





**Equality:**  
**Reaching for the**  
**Transparent dangling carrot**  
**In the Words of Public Sector Women**

Video Title: Equality: Reaching for the transparent dangling carrot

Video length: Approx. 35 minutes

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## I. Project Description

### 1.1 Synopsis

What is equality? What does it mean in the lives of women? Is it defined through quantitative data and statistics comparing categories across gender? Or does it mean something different in women's day-to-day lives?

My thesis project has taken the form of an educational video that consists of interviews with ten public sector women from across Canada who discuss issues of equality in their workplaces and homes. All interviews took place at the Regional Women's Committee in St. John's in May 2006, on the heels of Prime Minister Harper's cuts to the Status of Women Canada (SWC). After Harper's government removed "gender equality" from the mandate of SWC, Canada's primary institution responsible for gender equality, his government then cut a large portion of the department's budget and changed their funding criteria so that any organization that took part in any "lobbying" or "advocating" for women could not apply for any funding from SWC (*Reality Check: Women in Canada and the Beijing Declaration of Platform for Action Fifteen Years On, A Canadian Civil Society Response*, 2010).

With this public statement, I saw an opportunity to address the discourse of equality in Canada. Through my volunteer work I developed a relationship with several people at the federal union the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) which also worked in equality seeking efforts.

Specifically, I wanted to learn what women understood by "equality", to gain pieces of a qualitative definition and perception of equality that is more comprehensive and better corresponds with women's lives than the usual statistics and numbers that are

often used to define it. My Master's project video, along with the utilization guide, will be incorporated in a utilization kit by the Regional Women's Program of Newfoundland and Labrador, with the possibility of expanding its use to the rest of Canada.

### **1.2 Initial Goals**

When I began this project, my goals were to:

- Create an easily accessible tool for the PSAC members and beyond that would be used as an educational tool.
- Add to the discourse of gender equality in Canada, which, as a researcher, I believe has been fading out of collective consciousness.
- Collect concrete examples of equality and inequalities in women's lives via video, which would hopefully be relatable to others and allow them to further their own discussions and analysis regarding equality.

It was not the goal of this project to find one singular succinct definition of equality but to instead create a film that could provoke conversation so that the complexities of the concept could be acknowledged and discussed as to move forward through the process of realizing equality.

### **1.3 Video: Accessibility and an Education Tool**

I wanted my project to go beyond academia and the usual academic texts. In her chapter *Educating Women: A feminist agenda* bell hooks (2000) wrote about how feminist educators should use other means besides the traditional academic texts and should educate in non-academic settings.

Concentration of feminist educators in universities encourages habitual use of an academic style that may make it impossible for teachers to communicate effectively with individuals who are not familiar with either academic style or jargon. All too often educators, especially university

professors, fear their work will not be valued by other academics if it is presented in a way that makes it accessible to a wider audience. If these educators thought of rendering their work in a number of different styles 'translations' they would be able to satisfy arbitrary academic standards while their work available to the masses of people. Difficulty of access has been a problem with much feminist theory (p. 112).

She explains that educating outside the realm of the institution, at the margin, may be seen as a specifically feminist endeavor, which promotes rethinking of sexual socialization. By creating an educational video for the PSAC I hoped to have captured some insights and ideas of women regarding issues of equality in an accessible and engaging way that will serve a wide range of potential audiences outside the traditional academic arena.

As mentioned, the video will be accompanied by a utilization guide (see Appendix D) that is comprised of:

- An introduction to the topic
- Discussion questions and activities
- Suggested readings.

With the creation of the video DVD and the utilization guide, the research captured will be able to reach more people than traditional text while, hopefully, creating a time and place to further the discourse of equality in Canada. In an interview with alternative and feminist filmmaker Renee Tajima-Peña published in *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Sagara (2002) captures Tajima-Peña's words, "I think film can help take people to places they can't go to through books or any other way. It humanizes subject matter. And because it's very concise and compact, and can have that power of being thirty, or sixty minutes, film can provoke a lot of discussion and debates" (Sagara, 2002, p. 182). A short film or video with its many layers can allow people to relate to and understand issues,

problems and even each other. However, my video is approximately 35 minutes and not a full-length feature film like Tajima-Peña mentions, since I wish to initiate discourse of equality, not capture a complete story and analysis of it. A short video will hopefully allow people's interest to be piqued but not satisfied.

Dudley (2003) wrote of the transformative power of video that, "Women, youth, indigenous people and others are using video to present new or hidden aspects of our lives and our world" (p. 146). Dudley (2003) continues, "It is through the process of producing videos that local communities are learning the art of constructing messages to communicate their concerns, describe their successes, or share their dreams with others" (p.146). Video holds more accessible and often more profound information than many written texts and because of this many groups and communities are discovering the power of video for education and action purposes. As Bury (2003) wrote, "Video creates a space in which to tell stories that can be powerful enough to inspire change" (p.103). Through my project of video and utilization guide I hope to allow for a space and time for the discussion of equality amongst the Newfoundland and Labrador women of the PSAC attending their Women's Program meetings. I hope the women's stories in the video can educate one another in their realities, perspectives and even dreams of the concept of equality. I hope to allow for the women's voices to come out through the technology so they can hear themselves and one another while watching and listening to the video.

Dudley (2003) wrote,

As traditional communication forums have become more open to grass roots productions, videos are being developed to uncover injustices, to give visibility to the needs of isolated or marginalized groups, and to tell stories of how everyday people overcome adversity.

In doing so, new actors have entered social and political spheres through visual media, and the ideas, images and messages they create are being used to influence and transform power relations around the globe (p. 146).

Through video and its recently easily accessible technology, stories that have not been previously widely shared are being communicated, breaking silences and shredding absences from public and political realms. Bury (2003) agreed,

There was a time when video technology was bulky, complex, and expensive. However, over the past 20 years, as technology has miniaturized and become easier to operate, opportunities have grown for non- experts to use technological tools in new ways to advance their own agendas (p.112).

Although the technology for video-making is still unavailable to a large part of the world, its decreased financial cost and its increased user-friendly properties have allowed for more stories to be told and more realities to be shared. This applies to my own means and abilities as well. Even ten years ago I would not have been able to undertake the video project, since camera equipment and editing software would not have been as readily available to me. As the medium of video has become more widely available, so has the understanding of people's different stories and issues because of the convenience and accessibility. With the phenomenon of such video sharing sites as *YouTube*, sharing stories and perspectives are even more accessible than before.<sup>1</sup>

Dudley (2003) raised an important point while discussing the transformative properties of video. Simply stated, "Video has the potential to deeply affect audiences and producers alike" (Dudley, 2003, p.146). The creation and showing of a video with its multilayered meanings, images and stories can have profound influences on the

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<sup>1</sup> It has not yet been negotiated if my educational video will be shared on YouTube but it is a possibility.

producers/directors and the audience members alike. Both groups can walk away from the project with a gained perspective and a glimpse into a reality previously unknown. This allows for increased understanding of one another and also a sense of connection. To summarize as Mizunoe (2006) put it, "Video is the best tool for connecting people" (1<sup>st</sup> paragraph).

## 2. Social Relevance

### 2.1 *Governmental Statements on Equality*

The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action and the Canadian Labour Congress released a report on February 22, 2010 in response to the United Nations meeting "Beijing + 15". This UN meeting will evaluate progress, identify challenges and recommend policies to promote gender equality and the advancement of women. The report highlighted many of the reasons I choose to embark on this project while it demonstrates the social relevance of my project at this time. The report begins:

There has been a sharp decrease in institutional and political support by the Government of Canada for the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls during the period 2004-2009. This is true of Canadian government policy on women's human rights in the national and international context. Examples of this shift include:

- The elimination of the phrase "gender equality" from the mandate of Canada's primary institution responsible for gender equality in Canada; Status of Women;
- The closing of twelve of the sixteen Status of Women offices, on the principles that women's and men's issues do not need to be separated;
- The reallocation of funding from organizations that support advocacy for women's human rights to organizations that provide front-line services only;
- The elimination of funding to the court challenges program, a program created to provide assistance to court cases related to equality rights guaranteed in Canada's constitution;
- The elimination in 2006 of the funding agreements that had been negotiated with the provinces and territories to provide five billion dollars for childcare and early learning programs;

- The decrease in levels of financial and human resources specifically committed to gender-equality projects in the Canadian International Development Agency and the Department of Foreign Affairs.  
(*Reality Check: Women in Canada and the Beijing Declaration of Platform for Action Fifteen Years On, A Canadian Civil Society Response*, 2010; p.1)

Prime Minister Steven Harper and his Conservative government have been in power since 2004, at which time the shift in the federal government's mandate towards women changed. These cuts to Status of Women and the elimination of programs such as the court challenges and the nationalized childcare demonstrate, at the minimum, that the Harper government has no interest in advancing women's equality.

In the recent Federal Government report *Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report* (2006) many of women's societal inequalities were documented. Some highlights of the report:

- Employed women are far more likely than their male counterparts to lose time from their jobs because of personal or family responsibilities. Women are also much more likely to have only part-time work than their male counterparts (p. 109).
- The majority of employed women continue to work in traditional women's jobs and occupations and there has been virtually no change in the proportion of women employed in these traditionally female-dominated fields in the past decade (p. 113). Women remain a small minority among professions in the natural sciences, engineering and mathematics (p. 113).
- Women are much more likely to be victims of a violent crime such as sexual assault or criminal harassment (p. 159). Women are more likely to be victims of violence from a current or former spouse or partner (p.160). Women are more likely to report more serious types of violence and are more likely to have repeated episodes of violence from a partner. Women also suffer from more physical injuries due to violence (p.161) and are more likely to have to seek medical attention than their male counterparts (p.162). Female victims of spousal violence are also three times more likely to fear for their lives than male victims (p.162).

Keeping these points in mind, the measurement of gender equality in current capitalist societies and economies has often been in the comparison of incomes across

women and men. Not surprisingly, women still have significantly lower incomes than their male counterparts. In 2003, the average annual pre-tax income of women over 16 years old from all sources including employment earnings, social assistance, child tax benefits and seniors' benefits was \$24,400. This amount is just 62% of the figure of men, who had an average income of \$39,300 in that same year (*Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report*, 2006, p. 133).

Armed with this knowledge, in October 2006, the Government of Canada removed "equality" from the mandate of Status of Women Canada (SWC). The Status of Women Canada was created by the federal government in 1971, after the Royal Commission on the Status of Women released its lengthy and comprehensive report documenting the numerous and varying inequalities Canadian women face. The SWC's main purpose was to act as an internal watchdog of the government (MacIvor, 1996, p. 81). The non-updated site for the status of women has its former mandate still posted. It reads:

Status of Women Canada (SWC) is the federal government agency which promotes gender equality, and the full participation of women in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the country. SWC focuses its work in three areas: improving women's economic autonomy and well-being, eliminating systemic violence against women and children, and advancing women's human rights .  
(About Us: Status of Women Canada, 2007)

The removal of "equality" to the mandate is a political move by the Harper government. Women's groups and organizations were told that funding proposals with words like "lobbying" and "advocacy" would no longer be approved for funding by the Status of Women Canada (German, 2006). In a presentation to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, Minister Beverley Oda said, "This government does

fundamentally believe that women are equal. The charter is there. We recognize that women are equal under the charter and under any democratic society" (News flash! Equal... but no equality, 2006). The same day with the announcement of a 43% cut in the SWC operational budget, and the closing of 12 of the 16 offices across Canada, the government announced a \$13 billion surplus. Minister Oda claimed they were pursuing "efficiency savings". The government considered these cuts "fat" that deserved "trimming" (News flash! Equal... but no equality. 2006).

There were pockets of resistance with passionate small protests and marches across the country (Richardson, 2006) but the minor media coverage and lack of cross-country uproar got me wondering, why weren't more women (and men) angry? Did the majority of Canadians truly feel that women were already equal in Canada? I wanted to ask women and get their ideas.

## **2.2 Equality in Canadian historical context**

When dealing with the complex idea of equality, it is important to acknowledge the basis for the concept's existence in common language and media. In her book, *Women in Politics in Canada*, MacIvor (1996) writes about women's status in current society, where we were, where we are now and how we got here. She writes,

Women have made a number of breakthroughs in the past century. Women can vote in elections. Women run businesses, lead established churches, and teach in universities. [However] despite these breakthroughs, many women are still at a significant disadvantage in Canadian society. They are underpaid relative to men, even when they hold the same qualifications. They are not assured reproductive freedom..... Women are still regarded as threatening aliens when they enter male-dominated occupations. (MacIvor, 1996, p. 13)

Women are still sometimes treated as less intelligent beings, as sex objects, and as male property. When women try to adapt to or to break

out of women's traditional roles, or to combine them with other roles, they face hostility (MacIvor, 1996, p. 14).

Here, McIvor (1996) has summed up the rising and plateauing of the status of women in Canada. During the time of the "second wave" of the women's movement, economic and social developments drew women out of their homes and into the paid workforce, which created profound changes in Canadian families. "Women's lives have been transformed in a dazzling short time. The changes are visible to people who have lived through them, but they may not be as apparent to people born since 1970" (MacIvor, 1996, p. 14). Since these changes are not in the collective memory of those born after 1970, it is particularly important to understand the history behind them.

#### *The Women's Suffrage Campaign and the Persons Case*

When examining a tangible beginning to women's fight for equality, many people start with the suffrage campaigns since that was women's first official political campaign to change legislation so that women had rights similar to those of men. It can also be regarded as the beginning of the recorded discourse of equality amongst the general public. Of course, there were many writers, activists and leaders that led to the suffrage campaigns, but when looking at Canadian women's history of equality, the suffrage is a great place to start.

By the end of the nineteenth century, women in Britain, the United States and English Canada had begun a campaign for suffrage. The "suffragettes" were mostly, white, urban and middle-class women who fought for the same voting rights as their husbands and brothers (MacIvor, 1996, p.75). Nonetheless, after several decades of resistance and organizing, after the First World War most politicians could not ignore the suffragettes and their allies (MacIvor, 1996, p.76). Through an opportunity to gain more

votes, the federal government of 1917, a Union government of the Conservatives and Anglophone Liberals, awarded wives and close female relatives of active servicemen along with some nurses who performed military service, the right to vote. The sordid reality was that the "government thought the women would vote on behalf of their absent heroes" and more likely to support the election issue of conscription (MacIvor, 1996, p.78). However, it is important to note that successive federal governments demonstrated and clung to a deep resistance of anti-suffrage. This illustrates the strong opposition to women's equal participation in public life that existed in the first part of the twentieth century. I would argue that, all though it may look different and less overt, this resistance still exists today.

Through several "Persons cases" throughout Canada, women fought to be recognized as full persons under provincial and Canadian laws. (MacIvor, 1996, p.79). In 1929, after countless hours of lobbying and immeasurable efforts, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled "Canadian women were indeed 'persons' under section 24 of the Constitution and for all other legal purposes" (MacIvor, 1996, p.79).

Such legislative changes allowed women to vote and be considered full persons in the eyes of the Constitution, but did not raise the status of women up to that of men. Equality was still a distant concept. Women, and their supporters, continued to work through various avenues to improve their status. They worked with women's auxiliaries of political parties, unions and social movements to have their concerns heard. As MacIvor (1996, p.79-80) points out, these efforts are often overshadowed by other events of the time, such as the Depression, the Prairie Drought of the 1930's, World War II, followed by the post-war reconstruction and the baby boom of the 1950s and early 1960s.

Other issues, like the violent resistance to the civil rights movement and the social division over the Vietnam War, filled the media. Although they were largely American phenomena, MacIvor (1996, p.80) argues that they affected Canadians profoundly.

*Birth of the Status of Women Canada*

On February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1967, after a threat to then Prime Minister Lester Pearson from Laura Sabia (leader of the Committee for the Equality of Women, CEW) to march one million women on Parliament Hill, Pearson set the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) (MacIvor, 1996, p.80).<sup>2</sup> "The RCSW, the first Canadian commission headed by a woman, was given a mandate to investigate and report on all matters pertaining to the status of women and to make specific recommendations for improving the condition of women in those areas which fell within the jurisdiction of the federal government" (Morris, 2007).

MacIvor (1996) writes, "The RCSW was a gigantic national consciousness raising exercise" (p.80). The commission traveled across Canada, listening to women in church basements, hotel ballrooms and shopping malls. MacIvor (1996) continues, "Women who read or heard about these meetings in the media were astonished to hear their own personal experiences in the words of others" (p.80). The very existence of the RCSW had legitimized the demands that women had begun to place on the government. By creating this commission the Canadian government acknowledged the inequalities faced by women and began a discourse with them about their lives.

But the great undercurrent born of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was a pronouncement of gender inequality (Equality First: The Royal

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<sup>2</sup>MacIvor (1996) reports that many scholars credit Liberal Cabinet Minister Judy LaMarsh with convincing Prime Minister Pearson to set up the RCSW (p. 80).

Commission on the Status of Women, n.d.). The report of this Commission, published in 1970, was 488 pages and contained "167 recommendations on such matters as equal pay for work of equal value, maternity leave, day care, birth control, family law, the Indian Act, educational opportunities, access of women to managerial positions, part-time work and pensions" (Morris, 2007). The report also gave information on the additional disadvantages faced by women of visible minorities and those with disabilities. To monitor the government, the National Action Committee of the Status of Women was founded in 1971. The federal government created its own internal watchdog, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW), (MacIvor, 1996, p. 81). *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

In 1982 the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was passed by the federal government, which standardized the language of rights and freedoms for all Canadian citizens. This was welcomed by many disadvantaged groups, since it outlawed their discrimination. The language of equality was institutionalized for Canada. Particularly relevant to this discussion are:

#### Equality Rights

15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (See *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*)

This new part of our constitution named "race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability" as categories one could not be discriminated by,

affording a strong legal defense to groups and individuals who had previously been discriminated on the basis of such characteristics. It was not a cure-all for the prejudices in Canada, but it was a starting place for many (Stienstra and Wight-Felske, 2003).

### *Equality now*

Given the hard-fought creation and history of the Status of Women Canada (SWC) and its *raison d'être*, the severe cuts and changes to the SWC create a clear view of the Harper government's agenda with regards to equality, especially gender equality. The SWC was created to serve as a watchdog of the federal government; making sure women's issues were dealt with, as equality was a goal Canada was striving to realize. By closing 12 of 14 offices, cutting the department's budget by 43%, removing "equality" as part of the mandate and refusing to fund any group that advocated on behalf of women, Harper's government rendered its own internal watchdog on equality essentially powerless. It was a bold political move in the face of overwhelming statistics proving the inequalities still exist in Canada.

Many groups like those with disabilities, Aboriginals, people of colour and women are still seeking equality in their social realities. In the time since the 1980s, equality has become a buzzword used by politicians and spokespeople but in most cases it has not even come close to being realized, according to those who deem they need it (MacIvor, 1996; Stienstra and Wight-Felske, 2003).

With the knowledge of this history of equality in mind, I interviewed Newfoundland and Labrador women attending the Regional Women's Conference in order to gain their perspectives of the concept of inequality.

### ***Women in the Labour Movement***

According to the Statistics Canada publication, *Women in Canada: A gender based statistical report* (2006), "Unionization rates among women and men are currently almost exactly the same" (p. 112) which is a change from decades past, when more men were unionized than women. Interestingly, according to the same report, in 2004, 35% of Canadian women aged 24-54 who were in the labour force were in a union (p. 112). This is a large portion of Canada's female population. More women than ever are now represented by unions, and consensus of most studies in Canada reveals that unions do allow more women to earn similar salaries to their male counterparts (Phillips and Phillips, 1993, p.114). The wage gap between unionized women and men is shrinking, but not closing, demonstrating the difference between women and men's salaries, even in unions. In the same vein of inequality in unions, Phillips and Phillips (1993) wrote, "Canadian women have not been well represented among the ranks of organized labour" (p. 114). I have not been able to find any reports on women's experiences and leadership representation from the PSAC. However, I did locate a recent and comprehensive report specifically on this issue by another national union very similar in structure and work force to the PSAC, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). In the *Spring Report of the National Women's Task Force to CUPE Members: Findings and Recommendations* (2007), it was reported that for every 9 executive positions in the PSAC, 4 were occupied by women (p. 5). Even though 44.4% is not a complete failure of

representation, I could not help but wonder what the women of the PSAC feel the climate is like regarding leadership roles and equality issues after reading the report of CUPE.

Through the feedback of over 6,900 members in 121 different communities across Canada, the CUPE National Women's Task Force (2007) discovered that women were not represented in leadership roles within that union and collected information regarding possible explanations. About 30% of women said they would like to be more active in their union, but were unable to serve due to factors such family responsibilities, working conditions, economic insecurity, union culture and practices and general gender barriers (p. 2-3). Many women also spoke of a backlash against women and equity seeking groups, saying that they felt women are losing ground in their fight for equality. Other barriers were reported, such as the difficulty women have in getting to union conferences and functions, the lack of accommodations for members with disabilities in after-hours activities, the lack of training and skills development, and the *unwritten* election rules such as not challenging an incumbent, as well as the existence of backroom deals (p. 3-4).

These reports of women's experiences support Phillips and Phillips' (1993) statement, "It is true, of course, that unions themselves have not always lived up to the altruistic goal of non-discriminatory treatment..."(p. 118). They continue, "But in general, the union maxim of strength in unity has encouraged a more even treatment of most workers within the organized sector" (p. 118).

Through the interviews for this project I was able to gauge the participants' feelings of equality or inequality in their union, the PSAC. Most of the participants praised the union and its developmental programs for educating them on issues of equality, allowing them to acquire the necessary skills to stand up for themselves and

each other in their workplaces. Many participants even attributed a better level of equality in their home lives because of the tools, language and analyses they learned in the union workshops and courses. Some even shared that their own self-confidence had grown due to their "union training". However, half the participants agreed there was room for improvement with regard to equality within the union structure itself. Phrases like "old boys' club" were used, but usually followed with "it's getting better, but we still have work to do".

### **2.3 Women's equality as they see it**

Through my investigation into the topic of equality I have found little to no research on what the concept of equality looks like to women in their own words. The concept seems to be one that is mentioned throughout journal articles and books without definition or terms created by women today (ex: Acker, 2007; Grown, 2007). I would argue that it is a term that has been spoken of so much that many people use it without fully acknowledging its meaning or the logistics and practicality of its implementation. And even though the term equality is used throughout the feminist arena, it is not clear what exactly it is or what it would look like for women:

"Overwhelmingly, feminism to most people means support for the equality of men and women. The problem that arises is what equality means. If one has equality as a goal, does that mean identical treatment? Different treatment? Or fair treatment? In fact, there is no one agreed-upon definition of equality, even within the women's movement." (Newman and White, 2006, p.14)

The 2005 report *Equality for Women: Beyond the Illusion*, says, "'gender equality' means that women have the conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national political, economic, social and cultural development,

and to benefit from the results" (p.13). This may be a good working definition for that report, but what does it mean to women's day to day experiences? As well, is it the same definition Canadian women would give?

#### **2.4 Working with the PSAC: Creating an educational tool**

Through my graduate work and activist work I have had the opportunity to form a working relationship with several people at the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). The PSAC is a national union of over 166,000 members who work for the federal government or agencies as immigration officers, fisheries officers, food inspectors, and customs officers. Their members also work in women's shelters, universities, security agencies and casinos (About the PSAC, 2007). The PSAC has a very active Women's Program which "continues to expand with on-going conferences at the regional and national levels as well as through the development of campaigns and initiatives on emerging issues" (PSAC- Women's Rights program, 2007).

I had discussed the issue of the cuts to and the mandate change of the Status of Women with fellow activists at the PSAC where I discovered that the PSAC passed Board of Directors' resolutions and sent out media releases strongly opposing the Harper government's cuts and changes to the Status of Women Canada (The Women's Program: Equality for Women and Girls, 2007). After talking with the Atlantic Regional Coordinator, Cathy Murphy, we discussed how a short educational video capturing the thoughts of some women in the region regarding equality could gain some insight into the union member's realities but also could be used as an educational tool to initiate discussion and potentially action on the subject.

I decided that I would like to take part in helping to move the conversation about equality and equality issues beyond academia. I believed that a short informational video that recorded women's thoughts about equality, what it means for them, what it looks like for them, and how it can be achieved could serve as an educational tool to stimulate discussion within their union, but also potentially to be a rallying point to initiate action.

### 3. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

"Feminist scholars have insisted that the exploration of women's distinctive experiences is an essential step in restoring 'the multitude of both female and male realities and interests' to social theory and research"(Anderson, Armitage, Jack & Wittner, 1990, p. 94). To piece together a working, relatable, description of equality, I chose to capture women's narratives regarding their thoughts and experiences about equality and what it means to them, to gather knowledge through these women's words.

While interviewing the participants I refocused some of my initial questions to include:

- 1.) Do you think we<sup>3</sup> have equality now?
- 2.) What would (or does) equality look like in your workplace?
- 3.) What would (or does) equality look like in your home life?

I also asked women about equality in their communities but found, when editing the video, that in the interest of time constraints and relevance there was no need for the inclusion of those answers. Through discussions with the participants, I also adapted other questions regarding visualization and conceptualization, which did make it into the video.

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<sup>3</sup> I used the term "we" here (and in questions four and five) loosely, to allow each participant to make her own meaning of it. For some women it meant "Canadians" for others it meant "women", "women workers" or "women and girls".

### 3.1 Visualization and Conceptualization

4.) If we did achieve equality, what would it look like to you?

5.) If we did achieve equality, what would it feel like?

It was important to me to ask the participants what equality would look and feel like to them for two main reasons. This first was the issue that many people have gotten caught up in the politics of "Do we have equality or not?" without actually discussing what the word and concept means. In a recent CUPE National Convention there were several long hours argued back and forth on just this issue within the union. Some male members voiced their concern that female members were getting special advantages because they were women, making the men of the union disadvantaged. Susan Faludi wrote about such a scenario and named it "backlash" in her book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women* (1991). She argues that there has been a significant "counter assault on women's rights" since the 1980s that directly targets and attempts to undermine the achievements of the women's movement (1991, p. 12). This issue came to me when I had a CUPE member, who had attended this meeting; approach me after one of my preliminary presentations of the video. He explained that he thought those questions about visualizing equality were very important to the discourse. He spoke of his frustrations through the meeting, where the word equality was "tossed around", without anyone stopping to define it. He said that by asking women what they thought equality would look like, it allowed for concrete examples of the issues we have to address as we strive towards equality, without getting lost in the argument of who has more rights.

The other reason why visualization and conceptualization was important to me stems from a Vagina Monologues workshop in which I was able to participate in New York

City with author and playwright Eve Ensler. The entire workshop was mind opening but I was most moved and changed by our last exercise. Everyone in the workshop, approximately forty-five or fifty women all stood in a circle and held hands. Eve asked us to close our eyes and imagine a world without violence. I was so surprised by the concept my mind went blank. I had never even considered such a possibility to ever exist. I had accepted violence as part of our eternal existence. But as each woman, one by one in the circle, spoke about what it would mean or feel like to them I became moved. My eyes filled up because together we were imagining such a world. Filled with hope, but still unable to fully conceptualize that reality it came to my turn. My mind was still blank, my mouth spat out the words, "I wouldn't be afraid to have a daughter". I was shocked by my own answer but then realized how true it was. No one had ever even introduced the concept to me of a world without violence, and then after imagining it I felt it was actually possible. And my mind was forever opened.

When I asked each of the participants what equality would look and feel like, I could see their body language relax and most had smiles creep across their faces. They responded with words like "exuberant" and "joy". I wanted the participants, and therefore the eventual audience, to allow themselves a little time and space to think about true equality, however they would define it, and to just live there for a moment. I believe the concept of equality in real day to day terms is important to the discourse of equality. The measurements of equality or inequality are often stated in terms of dollar signs or police reports of violence, but of course there are much more complex measurements of equality, and the participants touched on those. Things like "peace" and "harmony" were discussed. I believe that these imaginings of a better, more inclusive, more egalitarian

society are important to acknowledge and discuss so we do not get too wrapped up in the quantitative statistics and arguments.

### **3.2 Importance of Non-Academic Settings**

Gaining insight from what women who are outside of academia think about equality is important knowledge to add to the discussion of the concept. My own personal research goals are highlighted by bell hooks (2000) in her previously mentioned essay *Educating Women* where she wrote about the importance of feminist educators going beyond the academic and institutional. My participants were union women, most of whom had been educated in one way or another by their union's Women's or Social Justice Programs, but the majority of them did not hold a post-secondary degree. Their perspective on equality and equality issues was not the usual academic concepts and phrases I had been used to. Through my undergraduate and graduate work I had had to read much on complex theories like Standpoint Theory, Post-modern Theory or Queer Theory, which were not usually rooted for me in any tangible, day-to-day terms. Instead these theories, although important in the analysis of inequalities and the equality movements, dealt with many abstracts such as social realms, political, social or collective consciousnesses. From my perspective of a student learning each theory, it seemed an academic argument between theories and theorists over which set of ideas was more meritorious.

The participants in my project, however, spoke of concrete or anecdotal examples to demonstrate their analyses and theories, rather than concepts. I personally felt I learned an immense amount from the interviews that will help with my own struggles for equality in my future work and home life. One such example was by Brenda from Labrador City,

who had developed her own theory of inequality, which she explained through her own personal examples. To illustrate her lack of equality in her home life she spoke of all the extra work she had to do for her family just to attend the Regional Women's Conference where we met. When I asked her about equality in her home life, he stated that she "had it pretty good" but she still had to do all this extra work before leaving her husband and family. She had to make sure groceries were bought, meals were prepared, and that there was gas in the car, despite the fact that her husband would be home the entire time. I believe that such perspectives are important in understanding how to communicate our messages, as academics, so they reach a larger audience more effectively.

### **3.3 Knowledge through Women's Words**

Of course, like much of feminist research, capturing women's voices and experience in their own words is crucial in my project. As Reinharz (1992) notes, "Understanding the experience of women from their own point of view corrects a major bias of nonfeminist participant observation that trivializes females' activities and thoughts, or interprets them from the standpoint of men in the society..." (p. 52).

Similarly, Lather (1988) wrote that, "the overt ideological goal of feminist research in the human sciences is to correct both the *invisibility* and *distortion* of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (p. 571). A way to reduce or eliminate the invisibility and distortion of women's experiences is to allow their own words to relay their experiences and thoughts on their perceived concepts of and around equality. As well, by creating an easily accessible video DVD, the words of the women are available to many others, further communicating their voices and words.

Bury (2003) writes about capturing women's words on video. She writes, "Who decides what voices are heard and what stories get told, is critical. Too often stories are not told because those controlling access to media channels do not understand or give credence to local stories" (p.115). By allowing the women's words to be videotaped, there will be a film record of their words and their stories to be watched and re-watched by those in the PSAC and perhaps beyond. Although this video is not one made for mass media distribution, the potential audience for it will be relatively large (upwards of one thousand people or more if shared in social media outlets like YouTube).

It is my understanding that none of my participants were ever asked such questions before this project. In fact, for most of the participants it was their first time ever being interviewed. Therefore, having their own views voiced through a video taped narrative was a new experience. Lawless (2001) examines the usefulness in talking about personal experiences for producing meaning about those experiences (p.7). "Telling gives [the participant] the opportunity to craft a narrative self that has cohesion and meaning, with reference to past and future, one that can rationalize and justify her shortcomings and her bravery alike" (Lawless, 2001, p.7). Even though Lawless refers to experience of violence, I feel this comparison can be carried over to discussions of equality since there are many types of violence inflicted on women which enforce or illustrate inequality.

By allowing women time and space to think and talk about what equality means for them, there is an internal dialogue created that may have not occurred otherwise. It gives the participant the opportunity to "have the mic" in the literal and figurative sense. Lawless (2001) continues to say, "[The participant] walks out different from when she

walked in" (p. 7). By creating the time and space where the woman's thoughts and feelings about the issue are center stage, I feel there was a positive feeling of meaning to the women's words and their interview experience. It was very encouraging to see the women open up and even seem to surprise themselves with their knowledge, analysis and experiences. Most women's body language relaxed more and more as the interview went on and there was no shortage of smiles or laughter from the participants.

### **3.4 Feminist Film Theory**

It was important for me to create a video that is respectful and effective and that is true to the women's words and messages. To accomplish this while recording, editing and producing the video tool, I remained cognizant of feminist film theory perspectives.

Firstly, a feminist filmmaker must remember, as Thornham (1999) wrote, "Films are 'texts' – complex structures of linguistic and visual codes organized to produce specific meanings. They are not merely collections of images or stereotypes" (p. 12). When creating the recording scene, choosing or cutting a video clip and creating the storyline of the video, I was aware of the many complexities of meaning making illustrated through my decisions while creating this project. There were often so many variables to consider that the process was sometimes paralyzing. Even though I did not make a traditional film, the video still holds layers of meanings and representations that relay messages to audience. This was a constant at the forefront of my mind when creating the video. As Thornham (1999) wrote, "Films structure meaning through the organization of visual and verbal signs" (p. 12). I had to ask myself constantly about the messages I wished to convey with each piece of the video, to ensure the result I produced

demonstrated the meaning planned and the message intended by the participants and myself as the director and producer.

As Columpar wrote "Film is not ideologically neutral. Rather, it is a signifying system with its own representational legacies, established tropes, industrial constraints and political baggage" (2002, p. 26). In my project, although I never pretend it to be neutral, each representation- each clip, image, sound bite, edit, segment, etc.- had to be chosen to illustrate meaning making by the audience. I had to be very mindful and attentive choosing each representation to maintain the integrity and intended meaning of each participant.

When creating a video project, its purpose and prospective audience is important to the direction of its creation. This video will be used to fill two criteria with two audiences and sets of expectations. For my degree requirements, the video and its contents must meet an analysis and academic expectation. For the union, PSAC, the video needs to be educational, interesting, hopefully motivating and even entertaining to a specific audience. Through the filmographer Renee Tajima-Peña's interview by Sagara (2002), I learned that even though there will be a focused viewership, this video has great potential importance since it will be used as an organizing and education tool (p. 187). This video may have the ability to initiate conversations and actions regarding equality issues in the union and beyond. Tajima-Peña said,

I think film should be used to promote discussion, because film can't answer all questions. In fact, a film should mostly ask questions and not answer too much. One because film is fixed and things change. Two, because I think anybody who depends on a filmmaker to answer too many questions is not doing their job. (Sagara, 2002, p. 182).

When used as an educational tool, I believe the video and its utilization kit will elicit conversations and further the discourse of equality amongst those who watch it.

Hubbler (2002) had several interesting things to say about the endings of films; particularly those that wish to motivate or spark change. She suggests that the lack of closure in a work or text is the "hopeful indication that human society can and will take up the challenges posed by the film" (p. 83). She continues, "The satisfaction denied by the conclusion can only be achieved by collective transforming of society" (p.83). Hubbler believes that films and similar media can motivate people if they are not given a tidy package to walk away with. She recommends that films that wish to invoke change leave the audience with a sense of urgency, not one of satisfaction. I feel that I had internalized this perspective when trying to edit together the ending of my video. In fact, if I had to pick one part which was the most difficult to edit together it was absolutely the ending since it took me many weeks and many attempts to come up with an ending which I thought would leave the audience with a feeling of urgency or need for action.

#### **4. Research design and Implementation**

With the cooperation of the Regional Women's Committee, I was able to place a small flier in each of the conference kits, explaining my project and the kinds of questions I would be asking in interviews (see Appendix A). The committee also allowed me to speak at the opening of the conference to explain my project and inform each of the women that they could participate in the video project if they wished. I attended the two and a half day conference, was visible as much as possible to the attendees and participated myself in the conference when I was not interviewing. I had a separate room

in the hotel, where the conference took place, in which to conduct the short interviews. I created an informal studio containing my lights, cameras, tripod, and microphone.

#### **4.1 Participants**

I video taped my interviews with 10 federal public sector women in the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) union who attended the Regional Women's Conference held in St. John's in June 2007. Most women were self-selected but there were a couple with whom I had discussed the project before the conference and I had asked to participate. The participants ranged in ages from 28 to 55 years old. There was a representation of many locations around Newfoundland and Labrador including St. John's, Gander, Rocky Harbour and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. As well, there were women from Chester, Nova Scotia, Winnipeg, Manitoba and Vancouver, British Columbia. Although there were no visible minorities among the women whom were self-selected, three of the ten participants identified themselves as First Nations or Métis people. There was also one participant who labeled herself as "gay" before the interview.

#### **4.2 Ethical Considerations: Consent**

##### *Free Consent*

To ensure free consent was present, I explained to each participant that they did not have to take part in the research and if, for any reason, at any time, they wanted to stop the interviewing or the video recording, I would stop immediately with no questions asked. I also gave each participant different options for disclosure. On the consent form, a participant who wished to take part in the project but did not want to be seen on camera could select the option of just revealing her voice. If this option is still not desirable, she could then choose the

option to take part in the video with her words quoted in my voice-over or her words on the screen. No participants chose these options however.

#### *Informed Consent*

Before beginning the interviews, I orally provided detailed information about my project and also gave a summary handout (see appendix B). I let each potential participant know of the kinds of questions I would be asking during the interview. I conducted interviews and began taping the participant only after receiving completed consent forms (see appendix C).

#### **4.3 Feminist Approaches to Interviewing**

Once I felt that a participant had fully understood the project and she had signed the consent forms with free and informed consent, I began interviewing and recording. Each participant was informed that they could choose to not answer any of the questions if they wished. As well, after the interview, if for any reason they decided they did not want part of the interview or its entirety to be included in the video, I let them know they had 30 days to let me know, and any non-desirable part would be left out of the video, no question asked. Also, each participant was made aware of the options that if for any reason, they wished to be "blackened out" with only the voice coming through the video, or even if they wanted their voice to be disguised they could choose that route. None of the participants opted for any of those alternatives. However, there were a few instances where some participants told specific examples of inequality in their workplace during the interview and then after the interview had concluded, but before they left their chair, they requested that I not include their example in the video for fear of repercussions for telling a personally identifying story.

#### **4.4 Open-ended Interviews**

After establishing each participant's name, age and where they lived, I asked them if they had any questions about the process or project. Then I used the loose set of open-ended questions about equality in their lives, mentioned previously, with every participant but allowed each woman to speak in her own time about each question or topic. Some interviews were only 15 minutes, some took almost an hour. I let each participant dictate how much they said on each topic. As well, in the interview I tried to internalize "ways of listening" highlighted by Anderson and Jack (1991). One particular quote stayed in my mind, "When the woman, and not the existing theory, is considered the expert on her own psychological experience, one can begin to hear the muted channel of women's experience come through."(p.20). I was cognizant of the power imbalance of the researcher/participant relationship, especially since I came from an academic institution and most of my participants had not attended post-secondary education or had done so 20 or more years before. I wanted to make sure each participant felt her words were important and relevant. I mentioned in each interview, repeating myself if the participant seemed unsure of how to answer "there are no wrong answers". As well, to make sure there was ample time for each interview I didn't schedule any interviews back-to-back, usually allowing at least a half an hour between interviews.

#### **4.5 Self-disclosure**

Self-disclosure was an important part of the type of feminist interviewing I wanted to embark on. Self-disclosure in this context refers to the interviewer being able to relate to the participant through the sharing of common experiences.

Rienharz (1992) says that self-disclosure during interviews, when appropriate and authentic, is a good feminist practice that can put a participant at ease (p. 32). I used elements of self-disclosure whenever possible and appropriate, to allow for a conversation and idea flow, but was careful not to push any of my own ideas on the participants. I wanted to feel that each interview was a conversation between each participant and myself. One such example occurred when I spoke to several of the participants about their upbringings. Since most of the women came from the generation before mine, they had experienced more overt gendered expectations from their families and communities. After the stories of their pasts were told I shared stories of mine, explaining that I may have had more opportunities for education and other choices on the surface, but I still felt many expectations from my parents specifically because I was female. As well, in my childhood growing up there was a clear division of labour in my home which was gendered, and that greatly frustrated me as young as six years old. We compared the similarities and differences of our upbringings, which allowed us to make connections and relate to one another.

#### ***4.6 Importance of Rapport***

Rienharz (1992) wrote, "By achieving rapport, the feminist researcher reassures herself that she is treating the interviewee in a nonexploitative manner. Rapport thus validates the scholar as a feminist, as a researcher, and a human being. It symbolizes her sisterhood, her interviewing skill and her ethical standing" (p.265). Self-disclosure is crucial for building rapport with participants. However, creating a relaxing research site, paying particular attention, demonstrating empathy, and showing interest in what the participant has to say through active listening are also important in developing a rapport

with the participant. Similar to Reinharz's ideas, Oakley (1981) notes that "in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (p. 41).

Building rapport was easier with some participants than others, especially the ones whom I had met previously at other activist events. However, I felt that a solid rapport was built with each participant. As a researcher, I could notice the building of rapport as the interviews went on. Each participant seemed to become more relaxed, offered longer answers to the questions and had more open body language the more we spoke. As well, with each interview there were many more jokes and laughs exchanged near the end, demonstrating a loosening up of each participant and also myself.

#### **4.7 Acknowledging Biases**

I did not set out to make an objective, journalistic video for this project. I wanted to capture the stories and ideas of some women of the PSAC through feminist research methods and then to help their words and narratives move out into the public realm through video. The stories I captured and relay in this video are evidently subjective, as are all videos. As Seidl (2003) wrote, "As the person orchestrating the video documentary process, I bring my own bias to the process. The producer/director is responsible for the documentation from initial concept to final distribution. So, for all practical purposes, the director is the story teller" (p. 160). Seidl acknowledges her biases in her videos and to counter this bias she says, "Part of the documentarian/videographer/producer's job is to be quiet long enough to hear the story as told in the way that the people who lived it would have told it" (p.160). Although it is the

words and stories of the participants that are the core of the video, it has been my responsibility and honour (and sometimes frustration) to shape these pieces of conversation into themes. However, from the outset everyone involved, from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) to the PSAC to all the potential participants, knew of my original interest in this topic and my ultimate desire to try to add to the discourse of equality through the making of a video.

#### ***4.8 Equipment and Resources***

The camera and tripods used in my video were loaned to me through Memorial's Digital Research Centre for Qualitative Fieldwork (DRCQF). I had previously directed, edited and produced a 26-minute autobiographical documentary and other video shorts in my graduate course work. Also, I had the Final Cut Pro video editing software on my personal computer.

#### ***4.9 Technical Experience and Editing***

As stated above, I had some editing experience from past projects. However, previous to this project I had not used Final Cut Pro and I needed many tutorials and books to help understand this complicated and advance software. This software usually has its own full courses to learn how to use it effectively. The software failed me more than once, causing multiple problems and costs. Nevertheless, I learned many valuable skills through both the interviewing and editing processes which will be sure to help me in my future endeavors.

### **5. Feminist Research as Activism**

Feminist scholar Maria Myles says that the motivation behind feminist research is the desire to effect change in women's lives through activism and consciousness-raising, (Porter and Judd, 1999, p. 30). Therefore, if feminist research is to be true to its form, it has to have, within its core, elements of activism<sup>4</sup>.

I chose a video as a project, which will be accompanied by an educational/users guide for a specific group of users, because I wanted my research and my project to be a launching point for more discussion and action around issues of equality. Participatory video is a form of media in which a group or community creates their own film. When researching this tool I was inspired by the empowerment some people reported when they were able to participate and help in the creative process of videos that told their stories. However, due to time, resources and geographical constraints, it was not possible for the participants in my project to participate in the editing. Nonetheless, I believe that Shaw and Robertson (1997) would classify the documentary-like format of my video as a "production for the community", a type of socially based production concerned with social issues that are outside the realm of mass media. So, even though the participants were not part of the editing process, they still participated in the video, lending their voice to the discourse, in hopes for change.

Huber (1998) wrote, dialogue is needed to start the process and subvert what he defines as the "culture of silence", created when those in exploited and/or in poverty lose the ability to understand and articulate their own oppression (p. 32). Through my own research and experiences I feel that many women have lost their ability to understand their own oppression caused by authoritative and patriarchal forces, thus causing the

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<sup>4</sup> I define activism here as action for change.

"culture of silence" Huber writes about. Huber also speaks of fellow scholars Fierce and Habermas, who state the importance of dialogue or communication for constructive problem-solving (Huber, 1998, p.6). The dialogue about equality discussed by the participants and then edited by me into a video is designed to elicit further discussions and communications that will hopefully lead to constructive problem-solving and change.

## 6. Reflections

This project has been a long but important personal journey. There have been many causes for delay and frustration ranging from ill-timed familial responsibilities to complete and utter failure of technology and hardware. However, the project has allowed me to learn so much while hopefully creating a new piece of discourse on the subject of equality in women's lives in Canada.

### 6.1 *My Video Title Choice: Equality: Reaching for the Transparent Dangling Carrot*

When I was trying to come up with a title to my video, I wanted it to have meaning while, hopefully, being interesting. After much word play I came up with the title *Equality: Reaching for the Transparent Dangling Carrot* because of the complex meanings the concept produced. The dangling carrot on a stick is an idiom that refers to a guiding principle of offering a reward for making progress towards benchmarks or goals but not necessarily ever actually delivering. The original metaphor refers to a boy sitting on a cart being pulled by a donkey. The boy holds a long stick to which a carrot has been tied, and he dangles the carrot in front of the donkey but just out of its reach. As the donkey moves forward to get the carrot, it pulls the cart—and the boy—so that the carrot always remains just out of reach as the cart moves forward. Similarly, equality is a concept that has been dangled in front of women for generations, often with promises of

getting the reward if we worked hard enough, persevered or played within the rules or laws. However, just when we feel the reward of equality is about to be obtained for our efforts, we can see that it is still out of our reach.

Another way to look at the dangling carrot is the incentive to keep working for change, keep fighting for a better tomorrow. Sure, equality has not yet been realized, but that does not mean we have not earned other victories along the way. There are many ways in which women's lives in Canada have improved on our trail blazing toward equality. Starting at winning the right the vote, continuing with accessibility to our own reproductive rights and education and so on, it is undeniable that things have changed, even though many limitations and restrictions still exist. As most of the participants acknowledged in the interviews, we have come a long way but still have very far to go before we reach equality.

I wanted to add "transparent" to describe the carrot for a couple of reasons. Firstly, one of my personally favourite and formative artists is Alanis Morissette. In her song "Thank You" there is a line that always spoke to me: "How 'bout them transparent dangling carrots?" (Alanis Morissette, 1998, track 3). I always liked this line because I thought it said so much about what many people think they are working for: the promotion or the fancy car or even parental acceptance. However, the very thing they are working for can barely even be seen, and its always "out there". I felt this was similar to equality. Equality is a concept that seems elusive. Just when you think you have a good grasp on its meaning or its vision, the intangibility of it causes it to evade you. I feel like equality is a concept we have created in the abstract and we may have some beautiful intentions in what we are fighting for, but without nailing down some qualitative

descriptors that allow us to see what equality is or could be we are chasing a phantom, a mirage, a ghost. Equality is a goal many of us work and fight for but its vision can often be lost, confused or hard to see. Thus when we are fighting for equality we are reaching for the transparent dangling carrot.

### **6.2 *Changing and Adapting***

Working with technologies is both a help and a hindrance at times. The software Final Cut Pro may have not been the optimal software for me to use since it was so complex and required so much costly instruction. It was often frustrating and immobilizing. I also had to deal with the fact that the one day I moved all my project files to my external hard drive because my computer's start up disk was full was the day I dropped my external hard drive, making it unreadable by any computer. However, with the help of a several weeks' data recovery I was able to begin the video again, learning from many of my first mistakes with the software and editing.

The video itself changed as time went on, eventually coming out as the final project submitted. It is three times as long as initially anticipated, which was an internal conflict I spoke to my supervisor about several times, since I was afraid it was too long to keep an audience's attention. However, we agreed that the extended time was needed to establish the storyline and allow for meaningful, complete and varied thoughts of the women to be effectively illustrated.

### **6.3 *Selecting Clips***

I often had trouble picking which clips I believed would be the best to demonstrate an idea while remaining empowering and relatable to the audience. It was very difficult to select one clip over another, while trying to decide which I related to

most and trying to imagine which clip would be most relatable to the expected audience. There were some problems with technology (example: clip sound being "piqued out") while some interviews were unusable because the participant did not use the actual contextual words in the clip, because their response came from a conversation we were having. One example was with Linda, who had amazing insight about "being there", by "there" she meant realizing that there wasn't equality for women and others. She talked about how to get "there" and how some women are essentially too brainwashed to be "there". She said; "I work a lot with women in abusive relationships, and one thing I realized is that, no matter how you were before, if you're told something enough, you start to believe it. These women are told they are equal, so they believe it without question." Although not a completely unproblematic notion, I thought the comparison of women being in an abusive relationship (being told over and over something, by authoritative powers in attempts to dis-empower them) to women in general who are taught they are already equal and are taught not to question it was a powerful statement. Either way, it could not be included since it would not be clear to the audience what "there" meant in the clip.

#### **6.4 *Choosing Images and Music***

I found, through the feminist lens, choosing images for the film's transitional parts was very difficult. An image holds within it itself so many complex layers of meaning-making text. I did not want to perpetuate the established norms, but a filmmaker often has to use conventions to move ideas along. I was trying to see beyond the traditional images available, but had many troubles since most stock photography was so contrived and rehearsed. And, of course, through many of my image searches I had to deal with an

irony in this project on equality: many of the titles of the stock images, "attractive business woman" or "sexy business women in meeting". In another example, when I searched "women work" the query produced some very sexual images of nearly nude women with cleavage on a tractor or in business suits. Such results demonstrated to me the utter lack of equality, since "men work" produced no sexualized pictures at all. Of course, this echoed the need for the equality discussion to be continued and strengthened.

In the end, I chose images that I believed to be easily accessible and those, which I thought would hold meaning to the perspective audience. For example, the colours pink and blue were used in an image to illustrate the gender differences. I also chose a use a clip of a female symbol breaking the glass ceiling because it was a concept brought up by many of the participants. Since "the glass ceiling" was a term many union activists used, I believed the clip would not only be well understood by the prospective audience but also it had the potential to be a powerful visualization. I acknowledge that such images and clips may reproduce already ingrained societal stereotypes or clichés; however, the audience does need a reference point from which discussion can begin.

As with the images, I had trouble picking sound clips for the beginning and end of the video. I believe music is a very powerful tool to communicate and set a mood. I found music choice very difficult because most seemed too dramatic or too light, happy, suspenseful, etc. Finding something to set the mood, like I eventually chose, entailed many hours of going through free music clips.

### ***6.5 Feminist Research Pressure for Change***

While every video or filmmaker wants to elicit some kind of movement, change or shift in the audience from their work, I felt particular pressures since this project was

specifically designed and created as a piece for discussion and change. Paralyzed by perceived personal, creative and skill inadequacies I often felt it was impossible to do justice to the women's words and to add meaningfully to the discussion of equality in the union movement and beyond. With the support of my supervisor, and after speaking to other video and filmmakers, I decided I had to move on from these paralyzing thoughts and to actively participate in the discourse on equality.

#### ***6.6 Participants' Statements Too Political/Opinionated?***

Some of the participants had very strong political opinions stating things like "I believe Harper has a war on women" or one participant, Robin, when asked, "What would equality look like to you?" she immediately responded, "Well, we'd have an NDP government, federally." Each time, while I may have personally agreed in parts with these statements, coming across so strong politically caused me to wonder if I should be more cautious. There were two main reasons for this feeling.

One was the fact that I was worried the University administration would object to such outright criticism of the current federal government, and therefore I was concerned that the Women's Studies department would echo that objection. However, at the same time, the strong political beliefs of many of the participants had a right to not be silenced, yet again. I struggled with what clips I should include, discussing it several times with my supervisor. Then I re-read through my original project proposal; I found this sentence I had written: "I hope to allow for the women's voices to come out through the technology so they can hear themselves and one another while watching and listening to

the video." I then went on to quote Dudley (2003) who wrote about videos being developed to uncover injustices and to give visibility to the needs of isolated or marginalized groups, which then are used to create influence and transform power relations. I continued, "Through video and its easily accessible technology, stories that have not been previously widely shared are being communicated, breaking silences and shredding absences from public and political realms."

Reading this allowed me to believe that these opinions had a right to exist in space and time in my video project. And if I bowed down to authoritative powers in fear of potential personal disadvantageous outcomes, I would be further silencing the women's voices I had worked to give volume.

The second issue I had was with wanting to not seem "too politically extreme" to the audience that I was creating the educational video for. I had heard anecdotally that a few members felt that some people in the union, while educating their members on their voting choices each election, had suggested that each of them vote NDP, since their political platform was most supportive of the labour movement. Although the PSAC had never officially supported any one party over another, I had heard a few times through my time in the labour movement that some people felt pressured to vote a certain way. Of course, when people feel pressured to do such an act, either legitimate or perceived, there will be resistance. I did not want this resistance to spread to my video. However, at the same time, the words of the women who supported the NDP were, of course, personal and relevant to them and the discourse.

As well, since a pending election was perhaps just months away, I believed that if the video was to have power for change, like feminist research is supposed to aim for,

including the participants' words on the NDP would at least allow for some discussion in the groups.

### **6.7 Voids in the Video**

Interestingly, there were no mentions of the need to teach men about equality and very few mentions of teaching the upcoming generations about it. Perhaps this was due to the framing of my interview questions. However, Angela does give one great example in the video of her son who did a project on women in history after being involved in a union education course with her, demonstrating how important it is to educate young people on issues of equality.

In retrospect, I would have asked such questions about men's and upcoming generations' role in reaching for equality since the answers would have been helpful in creating a video segment to help end the video on a hopeful note. Of course, I wanted the participants' words to shape the video but I would have liked to include questions on how they thought we could possibly change things. Fortunately, these are things that can come out in-group discussions from the utilization kits.

## **7. Impact**

As mentioned several times throughout this report, my ultimate goal for this project is for it to be used as an educational tool on the discussion of equality. I hope to create a time and place for a discussion of equality that is not usually addressed. As well, with the educational kit, I hope that the project can act as a launching point for future discussion and action. If you watch the submenu item "What did the participants think of the project?" on the DVD, you can see that the participants hoped and anticipated that this video project could be very helpful in discussing equality within the union and

beyond. Many participants seemed to like the idea of a video surrounding this issue, with one of them speaking directly about the power of video as a tool. To spread the accessibility of this video, the DVD and utilization kit will be replicated by the PSAC's Women's Committee in Newfoundland and Labrador and is very likely to also extend nationally.

As well, through the discussions with the participants I have a couple of suggestions for future research:

- How do women perceive equality/inequality with regards to financial decisions at home and work?
- In what ways do the twenty-something year old women today take up the equality battle fought by the generations past? What does it look like today? How is it different? How is it the same? (This was an issue of great concern to many of the participants who feared what would happen to women and equality after they were gone.)

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## Appendix A

### Information Sheet to be distributed in the Women's Regional Conference kits.

This sheet has been discussed with the conference organizers who felt it was important to include my picture in it so women could identify me. The text will stay the same but some formatting changes may be made to make the flier more eye-catching.

**This woman may ask you:**

### What Does Equality look like for you?



My name is Kelly Hickey and I am a candidate for a Master's Degree in Women's Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I've been working with the PSAC for the last two years through organizing drives. I am currently searching for participants for my thesis project and am hoping you can help! Ideally, I would like to interview women from different regions of Newfoundland and Labrador about equality in their lives.

The interviews will be videotaped and edited for use in a short educational video for the PSAC Regional Women's Committee.

Some sample questions:

- 1.) What does equality mean or look like to you?
- 2.) What would (or does) equality look like in your life? How about in your family? Home? Community?
- 3.) What would (or does) equality look like in your workplace? How about in your union?
- 4.) Without naming any names, can you give me an example of incident demonstrating inequality in your home? How about your workplace?

### Project description:

Through recording brief individual discussions with women of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) at the Regional Women's Conference, June 1-3, 2007, I hope to gain perspective into what equality looks like for women of the PSAC in their workplaces and lives. My primary objective is to begin and document the discussion of equality, as you understand it, to learn of your experiences with issues of equality in your words and to then create a short video about your stories for educational purposes,

This project has met the approval of the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics and Human Research as well as the Graduate Committee of Women's Studies. *(This will not be sent until it is approved by both ICEHR and the Graduate Committee.)* For more information or if you are interested in participating, please contact me at:

Kelly Hickey

Department of Women's Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland,

St. John's, NL, A1B 3X8

709-727-4594

[kellyhickey@gmail.com](mailto:kellyhickey@gmail.com)

## Appendix B

### Information for Participants

#### Who I am:

My name is Kelly Hickey, and I am a candidate for a Master's Degree in Women's Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Kelly Hickey  
Women's Studies,  
Memorial University of Newfoundland,  
St. John's, NL, A1B 3X8  
709-727-4594  
[kellyhickey@gmail.com](mailto:kellyhickey@gmail.com)

#### Project Description:

Through video recording brief individual discussions with women of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) at the Regional Women's Conference, June 1-3, 2007, I hope to gain perspective into what equality looks like for women of the PSAC in their workplaces and lives. My primary objective is to begin and document the discussion of equality, as they understand it, to learn of their experiences with issues of equality in their words. I hope to then be able to create an utilization tool kit for the PSAC, containing a short 8-10 minute video and a short guide including some discussion topics and questions to initiate discussions in the Women's Programs in the region. This kit will be replicated and distributed by the PSAC but would also serve as my Master's project.

There is no time limit to each interview, but I do not expect the interview process to exceed 15-20 minutes. Interviewing is to be taken place at the Regional Women's Conference in St. John's, June 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>. I hope to be able to interview women from different areas and perspectives of Newfoundland and Labrador to gain a broader perspective of women's realities in the region.

I will ask open-ended questions about equality and equality issues as you see them. Any participant can decline to answer any question for any reason, no questions asked. As well, any participant may pull out of the interview or the project up until July 1, 2007.

If you agree to be a participant in this research and there are issues of technical problems, unclear sound or need for further clarification you may be contacted for a second interview.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. If you have any concerns or questions that may not be resolved by me (Kelly Hickey), you may direct them my supervisor, Elena Hannah at 709- 737-8035 or [erosen@play.psych.mun.ca](mailto:erosen@play.psych.mun.ca).

*The proposal for this research has been approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research; and, should there be ethical concerns about the research that are not dealt with by the researcher, please contact the Chairperson of ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 737-8368.*

## Appendix C

### Consent Form

Page 1 of 2

Questions regarding this research may be directed to:

Kelly Hickey  
 Women's Studies,  
 Memorial University of Newfoundland,  
 St. John's, NL, A1B 3X8  
 709-727-4594  
[kellyhickey@gmail.com](mailto:kellyhickey@gmail.com)

**Please choose one or both of the following options:**

#### **Option A (general video recording):**

I agree to participate in this video recorded interview, to be used by Kelly Hickey for her scholarly research and dissemination (including a wide release video DVD as a thesis project, PSAC project, etc.). I grant her permission to use this material at her discretion for all purposes proposed.

---

Signature of participant

Date

**OR**

#### **Option B (confidential video recording):**

I agree to participate in this private video recorded interview, to be used by Kelly Hickey for her scholarly research and dissemination (including a wide release video DVD as a thesis project, PSAC project, etc.), trusting that she will disguise my face and voice and any other identifying information and discard the original footage. I grant her permission to use this material at her discretion for all purposes proposed.

---

Signature of participant

Date

#### **Name disclosure:**

I give permission to Kelly Hickey to use my **name, job title and union position** (if applicable) in the communication of this research. (If No, I understand that my name and any identifying information will be disguised in editing).

Circle one:

**Yes or No**

## Page 2 of 2

I understand that I may chose to not answer any question(s) and that I may withdraw or re-negotiate my participation in this study at any time during the interview. I also understand that if I would like to withdraw or re-negotiate my participation after the interview, I will have until July 1, 2007 to contact Kelly Hickey.

I understand that if I have any ethical concerns that cannot be resolved by Kelly Hickey, I can contact Elena Hannah (Academic supervisor) at 709- 737-8035 or [erosen@play.psych.mun.ca](mailto:erosen@play.psych.mun.ca).

---

Signature of researcher

Date

---

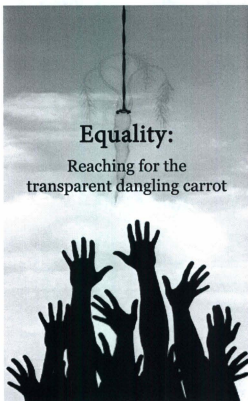
Signature of participant

Date

Participant address, telephone number plus additional contact information if any (to be used if a second interview is required due to technical issue or need for clarification):

*The proposal for this research has been approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research; and, should there be ethical concerns about the research that are not dealt with by the researcher, please contact the Chairperson of ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 737-8368.*

## Appendix D

**Video Utilization Guide**

The following guide is meant to serve as a utilization and educational resource to accompany the video "Equality: Reach for the Transparent Dangling Carrot" by Kelly Hickey. Please feel free to modify or adopt the suggestions and discussion topics to best suit your needs.

This project was created with the PSAC's Regional Women's Conferences and meetings in mind for the audience; however, its use is encouraged by any group that could benefit from its viewing and activities.

### **Introduction**

What is equality? What does it mean in the lives of women? Is it defined through quantitative data and statistics comparing categories across gender? Or does it mean something different in women's day-to-day lives? Where do the statistics and the women's lives intersect?

After watching the video "Equality: Reach for the Transparent Dangling Carrot" you will likely know that in 2006 Harper's government made cuts to the Status of Women Canada (SWC) and that his government removed "gender equality" from the mandate of SWC, Canada's primary institution responsible for gender equality in Canada. (For further information on this issue and a good reference for statistics on inequalities in Canada please see *Reality Check: Women in Canada and the Beijing Declaration of Platform for Action Fifteen Years On, A Canadian Civil Society Response* listed under "Suggested Readings" in this guide).

This governmental action allows us a hub to discuss issues of equality and even a focal point to organize around. Social changes are created in small groups that know how to organize and share their ideas well. As Jeannie says in the video, "It's the one on one that is important."

The participants in this video told stories and gave their experiences and insights of (in)equality in their lives. Now it is your turn. The stories captured in the videos are stories that are often omitted from most media and communications. However, these experiences are crucial to understanding our own realities as Canadians. Your story is important to share.

### **Questions**

It is suggested that you break into groups of four to five to discuss the following questions below. Make sure one person is the note taker. Ideally, you should have a general facilitator to make sure all groups are staying on track. Please emphasize that although no women are to be pressured to share their ideas and experiences, there should be a specific opportunity for each woman to share her words. Allow for approximately 10-15 minutes for each small group exercise and another 20-25 minutes for the large group exercise (a total approximate time of 40- 55 minutes, or less if there are smaller groups).

Once the allotted time for each small group exercise is up, have each group note taker report back to the general group where the stories are recorded in plain view of the group.

### **Question Set One** **For small group:**

1. What have you learned from this video?

2. What similarities do you have with the women in the video?
3. What differences do you have with the women in the video?
4. Which story or experience did you relate to the most?
5. Was there anything in the video that surprised you?
6. Do you have equality in your workplace?
  - a. If you do, how do you think it was created and is maintained?
  - b. If you do not have equality, what do you think is causing or maintaining the inequalities you face? What could you do to promote a more equality centered workplace?
7. Do you have equality in your home life?
  - a. If you do, how do you think it was created and is maintained?
  - b. If you do not have equality, what do you think is causing or maintaining the inequalities you face? What could you do to promote a more equality centered home?
  - c. If you have a partner, housemates or family members at home, what do you believe they would say if asked, "*Do you have equality in your home life?*"

### **Question Set Two**

#### **For small group:**

1. Why do you think Harper's government made the cuts and changes to the Status of Women Canada?
2. What do you believe your government is doing to promote equality in this country? What about in your community? What about internationally?
3. Equality as a concept has fallen off the mainstream political agenda so that we do not hear much about it anymore. Why do you think that it is?
4. Imagining the change you want to see is important for not only gaining our direction but also for exciting our passions. It may be helpful for each participant to jot down their thoughts on this next question for themselves.  
Take a minute and think about each of the following questions before answering:
  - a. If we had equality, what would it look like to you?
  - b. If we had equality, what would it feel like to you?

Report back to large group.

### **Question Set three**

#### **For large group:**

After gaining insight into each other's realities, list the areas of our lives we need to work on to reach for the equality we just imagined.

Taking each area listed that we need to improve on, one by one, brainstorm on how we could focus our efforts. What needs to be done? What can we do? What would be helpful? What seems to elicit the most positive change in your experiences?

.....

#### **Bridging Ideas into the Reality**

After the group brainstorming on each listed area is shared and recorded, it's time to bring these ideas into reality. The general facilitator announces that there will be breakout groups for each of the areas mentioned, and that people can volunteer for the group they would like to participate in. In these breakout groups, people will work on bridging the ideas from the session into reality.

For example, let's say the group decides that one area we need to work on is getting women promoted in their workplace more frequently or faster to be more on par with men. In this example, let's imagine that the brainstorming session revealed that women need to have more confidence in themselves and their abilities to go for the promotions, and even learn to demand it since some managers may discourage them. From that brainstorming one suggestion is to have a confidence-building workshop, or maybe have an inspirational female speaker come in and address the issue. Or another example that may have come up that the group thinks is both potentially effective and practicable is to have a book club that meets once a month, where the participants read books about empowerment and confidence building, which helps them highlight their

strengths. One example could be *"She wins, You win: The most important rule every business woman needs to know"* by Gail Evans (also in the "Suggested Readings" of this guide).

Perhaps another area that needs effort and energy to improve equality that could be mentioned is the small number of women in government. In this example, let's say the brainstorming creates the idea for a campaign aimed at ways to change Canada's low ranking on the scale when it comes to the amount of women we have in elected positions compared to other countries. This campaign could take the form of lunchtime presentations, pamphlets, posters, etc.

It is the bridging from brainstorming ideas into tangible, obtainable goals that will push the equality agenda forward. It is getting our hands dirty and saying to ourselves and to each other that this cause is important enough to get involved. It is important enough to put the effort in. It is important enough to take a chance. We owe it to ourselves and to our children to put every effort in now, today, to make tomorrow better. What do we have to lose??

Encourage women to meet regularly to discuss their progress, to share in the successes but also to keep each other accountable.

Keep each other focused and energized! We can make a difference. We will make a difference. To repeat the quote at the end of the video:

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."**

**-Margaret Mead**

### Suggested Readings:

*Reality Check: Women in Canada and the Beijing Declaration of Platform for Action Fifteen Years On, A Canadian Civil Society Response*, 2010

This is a NGO report on the latest statistics regarding many issues facing Canadian women today. It can be downloaded in full from the following website (or google the entire title):

<http://www.fafia-afai.org/en/news/2010/reality-check-women-canada-and-beijing-declaration-and-platform-action-fifteen-years-canadian-civil-society-response>

*Equality for Women: Beyond the Illusion*. Expert Panel on Accountability Mechanisms for Gender Equality Final Report, 2005

This is a Canadian report written by an appointed Expert Panel on Accountability Mechanisms for Gender Equality. The panel analyzes Canadian women's status and calls to action to the Canadian government for legislative changes including adoption gender-based analysis across all key departments.

It can be downloaded in full here:

<http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/SW21-134-2006E.pdf>

The titles listed below are books good for knowledge and motivation. All are available from most book stores or can be ordered online.

"The Equality Illusion: The truth about women and men today" by Kat Banyard

This is a book that deals with many issues including body image, gendered education, sexism in the workplace, violence in the home and the sex industry. It looks at things as they are in present time but also has strong call to actions to make increase equality in the future.

"She wins, You win: The most important rule every business woman needs to know" by Gail Evans

This is a book that explains how women have to work together as though we are a team. Evans writes about women mentoring other women and how women should unite together and make team-related choices. She gives tactics and strategies for attaining career goals. She is also the author of the popular book "Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman: What Men Know About Success that Women Need to Learn" 2000. Broadway Books, New York: NY.

"You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down" by Alice Walker

This is a book a fictional short stories by the Pulitzer prize-winning author Alice Walker. The stories, although fictional, hold many truths and perspectives of women oppressed but not defeated.

"Backlash: the Undeclared war against women" by Susan Faludi

This is a book written by the Pulitzer prize-winning reporter of the *Wall Street Journal* is a cornerstone for many feminist debates. Faludi explains in it how American women are often victims of the sexist counterattack against the hard fought feminist battles. She explains that the anti-feminist propaganda of conservatives has filled the media and popular thinking attacking women's minds, bodies and lives.

"In a Different Voice: Psychological theory and women's development" by Carol Gillingham

This book was one of the first of its kind to acknowledge women's psychological development as part on general human development. She points out the many sexist and biased views in psychology which have made women's experiences and development seem deviant to popular ideas of how people should develop and interact.

"Between Feminism and Labor: The significance of the comparable worth movement"

By Linda M. Blum

In this book Blum examines the concepts of "comparable worth" and "equal pay for comparable work" as a strategy to raise wages for female dominated jobs.

"Cunt: A declaration of independence" by Inga Muscio

In this avant garde book, Muscio gives readers the tools to reclaim their womanhood and femaleness as a positive thing. She encourages readers to embrace their personal and political power with an outspoken and humorous tone while touching on issues ranging from historical suppression of women by the patriarchy, rape, menstruation, sisterhood, pop culture and more.





