims' services bureaucracies within governments have expanded, and funding focuses on the provision of services to crime victims who make police reports. At the same time, funding for SAC/RCCs who provide support for the vast majority of women who choose to avoid criminal justice interventions has remained stagnant. Moreover, a victims' services funding model fails to acknowledge the crucial work of Canadian SAC/RCCs in social change activism and public intervention, as the focus is on the provision of services to individualized victims of crime.

Several respondents underscored the negative implications of this model. As one centre emphatically stated, "Gov't [*sic*] needs to stop with the victims' services — the reality is *women* are the victims. This is not a gender neutral issue" (emphasis in original). Several Quebec centres expressed concerns about being displaced by "centres d'aide aux victimes d'actes criminals" (CAVACs) — community victims' service agencies funded by the Quebec Ministry of Justice. According to one centre, these agencies have more legitimacy and "receive the most credibility by the justice system." Another Quebec centre worried that "the arrival and rise of CAVAC" threatens the judicial accompaniment and counseling services that her centre has offered to clients. In short, those centres

specifically commenting on the rise of the victims' services model were unanimous in emphasizing its damaging implications for their work and legitimacy. As one centre emphasized, we need to "move away from crime victim assistance programs which create a private fee-for-service model with too many gaps in services."

In the face of ubiquitous budgetary challenges that both consume the energy and threaten the autonomy of Canadian SAC/RCCs, many centres have turned to community fundraising as a means of preserving programming and social change activism. All of the centres responding to this survey engaged in community fundraising initiatives to support their activities. Nearly one-third of centres (29%) reported that more than 10% of their budget comes from centre fundraising efforts. Some of the activities listed included (in rank order): soliciting individual donations (through street-canvassing, mail campaigns, ongoing pledges); selling antirape t-shirts and buttons; staging *Vagina Monologues* productions; soliciting donations from service clubs; holding auctions ("silent," "art"); selling cookbooks; and holding fundraising dinners. It is clear that the kinds of fundraising initiatives embraced by centres are carefully chosen to raise public consciousness about sexual violence. Many fundraising initiatives (walk-a-thons, *Vagina Monologues* productions, sale of antiviolence/antirape t-shirts and buttons) have a clear political dimension.

Yet some respondents also emphasized the profound paradox of fundraising. If community-based fundraising increases access to undesignated sources of funding, thereby enabling centres to engage in the kinds of political or program activities not covered by project or service-based funding, so too can fundraising drain limited centre resources. As expressed by one respondent,

> We have had inadequate core funding; therefore we are continuously having to fundraise which takes time away from our activism. In addition, the decision we make to fundraise more ourselves rather than get shaped by the project money available (project funding monies was [*sic*] often not available for things we chose to do) meant more time and labour went into fundraising to support our goals.

There were also concerns about communities being "tapped out with donations." This concern gestures towards the broader context of antirape and other forms of social justice activism in neoliberal times. Second-wave feminist and antiviolence activists had some success in moving sexual assault out of the private and increasing recognition of sexual violence as a collective societal problem and a legitimate object of governmental intervention. State support for Canadian community-

based SAC/RCCs, even though limited, was an outcome of this success. In the current context, however, the problem of sexual violence is increasingly reprivatized and individual SAC/RCCs are forced to compete in the philanthropic marketplace for donor support.

Conclusion

The pervasive and serious social problem of sexual violence is being increasingly privatized, relegated to the unpaid and underpaid work of women working as frontline workers in the antirape movement. At a policy and discursive level, we are witnessing the decontextualization of "crime" from social conditions and power relations that contribute to the widespread problem of sexual violence. While committed to "a get tough on crime agenda," the Harper Conservative government cut the budget of Status of Women Canada [SWC] by 40%, removed the word "equality" from its mandate and fundamentally altered the funding criteria for women's organizations, making research and activities related to activism ineligible for funding (Canada 2007). SWC did not provide operational funding for individual SAC/RCCs. The elimination of SWC funding will, however, have a damaging impact for antirape politics. National feminist organizations active in the antiviolence movement, such as NAWL, have recently been forced to close their doors. SWC had also provided grant-based funding to CASAC that facilitated important activist research on responses to sexual violence and enabled centre members to network and develop political agendas at national meetings (Lakeman 2004).

As governments move to dismantle gender specific supports and replace them with degendered "victims' services," the particular expertise of the feminist antirape movement is threatened, and the creative possibilities of sustained response to sexual violence are undermined (Morrow, Hankivsky, and Varcoe 2004). Yet, the results of this survey strongly suggest that as national feminist organizing declines, antirape activism is being sustained at a local level in SAC/RCCs, though in a context that is increasingly difficult. Centres have been forced to rely heavily on volunteer labour; paid workers face enormous pressures and inadequate compensation; centres have reorganized to continue their crucial work; and they have devoted significant resources to grant-seeking and fundraising. Given the intense challenges facing Canadian SAC/RCCs documented here and the seriousness of sexual violence as a systemic social problem, it is not at all surprising that, when asked what kinds of governmental policies would facilitate their work, respondents stressed

the critical importance of new frameworks that would recognize their valuable expertise and provide adequate funding for their work. In the words of one respondent,

> If the government deemed sexual assault services essential services and was committed to adequately funding them, we would be able to do more public education, awareness and affect change, rather than simply putting band-aids on victims. We need an upstream, preventative, pro-active approach but lack the funds to carry this out adequately.

The difficulties faced by community-based SAC/RCCs could be interpreted as support for the argument that institutionalization and a reliance on state funding entraps antirape activism, undermining the political independence of centres and effectively eroding their transformative potential. Our results point to the multiple ways in which centres have resisted the depoliticizing impetus of funding and policy frameworks. Canadian SAC/RCCs do far more than simply provide services to individualized victims of sexual assault. In a context in which little governmental attention is devoted to sexual violence or gender-based disadvantage as objects of policy intervention, SAC/RCCs engage in diverse forms of political and social activism, raising social awareness of sexual violence, and challenging the thrust of policies and frameworks that reprivatize and individualize this collective social problem.

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