The Case of CheckpointWatch: A Study of Organizational Practices in a Women's Human Rights Organization

Helena Syna Desivilya and Dalit Yassour-Borochowitz

Abstract

The present study aims to discern the ways whereby *gender-role perceptions* and *women's perspectives* on political conflict and peace processes inform the organizational development process, reflected in organizational structure and processes. In order to achieve this we studied CheckpointWatch, a women's voluntary organization devoted to monitoring and reporting human rights violations of Palestinians crossing Israeli military checkpoints. The research is a qualitative study. Data gathering was designed to collect information from two sources: (1) interviews with key informants in the organization, and (2) documents transmitted over the organization's internal communications network.

The findings illustrate the complexities involved in the organizational development processes of a women's peace and human rights organization, its vacillation between transition into a more formalized NGO and its holding on to the social movement organization, grassroots stage. The study also demonstrates the significance of feminist ideology with its embedded complexity and internal paradoxes, which infiltrates into organizational structure, operational processes and activities. Finally, this research highlights the fundamental role of the cultural and sociopolitical context in women's organizational practices. Overall, the study contributes to organization studies by shedding light on the intricacies of organizational dynamics in women's Peace and conflict resolution organizations.

Keywords: CheckpointWatch, gender identities, grassroots, NGO, organizational development, sociopolitical context

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CheckpointWatch (CPW) is an Israeli women's voluntary organization devoted to monitoring and reporting human rights violations of Palestinians crossing Israeli military checkpoints in the Occupied Territories. We open this article with a vignette extracted from the organization's intranet that effectively illustrates some of the key CPW operations.

The Army Tramples the Night in Budrus, 01:10

At 01:10 I received a phone call that propelled me out of bed, to the effect that an army force had raided Kafr Budrus. The jeeps had come in from all directions, dozens of soldiers had gone into the houses and taken their inhabitants outside, children aged ten to seventeen had been taken from their beds, separated from their families and filmed by the soldiers.

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(The army takes photos of adolescents for record-keeping purposes, due to frequent acts of stone throwing by Palestinian youngsters.)

I called the IDF Humanitarian Center, which after a series of calls informed me that the army was indeed inside Budrus. I called the Maccabim Regiment CO. I woke him up. We had a very acrimonious conversation. I was especially angered by his emphatic denials. He claimed that I was distorting the facts. The soldiers were filming 'older teenagers' only, subject to his orders, and he even went so far as to tell me that everything was calm there … in the village … and I was creating an unnecessary drama.

All my requests to return the quiet to the long-suffering village were flatly refused. …

03:03 The phone rings, the Maccabim Regiment CO is on the line. He reports that he has ordered the forces to leave the village. He apologizes and admits I was right, and that the soldiers had indeed filmed children aged 10–17. … He also admits that the army's entry into the village in the dead of night had been contrary to his orders … In light of these facts and the series of apparently flawed insights, he had decided, as a gesture, to cancel the 48-hour curfew from this morning.

04:02 As I write, I get a call informing me that army forces are outside the home of the head of the village council and are informing him that a 48-hour curfew has been imposed on the village. At the same time I call the regiment CO and tell him that contrary to what he'd told me, a curfew had been imposed. I hear him talking on another line and then come back to me and tell me that the curfew will not be imposed, as he had told me. …

04:07 I am informed that five youths have been arrested. Their parents are very worried. One of the detainees had been arrested the previous Friday and released two hours later (there's nobody to speak to right now).

[…]

Good morning, World,

O.

In the spring of 2004, owing to our political and feminist inclinations and sympathies, the authors decided to join CPW. One of the authors joined and once a week over a few months reported for morning shifts at the checkpoint near her home (Jalameh), observing and writing reports. Owing to personal difficulties, the other author did not actually join the organization. During that period many questions arose in our discussions on the organizational structure and practices we encountered at CPW. The questions raised in this study emerged from our experiences. The study was constructed and filtered through the experiences of researchers supporting a feminist peace-movement organization (Olesen 1994).

The present study aims to elucidate the nature of ties between gender identities and the developmental course of the CPW organization (Calás and Smircich 1996; Cliff et al. 2005). Specifically, we explored how CPW's developmental processes resemble or differ from a prototypical pattern of transition from a grassroots organization to a more formalized NGO suggested in prior research on social movements and feminist organizations. We understand 'gender identity' as the term applies to a subjective construal of gender roles and their meaning in the self-concept (Stets and Burke 2000). Our analysis of the relationships between gender identities and the organizational practices of CPW emphasizes the intersection between these two phenomena and the distinct cultural and

sociopolitical context where this organization operates. Few previous studies have investigated such a juncture (de la Rey and McKay 2006).

Extant research and theorizing in the area of organization studies devotes considerable attention to the processes of organizational development and change in general, to conflict management in organizations and to feminist perspectives on work organizations (e.g. Calás and Smircich 1996; Cliff et al. 2005; Martin 2006; Putnam 2004; Van de Ven and Poole 2005). However, efforts to grasp the nature of organizational development in nontraditional organizations such as women's peace and conflict resolution organizations (P/CROs) have been scant. To explicate this phenomenon, we reviewed the following bodies of knowledge: the organizational facets of peace and conflict management organizations, especially their developmental course; women's inclinations and capacities for conflict management in a political context; the features of feminist organizations with an emphasis on feminist orientation and preferences for organizational practices in terms of structural forms and operational processes; and finally we have embedded the preceding streams of knowledge in a distinct cultural and sociopolitical context.

The present study undertakes this direction, integrating the emerging insights and analyzing the case of CPW accordingly. Such an integrative focus enables us to shed more light on the relationships between organizational development and gender identities superimposed on the cultural and sociopolitical context, a linkage that has been insufficiently addressed in organization studies. Specifically, the contribution of this study is threefold: highlighting organizational development patterns in a unique type of organization (a women's P/CRO), exploring the tensions inherent in these sorts of organizations and stressing the significant role of gender, cultural, and sociopolitical context in shaping organizational practices.

The following sections present the theoretical background for our study, focusing on organizational practices and development in peace and conflict resolution and in feminist organizations, and portraying the organizational profile of CPW as embedded in a specific sociopolitical context.

Organizational Practices and Development in P/CROs

Owing to the paucity of empirical research portraying the organizational aspects of P/CROs, we rely on two international studies of such organizations: the study by Gidron et al. (1999) on three conflict regions (South Africa, Northern Ireland, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict), and Meyer's (2004) recent study conducted in the same three locations.

According to Gidron et al. (1999), P/CROs constitute a hybrid of NGOs and social movement organizations (SMOs). They share some characteristics with other NGOs, such as nongovernmental and nonprofit status, autonomous governance and at least partial operation by volunteers. At the same time this category of organizations possesses features akin to social movement organizations. The moral creed of such organizations usually runs counter to the moral and ideological core embraced by the dominant political parties. Social movement

organizations make active efforts to change policies that foster conflict escalation and redirect their course to the peace process. The latter activities, which challenge the political elites, breed antagonism toward social movement organizations and place their legitimacy into question. In addition, most social movement organizations view themselves as a component of a larger framework of peace organizations.

The above-mentioned scholars contend that the dual characterization of P/CROs makes them highly dynamic, constantly modifying their structure in accordance with the ensuing political, economic, and social circumstances. Thus, in their formative stages P/CROs tend to resemble social movement organizations, whereas in later phases of their development, with their increased institutionalization, most of them become similar to other NGOs.

The need to enhance legitimacy in order to mobilize resources fosters the formalization process. Indeed, the findings of Gidron et al. (1999) indicate that most P/CROs eventually formalize their structures and operations, as manifested in formal leadership—executive directors, boards, executive committees and sub-committees, centralization of decision-making procedures, involvement of paid staff, development of formal rules, procedures and constitutions, and legal incorporation as a company or a registered nonprofit organization. Other factors precipitating the transition from a grassroots SMO into a more formalized NGO include multiple organizational aims, increased volume of activity, and growing membership.

Gidron's (1999) analysis of P/CRO modi operandi revealed that the majority of such organizations tend to engage in multiple tactics and activities, such as protest activities, lobbying, petitioning, networking, research, educating the public, and rendering services. These scholars attribute the tactical choice primarily to pragmatic rather than ideological reasons, notably the need to appeal to different audiences and constituencies.

Other scholars ascribe greater weight to ideological and specific regional political concerns in SMOs' tactical preference (Meyer 2004; Zald 2000). Meyer (2004) showed that intraregional variations in tactics employed by P/CROs were by and large accounted for by organizational identity, whereas interregional differences in tactical preferences were best explained by regional political constraints. We will explore later the role of each type of concerns—the pragmatic, ideological, and sociopolitical—in CPW's organizational practices.

Which P/CRO features also characterize *women's* peace and human rights organizations, in particular their developmental course? Do P/CROs display unique organizational patterns due to either explicit or implicit gender identity and/or feminist ideologies? We use the term 'feminist ideology' as it pertains to a diverse collection of social theories and moral philosophies concerning the experiences of women, by and large reflecting a struggle for social and political equality (Hekman 1999).

Several issues emerge as we try to respond to these questions. The first pertains to women's motivation for joining or founding P/CROs, and whether such tendencies are connected to gender identity and feminist ideology. The second relates to women's conflict resolution capabilities. What kind of capacities for

handling disputes do women display, and how do these relate to their preferred strategies and tactics employed within the framework of P/CROs? We deal with these latter questions first, in the next section.

Women's Conflict Management Tendencies in a Political Context

Women play an active role in politics, affecting public discourse and agenda, albeit their contribution often remains unrecognized and unrewarded. Research on feminist orientation to politics (Berger-Gould 2000; Herzog 2000; Isachar 2003; Mikell 2000; Yishai 1997) suggests that it diverges from the formal Western approach that stresses representation, visibility, and status recognition of political participation.

A Ford Foundation initiative provides some relevant insights. This organization convened a meeting of experts in international relations, representing diverse institutions. The participating scholars and practitioners have studied women's involvement in promoting peace in different conflict zones (such as Africa, India, and the Balkans) and were asked to convey their insights on the ties between peace building, gender, and women's leadership. Based on the analysis of this group discussion, Naraghi-Anderlini (2001) has argued that familiarity with complex life circumstances coupled with socialization, emphasizing communal orientation, has led women to prioritize differently to men. Thus, one can theorize that the primary motivation for women to join P/CROs seems to be rooted in their focus on social justice and human rights, whereas men's motivations to join P/CROs appear to lie in the realm of realpolitik.

Women turn to social movements, civil society, and voluntary organizations as outlets of political influence, challenging the formal institutions and pressing for social change (de la Rey and McKay 2006; Herzog 2000; Yishai 1997). Contemporary recognition of women's capacities for constructive conflict resolution is embodied in a UN Security Council resolution (#1325) acknowledging the importance of gender perspective in peace and conflict resolution processes and emphasizing the crucial role played by women and women's organizations in this domain.

Women's general perception concerning conflicts and their experiences in this domain shape their strategic and tactical preferences (Kolb 1993). Berger-Gould's (2000), Mikell's (2000) and Naraghi-Anderlini's (2001) investigations of women's activities in political conflict reveals that women not only take care of war victims behind the front line, but they also adopt a more active stance in political discords by means of nonviolent demonstrations, and play a central role in restoring social systems and rebuilding civil society in the aftermath of war. Moreover, women have shaped peace processes by conducting ceasefire and disarmament campaigns, encouraging dialogue and direct negotiation between conflicting parties, and serving as consultants to leaders and diplomats (Hunt and Posa 2001; Kolb and Williams 2000).

Thus, the strategies underlying women's political activism reflect two features: active engagement and constructive orientation (Cockburn 1998; de la Rey and McKay 2006; Rusbult 1993). Women's active engagement patterns

entail prompt organization, assuming responsibility, exhibiting commitment, and actually executing their missions. Constructive orientation pertains to their motivation to cooperate with the other side in an effort to find mutually beneficial solutions (Deutsch and Coleman 2000).

Isachar (2003) and Cockburn (1998) share the conviction that the above characteristics reveal the inherent association between feminism as an anti-oppression movement and women's social and political activism. A feminist culture advocates confrontation with conflict issues by means of conflict management approaches based on consensus, and condemns any form of coercion, especially imposing solutions by military means.

Organizational Practices in Feminist Organizations

Embracing feminist gender identity, manifested in women's strategic choice for engaging conflict in a constructive manner, may also imply grounding women's peace-related activities in certain organizational practices. A comprehensive analysis of a variety of feminist organizations (Ferree and Martin 1995) examined the relationships between feminist identity and organizational practices.

Interestingly, the researchers (Acker 1995; Arnold 1995; Ferree and Martin, 1995) found that the investigated organizations did *not* conform to the early conceptions concerning the preferred prototype of a feminist organization, which entails collectivistic decision-making, member empowerment, and a political agenda for ending women's oppression. Their analysis demonstrates that most feminist organizations which survived have modified their structure and modi operandi, with most of them intertwining collectivistic and bureaucratic elements in their organizational design, processes, and goals. Unsurprisingly, empirical research reveals that women's organizations display frequent internal tensions. These intraorganizational conflicts reflect ideological dilemmas around structural parameters, namely juxtaposing collective identities, autonomy, and equality against strategic effectiveness (Acker 1995; Arnold 1995; Cockburn 1998; Ferree and Martin 1995; Riger 1994). The internal tensions in feminist organizations stem from the multidimensional nature of feminist ideology, the specific organizational profile, and the characteristics of their external environment (Cockburn 1998; Ferree and Martin, 1995; Helman and Rapoport 1997; Markowitz and Tice 2002).

From an ideological perspective, members of a feminist organization are expected to recognize their shared gender identity and unity, but at the same time strive to represent and express the actual diversity among individuals. This fundamental opposition of feminist ideology to coercion implies constant social construction of reality among members of women's organizations, which entails allowing a wide range of alternative discourses rather than promoting a single normative voice or narrative.

Examination of the organizational profile of feminist organizations indicates that heterogeneity in goals, larger membership and differences in members' knowledge and experience, women's competitiveness, and lack of flexibility tend to enhance internal conflicts and mitigate egalitarian participation (Acker 1995).

Finally, the less supportive and legitimizing the external environment is of feminist organizations, the more pressure it exerts on women's organizations to conform to the prevailing norms of organization. Since most feminist organizations still operate in unfavorable environments, in order to foster sustainability they tend to compromise their egalitarian organizational forms and practices. Such necessary concessions often spur internal debates (Acker 1995; Calás and Smircich 1996; Cockburn 1998; Markowitz and Tice 2002).

In short, feminist organizations constantly engage in internal politics and negotiation aimed at closing the gap between ideals of desired practice and the realities of their daily operation. Most solutions entail a compromise reflected in organizational practices (Ferree and Martin 1995).

We now provide a glimpse into the nature of CPW's local cultural and sociopolitical context, emphasizing women's sociopolitical activism in Israel.

The Cultural and Sociopolitical Context of CPW

Bernstein (1993), Israeli (1987), Swirski (1991), and Muhlbauer (2001) argue that Israeli women's political activism has always been subordinated to the national security doctrine. This social ethos evolved in the process of a national liberation struggle and nation building. The Holocaust trauma enhanced the fear of annihilation, which in turn nourished the security doctrine and the striving for national cohesion and unity. As expressed by Muhlbauer (2001: 287): 'Any digression from this dominant national security doctrine has been criticized for promoting internal factionalism and risking the nation's well-being.'

The dominance of the national security agenda has been somewhat mitigated as a result of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in the 1980s and the first Palestinian uprising. Alternative interpretations of national security issues have become a subject of public debate. This transition fostered the formation of women's groups engaged in anti-war and peace activities. Notwithstanding the broadening of perspectives on security policies, the national ethos of a protracted struggle for survival has retained its potency. Thus, many women political activists experience conflicting loyalties—to the national cause on the one hand and to gender on the other (Muhlbauer 2001).

Moreover, coercive religious rule, which features a patriarchal value system, has constantly mitigated women's attempts to influence the political arena, pressuring them to revert to their traditional gender roles. The national security ethos, centrality of the Jewish–Palestinian conflict, and the traditional gender role hierarchy pressure women to assume the role of mothers of soldiers in a developing nation, where those taking part in the military system, namely men, enjoy a significant political advantage (Lahav 1993; Muhlbauer 2001).

Hence, women's voices on issues of national security and defense policies have usually been silenced. This favorable position of the national ideology over gender remained evident even when diverse worldviews became legitimate. It is therefore not surprising that the pressure exerted by the Four Mothers movement on the government to withdraw from Lebanon was quite effective;

these women expressed maternal concerns, thereby confining their activity to the sphere of the national and patriarchal consensus.

In a similar vein, Pope (1991) argues that the largest women's organizations in Israel (NA'AMAT and WIZO) developed within the national consensus and demonstrated loyalty to the national-familial ethos. Their activities can be classified as welfare NGOs, but they do not qualify as social movements as characterized by Gidron et al. (1999).

Penetration of radical (in the non-consensual and politically extreme sense) feminist ideology, led by American-born immigrants, into Israeli society in the 1970s, gave rise to women's P/CROs (Sharoni 1995), but has not dramatically changed the impact of these organizations on Israeli politics. Their condemnation of occupation and oppression, and opposition to the resulting dominance of patriarchal power structures and institutions has usually been interpreted as challenging the national security ethos, a red line most Israeli women refrain from crossing, especially under circumstances of an escalating Jewish–Palestinian conflict. Consequently, their peace initiatives by and large encompassed marginal groups (Muhlbauer 2001). The more influential women's groups which launched anti-war campaigns, such as Mothers Against Silence, have not significantly diverged from the national consensus. Most of them were of European origin, upper-middle-class professionals with academic degrees, who regardless of their left-wing political inclinations completed their mandatory military service. Their tactics reflected a combination of respect with firmness and assertiveness.

Conceivably, women's P/CROs embracing the liberal (more consensual and politically moderate) feminism creed constitute the prevailing form of opposition to the dominant national security perspective, capable of negotiating for change in national priorities. Liberal feminism allows women to take an active stance for peace, (Isachar 2003) while simultaneously retaining loyalty to their national identity.

As expressed by Isachar (2003: 16), women's political activism in Israel is quite unique: 'The hidden women's story, which is silenced in the history of literature, and which feminist writers attempt to bring to the surface and document is a protracted/continuous struggle against oppression. This is not a heroic narrative such as "vini, vidi, vici", but rather a laborious curving of pathways.'

CPW Organizational Profile

CPW was founded in 2001 by three Israeli women, and has been active ever since toward achieving three declared goals: monitoring soldiers' and police conduct at checkpoints; ensuring the human and civil rights of Palestinians crossing the checkpoints; and recording and reporting the data derived from observations to various audiences including decision-makers, international human rights organizations, and the general public. The organization's membership, totaling about 500 individuals, is confined to Israeli women, virtually all of them Jewish.

Most CPW members are within the 50–70 age bracket, by and large of European or American origin (Ashkenazi Jews), upper-middle class, and university-educated

professionals in a variety of fields. There is some diversity among the active members' prior and current experience of activism in left-wing political and human rights organizations, as well as in social activism.

A substantial segment of the organization's members are close relatives (daughters, granddaughters, and wives) of current or former military, security, or political leaders in the State of Israel (including pioneer leaders in pre-state Israel). CPW is a voluntary organization, currently operating in four regions, with a coordinator and a deputy in each: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and central Israel, North, and South. The organization's main thrust of activities revolves around monitoring soldiers' and police conduct at checkpoints. The activists operate in two daily five-hour shifts, and most women do one shift a week.

CPW's decision-making body operates as a participative democracy, resorting to collectivistic, decentralized decision-making procedures. All members are invited to participate in a monthly meeting, called 'an ORG meeting', where decisions are made. At these meetings every member has a say and an equal vote on whatever subject is on the agenda. Additional organizational decisions are taken in a small group (around eight) of the elected regional coordinators and their deputies (the organizing committee). This group meets periodically, each time in a different region, and any other interested members are invited to participate. The decisions made by the organizing committee are recorded and transmitted over the internal communication network; however, the proceedings of these meetings are not documented. Urgent decisions are made by the regional coordinators.

Additional organizational functions comprise an organizational spokesperson, a treasurer, and local shift organizers. CPW has its own website and an internal communications network which provides an outlet for an ongoing exchange between members, including heated debates over policy issues, organizational matters, and specific everyday concerns.

Fundraising is a rather sporadic activity, largely based on individual initiatives and personal ties with potential donors. This informal fundraising mode persists despite the establishment of a separate formal structure—a registered company called Women's Fund for Human Rights, composed of eleven members who hold token shares of one shekel (less than 20% of one euro) each. The company functions solely as a fundraising channel, and has no decision-making authority. Transportation to the checkpoints accounts for the largest portion of organizational costs (over 80% of its budget). CPW members finance other expenditures, such as telephone costs, gasoline (many women use their own cars for transportation to the checkpoints), office supplies, and, of course, their time.

It is noteworthy that not long ago another NGO sprang out of CPW, owing to a desire and tendency of some members to expand their activities into a legal and public struggle against human rights violations of Palestinian residents by the Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories. The founders and members of the new NGO (Yesh Din—YD), most of whom are related to members of the senior military and government establishment, have remained active in CPW. YD is a registered nonprofit association, organized as a hierarchical structure, assisted by paid legal specialists and media and public relations consultants. This orga-

nization utilizes the leverage of its members' ties with the current administration as well as with the economic and cultural elites. Thus, its organizational design and modus operandi significantly depart from the social movement, grassroots model that CPW has endeavored to maintain.

Our study attempts to examine the ways in which the paradoxes inherent in feminist ideology, other gender identities, the specific organizational profile, and the nature of the cultural and sociopolitical context are manifested in the organizational practices and development of CPW.

Methodology

In this qualitative study we have followed a grounded theory approach. The reason for choosing this methodology is that when we started asking questions about CPW's practices we did not have a clear direction as to where this study would lead; hence we needed the flexibility and freedom for in-depth exploration. We also discovered that these questions have rarely been asked regarding grassroots organizations, and that the relationships between the relevant concepts (such as NGOs, peace organizations, etc.) were hardly elaborated upon (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The initial research questions were heuristic and based on other related fields of knowledge, and as the study progressed they became increasingly focused and connected with relevant terms (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Data gathering in the present study was designed to collect valuable information in order to answer the evolving research questions (Cresswell 1998). Information was primarily gathered from two sources, as is often the case in qualitative studies (e.g. Shkedi 2003): (1) interviews with key informants in the organization, such as founder members of the groups making up the organization, women in central roles recommended by members of the organization for interviewing, etc.; and (2) documents transmitted over the organization's internal communications network that discuss the various organizational and ideological issues about which the organization's members are deliberating.

We contacted the key informants through the organization's contact list. All the interviews were tape-recorded (with the interviewees' consent) and transcribed, except the words of Y1 which were taken from Isachar (2003). They were asked to describe the structure of the organization, the ideological issues presently facing the members, their own views and reasons for joining and what are the central difficulties currently facing the organization. These were also the questions we directed at the written website data. Anonymity was ensured by not disclosing names or revealing personal information regarding the interviewees.

The use of key informants was particularly important because the preliminary and exploratory nature of this study called for informants with broad and deep knowledge of the organization in general and of the issues under study in particular (Kumar et al. 1993). We chose to interview members in key roles in the organization because, owing to the organization's geographic dispersal and decentralization, most members are not involved in debates

about organizational or structural issues, but simply do their weekly shifts. Of the members who were identified by others as key informants, or who assumed formal roles (such as coordinator of the Northern group) we interviewed six. We found that the structure of the organization, as well as its main conflicts, were repeated by all the interviewed women and that they were all concerned about the ideological and organizational split within the organization. For example, they all spoke of what we named 'The Jerusalem group' and 'The Tel Aviv group' (although not all the members with the same ideological/organizational inclinations were actually geographically representing Jerusalem or Tel Aviv). These same themes were also repeated in the discussions on the organization's website by other women.

To obtain complementary data and provide a range of viewpoints on the ideological and organizational domains, we also used the organization's website information, newsletters, and announcements, as well as the discussions conducted among different members on the organization's website throughout the months of May 2004 to September 2005.

In the present study we tried to ask pertinent questions of the data, and to make the kind of comparisons that elicit new insights concerning the organizational processes within a women's grassroots organization. We did not attempt to develop a new theory, but rather to translate the descriptive data into concepts, and to try to learn how these concepts were related to each other by means of what Strauss and Corbin (1990) term 'statements of relationships'.

To ensure the validity of our interpretations we undertook three measures:

(1) An initial draft of the manuscript was sent to the key informants for further comments, clarifications, and general feedback. A final revision was completed based on some of those comments.

(2) Triangulation of the data collected from interviews with the organization's website documents and discussions by means of 'constant comparisons' (Dey, 1993).

(3) The data and our interpretations were grounded in both conceptual standpoints (such as Ferree and Martin 1995; Gidron et al. 1999; Naraghi-Anderlini 2001; and others) and empirical ones (such as verbatim quotes, excerpts of web communications and descriptions) (Dey 1993).

As the entire structure of qualitative research is flexible and can change during the course of data gathering or processing, the study's findings are valid if they are well grounded in the researcher's stated perspective (Shkedi 2003). Hence, the instrumental validity of our study will be determined in accordance with the propriety of the research process (for example, transparency of the recorded interviews, access to documents for analysis, observing ethical principles in the course of the study, etc.). The apparent validity of our study will be determined by the plausibility of its findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the term 'dependability' to emphasize the uniqueness of the characteristics of validity and reliability in a qualitative study. In this way we hope readers will be able to judge the quality of the research and examine the logic and plausibility of the researchers' thinking and actions (Shkedi 2003).

The following sections present the results of our study in two parts: first, the relationships between conflicting gender identities and the organizational crisis; second, the dilemmas over organizational goals, structures, and processes.

Findings and Discussion

The organization is currently undergoing a process of internal reflection—a revisiting of its goals, organizational design, and procedures. This reorganization process was initiated because many of the members felt dissatisfied with the way decisions were being made and implemented, and because there were ideological disagreements that influenced the organization's activities. This reflective process has led to some modifications in definitions of organizational aims and practices. We attempted to elucidate the role of gender identities in the antecedents of the crisis and the ensuing implications for organizational development.

Conflicting Gender Identities and Organizational Crisis

The seeds of potential crisis can be traced back to the organization's foundation stages. CPW was established by three women from Jerusalem, none of whom was born or grew up in Israel. One of the founders came from Canada with extensive experience in human rights movements in Guatemala; another came from the former Soviet Union; and the third immigrated to Israel from the United Kingdom, where she had formerly been a member of the Communist party and various human rights movements (Keshet 2006). These women carried into the newly established organization clear overtones of radical social movements, but unlike other women who joined the organization soon after, they were not bound by Israeli national security doctrine or Zionist ideology. They sought radical measures to change the governmental political agenda, that is, ending Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. As expressed by the founder from the UK (Y1):

'I became involved in intense political activity right after Benjamin Netanyahu's election as Prime Minister. I have been on the executive board of the Committee Against Tortures, an activist in the Committee Against House Demolitions, and in 1996 I joined Bat-Shalom where I developed my feminist awareness (which until then had not been particularly strong) … I pledged to end the occupation no matter what. I hate demonstrations. I do not find them beneficial in any way. My thing is to somehow dig underneath and shatter the current situation. I see this as a kind of civil revolt. We saw how it happened in Eastern Europe: when the communist regimes collapsed, millions of people took to the streets and began tearing down the Berlin Wall with their bare hands. This is the kind of activity we need to encourage, I am looking forward to the moment when millions of people will come and simply tear down the military checkpoints with their bare hands, and it's over…' (Y1; Isachar 2003: 48)

Not only did the founders of CPW embrace radical (in the more extreme, less-consensual sense) left-wing political orientation, they also *explicitly* stated the feminist identity of the emerging P/CRO, as demonstrated by the following quotation:

'Because the three founders of CPW were feminists we quickly discovered that it is much more effective to have only women on the shifts. When men come, clashes arise immediately. For example, in the beginning AL (a man) joined us and right away shouting and quarreling with the soldiers started, and it was clear to us that we don't need it.' (Y2)

This extremist feminist gender identity demonstrated by the three founders conflicted almost immediately with gender identities embodied by Israeli-born women. The former advocated decisive action that would underscore the presence of CPW members to the soldiers, clearly signaling their objective to observe and monitor their activities at the checkpoint. The latter proposed a moderate and more restrained approach, based on premeditation and careful planning of activities, thereby reflecting their reluctance to antagonize the Israeli establishment, represented at the checkpoints by the Israel Defense Force (IDF) and Israel Police border patrol units.

The major issue to cause tension between the radical founder members and their moderate counterparts was over relations with the soldiers, especially the potential adverse repercussions of CPW members' activities on military personnel at the checkpoints. The radical women, not burdened by conflicting loyalties, contended that soldiers who condemn the occupation could have refused to serve in the Occupied Territories on moral grounds, thus solving their predicament. In contrast, the moderate women revealed deep concern with respect to Israeli society in general, owing to their own socialization, and hence a strong Israeli identity. Moreover, they felt particularly obligated to the soldiers, largely due to the fact that their own relatives (husbands, sons, etc.) had served or were serving in the IDF.

Indeed, as expressed by one of the founder members from the 'moderate' group, the radical feminist identity clashed with the more liberal version of feminist identity, the one that also reflected dual loyalties—to Israeli society and gender identity:

'You have to understand who the Jerusalem group are: most of them were not born in Israel, these women immigrated to Israel not necessarily out of Zionistic motives and come from backgrounds in leftist movements abroad, most of them do not see themselves as Zionists (you could say they belong to the radical left…).'

'As to conscientious objection to the IDF, this is not an official position of our organization, and there are disagreements and radical views on both sides. This issue constitutes a source of considerable tension, and there were women who left CPW because of that. For example, during the annual meeting of the CPW assembly, a military helicopter flew over us and there were individuals who said they wished it would crash and many others were offended, including some whose sons or husbands had been pilots. There were some who left and some who threatened to leave because of this divergence of opinions.' (Y2)

As can be seen in the above quote, the members of CPW face a uniquely sensitive position as the goals and ideology of the organization often clash with their domestic Zionist loyalties. It accentuates the potency of the local cultural and sociopolitical context in forming ideological preferences which then spill over to organizational practices.

Later on, following a feature article about CPW in the Israeli daily *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Kadmon 2003), women from the Tel Aviv area joined the organization.

This group, as described by one of the moderate founders from Jerusalem, demonstrated a moderate profile and clear bond to Israeli identity:

'The Tel Aviv group is by and large Israeli born, Zionists, who care very much for the State of Israel, they were in the Palmach (a pre-state military organization and precursor of the IDF) and served in the IDF, they are deeply concerned about the consequences of the occupation for the young people, for the soldiers. This is not something the Jerusalem women are concerned with … With respect to feminism, among the Tel Aviv women, this is not a central issue, but obviously all the women share an egalitarian worldview.' (Y2)

Although most of the Tel Aviv group members (and the majority of the Northern and Southern region members) do not explicitly view feminist ideology as a fundamental component of CPW's creed, implicit gender identities do frame their perceptions of organizational goals and practices, as expressed by one of the coordinators in the Tel Aviv region:

'The reason for excluding men is not necessarily due to a feminist perspective, but more due to the view of 'non-consensus' … In CPW it is clear, this is a women's organization because we want a non-militaristic nature, a non-security characteristic. This is not a feminist organization because women's rights and status in society are not on our agenda. But many women in the organization are feminist … and maybe after all women are less power-driven, perhaps it is no accident that women are peace activists. Women are probably less attached to the military ethos, to that romantic male perception. Women also tend to volunteer more than men, and in CPW it is quite impressive that most women have no ego, do not have personal interests to advance or be at the forefront, although most have or have had very successful careers outside CPW, but in the organization they are committed to the cause.' (S)

The above quotation clearly demonstrates women's communal inclination toward *acting* (engaging) on behalf of others to ensure human rights, resorting to a constructive approach with no expectation of personal reward (Cockburn 1998; Isachar 2003; Rusbult 1993). It also demonstrates a collective identity as the speaker uses the word 'we', and talks about women in general rather than about herself or a single woman. This linguistic pattern can be traced in most of the quotes, including those from the website.

Another member of the Tel Aviv group does consider CPW a feminist organization, grounding the defining feature of feminism in women's peace-seeking proclivities, as expressed in her own words:

'In my opinion CPW is a feminist organization par excellence. Feminism is reflected in the very subject matter of this organization. Peace is a feminine subject: women want peace because they are pro life, and peace serves life. In addition, peace has greater impact on women than on men … Women in CPW who claim the organization is not feminist, simply do not understand what feminism is.' (A)

The above quotations clearly show diverse conceptions of feminism, which presumably affect perceptions concerning the prototypical characteristics of feminist organizations. Such diversity has clearly contributed to the internal tensions within CPW and eventually to the crisis.

Notwithstanding the overarching opposition to the occupation and one version of feminist perspective or another shared by CPW members, the internal debate between the 'Jerusalem group' and the 'Tel Aviv group' was reflected in almost every activity and communication. Paradoxically, gender

identity, notably its feminist overtones, clearly accentuated this friction. The organization's ambiguous definition of its goals, its grassroots nature (namely lack of procedures for recruitment and absorption of new members, paucity of clear guidelines for conduct at the checkpoints, flat organizational design, and decentralized decision-making) all fostered clashes and precipitated an organizational crisis, as related by one of the women from the Northern region:

'There are no clear criteria for joining the organization; whoever wished to join was accepted. This was one of our mistakes. Had we built clear recruitment and absorption procedures, we would not need the consulting process. But as it happened, women came with different conceptions of what CPW is, they felt that they wanted to do something but did not know for example what the organization does at the checkpoints, what our attitude is toward soldiers, what are the goals … what does it mean to succeed, do you have to merely watch and document or do you have to do more, to help the Palestinians? This brought about a situation of aggressive exchanges among CPW members in an organization that talks about non-violence and tolerance.' (SH)

The organizational crisis developed with CPW's physical growth. As more women joined, especially in the Tel Aviv region, the need for clearly defined goals, strategies, procedures, and tactics has become indispensable. Since the moderate Tel Aviv group outgrew its radical Jerusalem counterpart, these women pressed for greater formalization of the organizational structures and procedures. In line with the contention of Gidron et al. (1999), an increase in a P/CRO's size coupled with the need to enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness tends to foster formalization processes, often accompanied by expansion of organizational goals. In the present case, this proclivity represented by the moderate Tel Aviv group conflicted with the radical Jerusalem group's resistance to change of the grassroots, informal organizational structure and procedures, or expansion of organizational goals. As expressed by an active Tel Aviv group member:

'The pressure began as the size of the organization doubled. It became clear that we needed to organize, set rules, since the reality in the field raises questions that need to be addressed. Questions emerged as to who should set rules – senior members due to their experience, or all members? One of the debates was over membership: Do members need to be radical? Anti-Zionist? Actually, there are different voices. For some women, maintaining the image of the Israeli state seemed important. Although they are against occupation and wish to promote the human rights of the Palestinians, help them establish a Palestinian state, they also care deeply for Israeli society. Another debate was concerning relations with the Israeli establishment and cooperation with other organizations. We have a lot of material, information, but we do not use it effectively, our voice is not sufficiently heard, our potential is not fulfilled. For that we need to organize, to maintain ties with the establishment and use the assistance of paid experts. Some think we need to expand our goals from merely 'voicing' to 'influencing'. Others do not want any ties with the establishment and do not want to change organizational goals, nor do they want to employ paid experts.' (S)

Internal tensions in feminist organizations, juxtaposing survival and effectiveness versus maintaining feminist ideology, are quite typical as indicated in the organization studies literature (Acker 1995; Arnold 1995; Calás and Smircich 1996; Cockburn 1998; Ferree and Martin 1995; Riger 1994).

Dilemmas about Organizational Goals and Practices

The fact that CPW members decided to engage in a self-reflection process suggests recognition of internal diversity and the need to deal with these divisions to ensure the organization's sustainability. The decision to engage in a self-reflection process while employing the services of an external organizational consultant was made in one of the stormier ORG meetings. This learning process, facilitated by the organizational consultant and attended by the group coordinators, members with formal roles (such as treasurer, etc.), represents women from both the more radical group and the more moderate group. The process appears to bring to the surface formerly latent disparities among women in CPW concerning preferred organizational structure and operations. In line with Ferree and Martin's (1995) and Riger's (1994) research, these internal frictions manifest ideological dilemmas contrasting the importance of feminist-collective identities with the supremacy of strategic effectiveness.

The consultation process has yielded a formal outcome, namely a document phrasing CPW's ideological creed and a proposed organizational design. Nevertheless, the internal debates concerning organizational form and practices persist in the intranet communications and are manifested in the individual interviews. The quotation above and the ones presented below clearly indicate the diversity of positions on organizational issues. Some members express effectiveness and survival-related concerns, but many women strongly resist forsaking the grassroots nature of the organization, especially its flat structure and decentralized decision-making processes.

Thus, some offer very specific proposals for enhancing effectiveness, such as the one proposed by an experienced manager of a women's organization and social activist, who ardently advocates the NGO model for CPW, albeit *not* forsaking the grassroots feature:

'We have to establish an NGO, which includes in part volunteers and in part paid professionals; there is no contradiction between a grassroots organization and a professional organization … there is a lot of experience with the NGO model, especially in peace-related organizations.' (A)

Other members guard against a disruption of shared gender identity and the grassroots model of organizing, as articulated by a regional coordinator over the intranet in reference to a debate over a financial issue: 'Our way of decision-making in this case as in all other cases matches the grassroots spirit.' She concludes the electronic discussion with: 'Always remember—we have more in common than differences' (H).

In fact, a recent electronic message followed by an abundance of supportive communications over the intranet vividly demonstrates many of the women's opposition to the transformation of CPW into a less egalitarian and less collectivistic organization. The author of the message provides specific suggestions to counteract this adverse trend, which in her view is already manifested by several events:

'It is very important that CheckpointWatch remains a grassroots, non-hierarchical organization. The meaning of these two extremely important conditions is that each

of us, by virtue of her participation in CPW's activities, has equal rights and equal power to influence group decisions. Lately, a few issues related to the functioning of CheckpointWatch have made me worried about dangerous steps in the direction of a very hierarchical organization where the power is concentrated in the hands of very few (even if they have been elected for other roles) ... It is easy to fall into the feeling that 400 women is an unmanageable number of people and any way a very few can represent all of them. But this eventually disempowers the rest of the activists and makes the organization a very stagnated entity ... I think that our main concern as a grassroots and non-hierarchical organization should be to ensure maximum participation of members in the different committees in order to involve them and help build up a strong group of activists who are willing to take responsibility for future activities.' (Y3)

This message lends support to previous findings in organization studies literature that feminist organizations need not necessarily compromise their ideological concerns regarding participative democracy and nonbureaucratic organizational forms in order to ensure survival. There are viable alternatives to forsaking a 'grassroots' organization, such as dividing it into small groups (Riger 1994).

One explanation for the constant deliberations and negotiations over organizational structure issues in CPW leans on the nature of feminist ideology, reflecting diversity of discourses and internal paradoxes. Another plausible interpretation refers to CPW's specific organizational profile. CPW's membership comprises upper-middle-class, educated women of middle age, some with limited experience in political or social activism. Some women are related to senior government officials, high-ranking military officers, and public figures. These features intensify the extant tensions inherent in the multifaceted gender identities.

Diversity in political and social activism experience among the membership, and the self-confidence of many women due to secure financial and social standing, increase internal conflicts in CPW between various groups. For example, the more radical feminists versus their liberal feminist counterparts, the more experienced women in contrast with less experienced members, and those more connected to elites versus the less 'privileged'. Such internal frictions, by and large represented by latent power struggles, tend to undermine equal participation and involvement in the organization.

The following quotation from an interview with an experienced social and political activist provides evidence for our contention:

'This phenomenon of women who are daughters/granddaughters or wives of … They founded YD, an outrageous thing, this can only happen in an organization where the leaders do not have a clue what real activism is … How could they have founded a rival organization? Don't they understand that there is a conflict of interest? The problem is the combination of lack of experience with self-confidence due to being the daughter/wife of ….' (A)

This CPW member asserts that such a specific organizational profile can endanger CPW's survival much more than the ideological divisions between the radical women and the more liberal ones:

'The central ideological debate in CPW is over organizational form. Although the political spectrum of CPW members is quite broad … and disputes erupt when there is a call

to join other peace or human rights organizations, these conflicts, unlike organizational ones, won't tear the organization apart.' (A)

Research on feminist organizations (Acker 1995; Cockburn 1998; Ferree and Martin 1995; Helman and Rapoport 1997) seems to support both explanations for internal tensions and dilemmas over structure and procedures. These scholars show that heterogeneous goals resulting from diverse gender identities and growing membership and gaps in members' knowledge and experience, coupled with women's competitiveness, increase internal tensions and mitigate egalitarian participation.

How can CPW cope with these internal conflicts and simultaneously ensure organizational effectiveness and sustainability? Our data do not provide a clear-cut answer to this query: this organization seems to vacillate between transition into a more formalized NGO and clinging to the grassroots stage of social movement organization. In the case of CPW, adopting a solution embraced by some P/CROs and feminist work organizations, namely compromising grassroots principles, would require a fundamental negotiation process that addresses the marked resistance of many members to a hierarchical design and centralized decision-making. Instead of embracing such a drastic solution, the organization experiments with other alternatives such as regional division and founding an offshoot organization.

Conclusions

On the one hand, the findings allude to the transition of CPW from a social movement organization at a purely grassroots stage into a second phase—a more formalized NGO, in line with the arguments of Gidron et al. (1999) and Ferree and Martin (1995). On the other hand, this study indicates strong resistance to such a shift. CPW members continue vigorously debating while juxtaposing the issue of organizational efficiency associated with formalization and bureaucracy versus the ideological principles of a grassroots organization based on equality and participative democracy. The latter tendency has been noted in previous work on stages of growth in feminist organizations (Riger 1994), suggesting that the mere reflection and open debate on those issues may represent growth and maturation in women's P/CROs, contrary to prevailing notions of organizational development which stress physical growth and efficiency. Perhaps CPW demonstrates the capability of its members for intentional/reflexive gender practicing or, in Schön's (1983) terms, to engage in reflective practice, thus closing the gap between espoused and applied theories, still virtually lacking in work organizations (Martin 2006). This latter capacity can then serve as another indicator of organizational development, especially in unique organizations such as P/CROs.

Furthermore, CPW, unlike its feminist work organization counterparts, which often compromise their ideological principles at later stages of development due to pragmatic concerns, appears more inclined to consistently grounding its practices on feminist ideological premises (participation, anti-oppression, and non-coercion). In this sense CPW not only differs from feminist work organi-

zations, but also departs from the prototypical processes postulated by Gidron et al. (1999) in their work on P/CROs. Instead, it bears a greater resemblance to Meyer's (2004) and Zald's (2000) conception of SMO organizational practices, emanating primarily from ideological rather than practical legitimacy-related concerns.

Nevertheless, consistent with prior research on feminist organizations (Ferree and Martin 1995; Riger 1994), the present study demonstrates the significance of feminist ideology, with its embedded complexity and internal paradoxes, which infiltrates into CPW members' differential preferences concerning organizational practices. Diverse feminist and gender identities are constantly negotiated: the more extreme feminists attempt to guard against further formalization and to maintain direct representation of individual voices; the more moderate seem to advocate greater formalization to ensure efficiency and organizational sustainability.

This research also highlights the significant impact of the cultural and sociopolitical context on CPW's organizational development and practices. The distinctiveness of this P/CRO is rooted in divergent gender identities of feminist Jewish women in Israel. On the one hand, Jewish women in Israel are socialized to embrace the national security ethos and most are mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of soldiers. On the other hand, those with feminist proclivities adhere to anti-oppression policies and practices of all kinds. How do they bridge these contradictory legacies? Presumably, they attempt to reconcile these divergent identities by embracing the approach of liberal feminism. This way, CPW members can take an active stance for peace, while simultaneously retaining loyalty to their national identity. Yet the process of bridging the disparate concerns is antithetical to heroic accomplishment of missions, but rather reflects the 'laborious curving of pathways' as put by Isachar.

In sum, the present study contributes to organization studies by shedding light on the intricacies of organizational dynamics in women's P/CROs embedded in a specific sociopolitical context. The developmental course and practices of CPW in some ways resemble and in some ways differ from P/CROs and feminist work organizations. CPW has evolved in the context of a security-familial ethos, evincing characteristics of a grassroots, social movement organization at its inception. Subsequently, while encountering an organizational crisis, CPW contemplated a shift into the second phase of a more formalized NGO, albeit the transition has not quite been made; it still maintains the central proclivities of women's conflict management tendencies—active engagement, demonstrating women's agency, coupled with constructive means—refraining from violence and coercion.

The unique element of this research is its focus on the intersection between gender identities, organizational practices of women's P/CROs, and the distinct cultural and sociopolitical context where this organization operates. Few previous studies have pooled these three bodies of literature.

We are aware that the findings of the present study may be limited by a somewhat similar conflict that exists within us as it does in CPW: our feminist and political identities are deeply entrenched, and sometimes conflict with our identities as researchers seeking to observe the organization and its women in an emotionally

uninvolved way. We are also aware of the fact that an organization that encourages pluralism and different voices cannot be portrayed by one 'story' alone. However, we have tried to present here a collage of opinions on the one hand, and our structural analysis of it on the other. Future studies could expand the span of narratives in similar organizations, track further stages in their developmental course, and contrast women's P/CROs with comparable men's organizations.

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