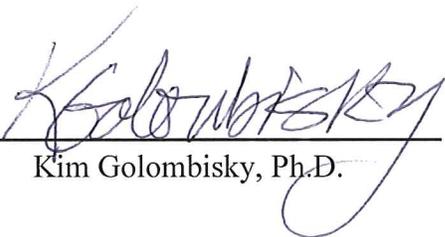


Facing the Future: Reinforcing the Mission of Pay It Forward Farm

Heather M. Kozar

An internship narrative submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Women's and Gender Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida
April 25, 2014



Kim Golombisky, Ph.D.



Diane Price-Herndl, Ph.D.

Abstract

Pay It Forward Farm (PIFF) is a multicultural non-profit organization located in Spring Hill, Florida. The mission of PIFF is to improve the lives of women, specifically single mothers, through developing their personal, professional, and multicultural skills. The purpose of this narrative is to discuss my spring 2014 graduate internship experience at PIFF. I explain my responsibility of laying an efficient organizational framework in order to facilitate a stable, sustainable, and successful future for PIFF and its members. Throughout my time at PIFF, I was able to observe and engage in situations heavily dependent on monetary funding and resources. Moreover, I was able to view how the limitations of the organization's budget and PIFF's volunteer workforce challenge multicultural visions of inclusivity.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....3
Background: Pay It Forward Farm.....4
Explanation of Internship Responsibilities8
Critical Reflections.....9
 Funding, Finances, and Organizational Frameworks.....9
 Paying It Forward: PIFF’s Volunteer Workforce.....13
 No Room for Compromise: Feminist Visions of Social Change.....16
Personal Reflections.....19
Concluding Thoughts.....20
References.....23

Introduction

Mallory was in her second year at Pay It Forward Farm (PIFF), a non-profit organization for single mothers located in Spring Hill, Florida. In order to gain professional experience in public speaking, she was sent to the University of South Florida to give a presentation to a group of graduate students about the work PIFF does for single mothers and the community. Mallory was nervous and anxious as she desperately disliked speaking in front of audiences, but her excellent presentation turned out to be my connection to PIFF. Within one week of hearing about the farm, I contacted Christine Collins, the founder and director of PIFF, and she invited me to drive out and visit the organization.

Over lunch with several of the mothers, I experienced the organization's ambition, kindness, and thoughtfulness. I listened to their stories of how they heard of PIFF and how the organization and Collins had dramatically changed their lives. While speaking with Collins, I gathered that the organization was on the cusp of a major change. Wanting to move the organization from a "social club" to a professional and educational organization, Collins planned to ensure that the future of PIFF was stable, sustainable, and committed to multiculturalism. After our meeting, I was confident I had found my internship site for the conclusion of my master's degree.

This narrative describes my spring 2014 internship experience at PIFF. First, I describe PIFF's origin and its mission to improve the lives of single mothers. This background section elaborates on PIFF's programs, personal, professional, and multicultural educational classes. Second, I explain my internship responsibilities: documenting the processes of PIFF's education programs, developing an official PIFF handbook, and minor marketing and meeting duties. Afterwards, I critically reflect on my experience at PIFF as they connect to feminist organization

theory and literature regarding funding limitations, organizational structures and leadership, the challenges of depending on a volunteer workforce, and the balancing of feminist visions of inclusivity. Last, I reflect on my personal revelations as a result of interning at PIFF. As a feminist activist and scholar, it is important to note that I write as an educated able-bodied white cisgendered heterosexual woman raised in the working class. Through this narrative, I hope to capture the experiences of developing sustainability for a feminist organization while honoring the perspectives of PIFF's director and members.

Background: Pay It Forward Farm

Pay It Forward Farm (PIFF) was created in 2010 with the objective to support single mothers in the rural Spring Hill area of Florida. Christine Collins founded the non-profit organization with the motivation to pay forward the support and kindness she received from her friends, family, and community during the time that she was a single mother. As the organization's mission statement declares, "Pay It Forward Farm is a multicultural community that aims to improve the lives of single mothers and their children, while teaching a self-reliant and sustainable lifestyle and becoming a launching point for positive action in the 'pay it forward' spirit of giving back to the world" (Pay It Forward Farm). The organization is able to admit up to 15 single mothers at a time, and since PIFF's founding, approximately a dozen young women have moved on from the organization to continue their educations or obtain jobs.

Although PIFF does not explicitly state it is a feminist organization, its founder identifies as such, and PIFF's goals, programs, and interest in improving the lives of single mothers espouse feminist values. As Metzendorf (2005) defines it, the purpose of feminist organizations is to promote the welfare of women by addressing unmet needs in their communities, and,

similarly, PIFF is an organization developed and maintained by women and for the improvement of women's lives. PIFF has developed 10 core values that state:

1. Self-reliance and sustainability stem from self-love and active participation in discovering our individual purpose in the world.
2. A servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible. We strive to practice the art of servant leadership.
3. There are only two true emotions: Love and Fear. We choose Love.
4. Faith is essential to our journey together. However, we do not define faith as a property of religion. We define faith as the trust, hope, and belief in the goodness that binds us together through love. We seek to explore our own and each other's faith in order to better serve and love each other.
5. We strive for empowerment within our families, our communities, and ourselves. We believe that empowerment comes from loving ourselves and loving others.
6. We believe that no matter where you are in your life right now, no matter who you are, no matter how young or old, it is never too early or too late to be who you are meant to be.
7. Every child, regardless of race, gender, class, religion, ethnic group, or sexual orientation is a blessing in this world. We strive to be the mirror that shows them their light. We affirm their emotional, spiritual, and intellectual success as human beings and their positive contribution to the world.
8. As Mothers and caregivers, we recognize our responsibility to be stewards of our Mother Earth. We are committed to teaching our children and future generations how to "Pay it Forward" and protect our environment and natural resources.
9. As a sisterhood of Mothers we affirm that we are creators and nurturers capable of changing the world. We acknowledge our greatness and the light that exists in us all. We encourage the discovery of our life's purpose and assist with the development of each other's goals.
10. We value emotional, spiritual, and physical health. (Pay It Forward Farm)

The single mothers' ages range from 18 to 35 years old, and their attainment of education includes their high school diplomas or General Educational Developments (GEDs). In addition,

as Pasco and Hernando Counties' demography is over 90% white, PIFF's membership reflects this statistic (United States Census Bureau, 2000). As a result of their limited work experience, access to childcare, and education, many of PIFF's members are unable to find full-time and long-term jobs with a living wage. Members have anywhere from one to three children usually under the age of 13, and although formal childcare is not available on site, the organization plans to open a childcare center in the next year or two. Several members bring their babies or toddlers to the farm, and the children are cared for on a cooperative basis.

As mentioned previously, PIFF began as an informal community group where no work or attendance commitment was required. Recently, Collins has shifted the organization's focus so that upon admittance into the program members are told that PIFF should be viewed as a responsibility, and members are scheduled specific hours to work and volunteer at PIFF throughout the workweek. Members advance through PIFF's four membership levels (novice, intermediate, advanced, and master) during their membership with PIFF. PIFF's program is constituted of three major educational programs—personal, professional, and multicultural. PIFF requires its members to be engaged volunteers and “pay it forward” by giving back to their local communities. As they complete their personal, professional, multicultural, and volunteer goals, members earn higher membership levels.

PIFF's professional development courses aim to equip members with skills that will prepare them to earn their GEDs and attain sustainable jobs or attend higher education. Professional development includes coaching, goal-setting sessions, and courses and workshops for building resumes, doing mock interviews, and learning conflict resolution. The personal development courses that PIFF has created are meant to support members in becoming emotionally, spiritually, and physically well. Home repair, cooking and nutrition, yoga, and

budgeting are some of the classes that members can take. Members are required to earn at least 5 certifications that will help them personally and professionally, which may include Microsoft Word applications, First Aid, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), horticulture, and financial literacy.

The multicultural diversity program, Breaking Barriers, is crucial to the inclusive community PIFF envisions. PIFF's handbook states, "It is important to Pay It Forward Farm that our members are multiculturally competent in order to broaden the scope of our understanding of and connection to others' experiences in our social world. We aim to listen, engage, and connect with individuals of diverse backgrounds, communities, professions, and religions" (Pay It Forward Farm). The organization brings in speakers to educate and lead discussions on topics on religion, culture, gender, sexuality, and career pathways. After completing each class or workshop for their personal, professional, and multicultural education, members are required to write formal reflection essays or papers in order to practice their writing and communication skills and critical thinking.

In 2010 Collins created PIFF in hopes of providing quality personal, professional, and multicultural training to single mothers in the Spring Hill area of rural Florida. PIFF's ultimate goal is to improve the lives of women by preparing its members to continue their education to earn their GED or college degree or work in a sustainable career. To date, PIFF has helped approximately a dozen single mothers who have continued their educations and/or found suitable jobs for their skillsets.

Explanation of Internship Responsibilities

The contract for my internship responsibilities was a semi-structured plan meant to address the long-term needs of PIFF. I worked 10 hours a week for 12 weeks during the spring 2014 semester. Together, Collins and I collaborated on how my skillset would best fit the needs of the organization. My first duty was to develop and document the processes of three of the organization's programs: Breaking Barriers, Professional Development, and Personal Development. Breaking Barriers is PIFF's multicultural education program, and volunteer speakers from the community present and facilitate discussion topics such as religion, culture, gender, sexuality, and career pathways. PIFF's Professional and Personal Development include programs such as public speaking and budgeting. Although Collins had many ideas for educational programming, she had not found the time to flesh out the details on mechanics. Next, it was my responsibility to construct the Official Pay It Forward Farms Handbook, which would tie together the organization's policies, procedures, and membership expectations to meet PIFF's multicultural vision and mission. For this task, I would create needed documents and collect and synthesize the organization's existing documents. In addition, I was to explore options for social media and marketing for public awareness and support. This included assisting PIFF's website volunteer to update the writing and restructure the organization's website. Last, as professional development for my future career goals as a professional and mental health counselor, I was invited to attend relevant organizational meetings and group counseling sessions.

Overall, my internship responsibilities were designed to help Collins in shaping a strong multicultural organization. It was important that my internship reinforced PIFF's mission as an organization committed to improving the lives of women well into the future.

Critical Reflection

Throughout my several months at the organization, three main themes stood out to me: PIFF's lack of funding and access to resources, reliance on a volunteer workforce, and dedication to open-mindedness and feminist visions of inclusivity. Each of these subjects proved to be a challenge and opportunity for growth for a developing feminist organization. Although these themes are presented as discrete in this narrative, in reality, they intertwined, overlapped, and influenced one another frequently. This section describes these important themes and ties them together with feminist organization theory and literature.

Funding, Finances, and Organizational Frameworks

Research suggests that one of the greatest challenges to feminist organizations is their limited financial funds (De León, Gigler, González, & Schellenberg, 2007; Kravetz, 2004; Mishra & Singh, 2007; Sheridan-Rabideau, 2008; Tandon, 2007). This is particularly true for feminist organizations in rural communities (English, 2007). Similarly, the greatest trial for PIFF's progress as an organization is its limited income. Most of PIFF's funding comes from its weekly community resales. Community members donate gently used items, such as furniture, clothing, or kitchenware, and PIFF resells them for funds to complete its unfinished childcare center, pay two part-time member sales associates, and keep its pantry stocked. An outcome of PIFF's minimal funding is that PIFF is currently unable to hire full-time or specialized employees to foster the stable growth of the organization. This also impacts the organization's framework and how the division of labor is distributed among employees and volunteers.

Historically, feminist organizations have aimed to be structured in a non-hierarchal manner wherein power is collective and democratic (Metzendorf, 2005; Mishra & Singh, 2007).

Within feminist organizations the “methods of operation are flexible and open to negotiation, not constrained by fixed rules or formal sanctions” (Kravetz, 2004, p. 145). Feminist organizations’ understanding of the dominating and controlling characteristics of power and patriarchy has “provided the standard against which members measured their progress in developing more equitable and human workplaces” (Kravetz, 2004, p. 144). As feminist organizations grow in numbers and online communication and workspaces increase while face-to-face interactions decrease, this nonhierarchical and informal standard has been challenging to maintain (Metzendorf, 2005).

In bridging feminist theory and practice, organizers are developing new methods of sustaining feminist organizations. For example, English and Peters (2012) found that organizers utilized “hybrid” forms of hierarchy and structure because it was practical for organizational growth. The hybrid framework is composed of “formal structures, operational practices, and decision-making guidelines” (p. 111) that affirm feminist values such as collaboration. In this model, discussion and consensus was utilized within the hierarchical decision-making process (English & Peters, 2012). Kravetz (2004) writes that feminist organizers are now asking, “How do we organize ourselves in ways consistent with our feminist principles?” instead of asking, “How do we function as a collective?” (p. 181). Overall, some feminist organizations find that they can develop into bureaucratic structures while continuing to preserve their feminist values through reflexivity and consensus within hierarchy (Adams, 2008; Hyde, 2000; Metzendorf, 2005).

At this point in its development, as a result of funding challenges, PIFF is able to support a centralized organization. As one person, Collins plays most roles in order to keep the organization moving in a positive and growing direction. In addition, the flexibility in rules and

operation that Kravetz (2004) speaks of has not aided Collins in building a cohesive and strong organizational foundation. In PIFF's case, flexibility seemed to encourage members' lack of accountability and productivity toward accomplishing PIFF's goals of developing members' professional, personal, and multicultural skills. Although some research has discussed the concept of "founders' syndrome," wherein the founders have a difficult time relinquishing their monopoly on the organizational decision-making (English & Peters, 2011), at PIFF, this is not applicable because of the lack of multiple full-time employees. With no funding for multiple full-time employees to help Collins, the breadth of responsibilities that come with founding and supporting a non-profit organization must remain her concern.

For example, during my first week at the farm, I, with the help of an experienced member, constructed a chore chart that described the cleaning and maintenance responsibilities for the community center. Instead of Collins being in charge of delegating and enforcing these tasks, she could rely on a pre-planned list wherein a team leader was assigned to hold members accountable. Although this could appear to be a trivial concern, the pre-planned schedule freed Collins' time for more important matters such as budgeting, marketing, writing grants, and scheduling educators. Until PIFF is able to support full-time employees, the organization functions centrally through Collins.

From my relatively short period of affiliation with PIFF, I observed that although the organization had been active for almost four years, important foundations had yet to be solidified. Collins and I decided it was going to be my responsibility to collect and document all of PIFF's programs, policies, and procedures into one central document in order to hold members accountable for their membership duties. This would help Collins so that she did not have to hound members for the completion of their tasks. Furthermore, Collins believes that it

was imperative to weave PIFF's multicultural philosophy throughout the handbook. This handbook aids members to become self-motivated and responsible for their own progress and success in the organization.

Wary of what bureaucracy may require of them, feminist organizations can be slow to formalize their organizations (Eisenstein, 2009; Kravetz, 2004). For example, Ferguson (1984) argued that bureaucracy ultimately co-opts feminist organizations and reinforces patriarchal and oppressive forms of hierarchy and organization. She argued for a structure that would fit outside the so-called masculine standard as a way to organize feminist non-profits. In contrast, after a trial period of running PIFF informally, that is, without documented rules and a pathway for organizational development, Collins chose to begin to formalize the organization and "run it like a business" rather than a "social club" to adhere to PIFF's mission of training single mothers. For PIFF, formalization meant documenting all of the organization's policies and procedures into a central location to ensure member and volunteer accountability and professionalism. All members receive this handbook and are required to read and abide by PIFF's standardized rules. Formalized organizational documents can work as a guide or framework for the future of the organization (Metzendorf, 2005; Sheridan-Rabideau, 2008). Furthermore, a documented structure for PIFF would make the process of applying for grants easier as funding sources demand organizational transparency to assure proper oversight (Kravetz, 2004; Markowitz & Tice, 2002).

Several studies have found that, like PIFF, feminist organizations over time tend to transform to include an institutionalized form of management (Hyde, 2000; Metzendorf, 2005). Metzendorf (2005) found that of 15 organizations, only two had formal handbooks or manuals at their founding, but over time, all 15 organizations increased their bureaucracy. The formalization

of a structured organization, if continuing to reflect a feminist vision, can enable a stable and consistent future for an organization (Eisenstein, 2009). By formalizing PIFF's organizational structure, it will be able to remain steady and stable and have a better chance for funding opportunities.

Paying It Forward: PIFF's Volunteer Workforce

Similar to other new feminist organizations (Klausen, 1994; Metzendorf, 2005; Pennerstorfer & Trukeschitz, 2012), PIFF's staff is mostly composed of community volunteers. Research has shown that volunteers, sharing a bond of mutual dedication to the organization's missions and goals, can be deeply committed to feminist organizations (Markowitz & Tice, 2002; Metzendorf, 2005). For example, volunteers "often participate to improve the quality of life for their families and neighbors" and have an interest in supporting the organization (Markowitz & Tice, 2002, p. 951). In contrast, volunteers, depending on their family or work responsibilities, also can be an unstable source of support (Metzendorf, 2005). With no formal obligations to the organization, volunteers can be an "unreliable" source of help (Hyde, 2002, p. 57). Mainly relying on volunteers also puts them at risk for becoming burned out with an excessive volunteer workload. Thus, PIFF's volunteer workforce can be considered a benefit as well as a challenge.

PIFF's 40 or so volunteers share their time and talents in several ways, including serving as professional or personal development educators and Breaking Barriers presenters. Volunteers do everything from giving their time and efforts to care for PIFF's children at the community center to providing building or grounds maintenance. Moreover, the volunteers who have specialized skillsets can create and support specific PIFF projects such as developing PIFF's

website or constructing the community center building. Collins attributes much of PIFF's growth to community donations of funds and resources to support PIFF's mission and members. As a result, the organization holds an annual PIFF Volunteer Appreciation Dinner to thank donors, supporters, and volunteers for their donations, time, and work.

Sheridan-Rabideau (2008) found that in the feminist organization GirlZone, the commitment of the volunteer staff could either make or break the success of the organization. However, with no formal commitment to the organization, "drop-in volunteers" are not able to accommodate all the needs of a growing organization (Sheridan-Rabideau, 2008, p. 16). Similarly, PIFF's personal, professional, and multicultural programs are dependent on volunteers' time; the consistency and reliability of the educators and speakers is central to the success of these programs. If there are no volunteer educators, there will not be any education programs. If there are no education programs, members are unable learn skills and graduate PIFF's program. Then members' goals of obtaining a GED or job remain elusive and out of reach. It is important and helpful for volunteers to commit to an allotted amount of time or number of sessions. PIFF has several volunteers who dedicate approximately three hours every other week for twelve weeks of sewing courses, while other volunteers are unable to give definitive answers for their time commitment. In response to this dilemma, PIFF asks all its volunteers to schedule their time at the farm in advance. This way, planning for major PIFF projects or educational programs can be managed. Otherwise, the instability of the volunteer workforce could impede the organization's goals.

Another issue concerning volunteers and feminist organizations is balancing personal and professional relationships. Personal relationships tend to be important to feminist organizations, and feminist organizers tend to meet one another through informal and personal networking

(Metzendorf, 2005). As the director, Collins has referred to the difficulties of balancing professional relationships with personal friendships. She worries about stepping on others' toes or offending volunteers as she tries to run a productive organization. Because the Spring Hill community is tightknit, many of Collins' close friends and acquaintances volunteer at PIFF. This dynamic has Collins reflecting on how to run a successful organization with her professional volunteers who also happen to be her personal support without crossing relationship boundaries. Similar to Metzendorf's (2005) research findings on feminist organizations, PIFF is faced with "an increased concern for task accomplishment" (p.150), meaning the organization is responsible for meeting its goals efficiently. Consequently, it can be challenging to hold volunteers accountable for consistency or dependability in their work ethic or efforts when they are in fact "volunteering" their time. For example, if a volunteer agrees to perform a specific task for the organization and does a poor job or does not follow through, how can the organization bring this to the volunteer's attention without disrupting the personal relationship?

Although a volunteer workforce can foster a dedicated and passionate organizational community, with no formal obligations, volunteers can be difficult to rely on. In PIFF's situation, a volunteer workforce is especially precarious because of the personal, professional, and multicultural education programs that are dependent on volunteer time and effort. Moreover, Collins has seen challenges arise when bridging personal and professional relationships in an organizational setting. Due to the unpaid and loose commitments of volunteers, PIFF's volunteer workforce also complicates carrying out a feminist vision of social change.

No Room for Compromise: Feminist Visions of Social Change

PIFF does not explicitly identify as a feminist organization. However, Collins identifies as feminist, and the work the organization seeks to accomplish, improving the lives of single mothers, is feminist as feminist organizations are defined by their mission of promoting the welfare of women by addressing unmet needs of their community (Metzendorf, 2005). Although most PIFF members do not identify as feminist, I observed that members had many feminist conversations. For example, one morning several of the mothers were discussing the appropriateness of breastfeeding in public, and they agreed women should be able to breastfeed in public whenever is convenient for them. One member recounted the dirty looks she got for breastfeeding in public and said, “I’m not going to be told to feed my baby while in a bathroom...it’s disgusting.” Another member agreed saying, “People forget what breasts are for...boobs are seen as sexual when really their purpose is for babies.” Conversations such as this one illustrate not only the mother’s resistance towards sexism but also the critical interrogation of social norms.

Because PIFF is located in rural Florida, Collins’ dedication to her vision of a multicultural organization is frequently challenged. Every other Thursday, PIFF hosts a Lunch and Learn, where the members attend a cooking class at the farm and share their meal with the speaker of a Breaking Barriers session, the multicultural education course. During one Thursday, members were learning to how cook a meal from several more conservative women from the Spring Hill community. The speaker invited to that day’s Lunch and Learn was scheduled to speak about myths about sexuality and the Bible as well as including the LGBT community within Christian spaces. A senior PIFF member overheard the cooking volunteers drop several

disapproving comments about the topic of the Breaking Barriers session, and it was feared that the volunteers would treat the speaker inhospitably and rudely.

The senior member notified and cautioned Collins and me about the potential conflict. During this conversation, Collins expressed her frustration but was not sure how to address it without offending any volunteers. We decided nonchalantly to reiterate the multicultural purpose of our organization and programs before lunch began to avoid any confrontation among the volunteers. In the end, the cooking volunteers did not stay to hear the speaker's lesson. But this experience proved to be a beneficial and productive one because it revealed an opportunity to emphasize PIFF's commitment to multicultural inclusivity. In order to reinforce PIFF's commitment to multiculturalism for all speakers, educators, and volunteers, I wrote the following statement for PIFF's internal and external documents:

Pay It Forward Farm and our families expect that as a volunteer you will respect and abide by our core values. We wish to have you join us in creating a holistic environment in which our members' emotional, spiritual, and physical health is supported. We speak and behave in a manner that reflects the value of multicultural diversity (race, gender, class, religion, ethnic group, and sexual orientation).

I inserted this statement throughout PIFF's handbook, website, and any volunteer registration or information documents. Its purpose is to reinforce the mission and vision of PIFF at the beginning of every person's introduction to the organization. It will serve to hold individuals working with or in PIFF accountable to abide by PIFF's values and maintain a culture of inclusivity. As I reflect on the previous sections' focus of working with friends and volunteers, confrontational situations add another layer to relying on a volunteer workforce. Collins chose to

stand firm with her convictions, understanding that her decision had the possibility of alienating her socially conservative volunteers. It is important to the organization that all viewpoints are respected, but while working at PIFF, each person's words and actions must accept multicultural differences.

One concern of feminist organizations is the risk of being coopted from their feminist mission at the cost of funding or volunteers (Metzendorf, 2005; Kravetz, 2004). Kravetz (2004) writes feminist organizations are "aware of the extent to which cooperation necessitated compromise and compromise could lead to co-optation" (p. 66). Adams (2008) argues that the recruitment and retention of staff and volunteers for feminist organizations must be a process wherein the person's feminist or multicultural values and morals are examined to ensure a certain level of commitment to multicultural social change. However, PIFF's unpaid volunteer pool makes this standard challenging because the community of volunteers who share a feminist vision is limited. In this case, Collins was not willing to compromise her vision of multicultural inclusivity and so remains willing to risk losing some of her volunteers in order to continue to foster a multicultural and inclusive environment. As PIFF becomes able to hire full-time and part-time staff members, the ability to more thoroughly vet applicants will allow PIFF to reinforce its core values and mission of being inclusive and multicultural. At the same time, PIFF's conservative volunteers remain an integral and valued core constituency of the group's mission.

Volunteers frequently challenge Collins' goal of adhering to and reinforcing a multicultural community. For feminist organizations like PIFF, the threat of co-optation is present through funding requirements and the community of Spring Hill where PIFF is located. As a result, Collins has to be reflective about the kinds of educators and speakers she invites to PIFF as

well as the subjects that are being taught to members. The multicultural statement that I wrote will serve to remind PIFF and its affiliates of the organization's dedication to inclusivity.

During my brief time as a graduate intern at PIFF, it became apparent to me that PIFF's access to funding and resources heavily impacts the structure of the organization. The lack of money shapes the division of labor as well as the dependence on the generosity of volunteers. PIFF's reliance on a volunteer workforce builds a shared allegiance to improving the lives of PIFF's members but also creates difficulties when volunteers do not have formal time obligations. Moreover, funding and volunteers at times challenge Collins' vision of feminist inclusivity.

Personal Reflections

As I helped PIFF members with writing their Breaking Barriers reflection papers and saw how they struggled with their writing and confidence, it became apparent to me that I hold much educational privilege. Although from my area of study I know of educational and social class privilege, it was my experience at PIFF that reinforced my understanding of *my* privilege. I had taken for granted many skills and opportunities I have had enjoyed over the course of my educational career. My success as a student and professional, yes, has been a result of my hard work and dedication, but also largely due to my family's support and cultural capital. I grew up with my parents telling my siblings and me that our only option was to attend college after high school, and although I could not afford the cost of tuition, I had the knowledge of the paths to student loans. Moreover, I was raised in a community where all my friends went directly from high school to college. So, I graduated high school and, arrogantly, did not think anything of it. Four years later, I graduated college with my Bachelor of Science, and again, did not blink an eye regarding how fortunate I was to have a college degree.

My education sanctions me to climb the social ladder and obtain privileges beyond what PIFF members currently have access to because they are without high school diplomas. Each of the women at the organization is intelligent and thoughtful, but social circumstances denied them the opportunity and support to finish high school or attend college in order to further develop their knowledge and social and professional skills. In PIFF's setting I was uncomfortable about my education because I did not want it to be a barrier between members and myself. Accordingly, I felt that I walked a fine line in talking about my educational background, especially as a graduate student completing a second degree.

On my first day at PIFF, Collins asked if I would join the members outside where they were sorting donations for resale. She wanted me to get an idea of what type of activities members did during their work time at PIFF. This activity not only allowed me to get a feel for the organization, but it also created a space where I could get to know the women and their perspectives on PIFF, and they could get to know me. I thought this was a helpful idea, and throughout my internship, I assisted members in sorting donations, passing out flyers, and helping their kids with their homework. I think it allowed all of us to bond and diminish any initial perceived barriers. My internship at PIFF has brought me to understand my relationship to the material effects of educational privilege such as the ability to climb of social class status.

Concluding Thoughts

My goal as an intern was to ensure that PIFF remains stable and sustainable into its future, and it is important to me that this work continues after I've left the organization. In the last few weeks of my internship, I connected PIFF with the University of South Florida's Writing Center in the hope that the Writing Center's consultants can tutor and coach PIFF's members

with their essays. Most of the single mothers doubt their writing skills, and, as a Writing Center consultant myself, I know the Writing Center will be a advantageous resource to build members' self-esteem and writing skills. Collins and the Writing Center are currently developing their partnership.

I also created a PIFF internship application to open the door for more students to work at PIFF for university credit. During my last weeks at PIFF, I contacted about 20 faculty members at three universities near the Spring Hill area regarding possible internship pathways to PIFF. I hope that the organization will have a steady stream of committed student volunteers who can continue to donate their time and talents to PIFF.

My entrance into PIFF was at a time when the organization was beginning to develop and formalize its organizational structure. During my internship experience, I noticed that PIFF's lack of access to funding and resources significantly impacts the organization's growth, structure, and distribution of responsibilities. As director and the only full-time employee at PIFF, Collins is mainly accountable for the functioning of the organization. In response, my internship responsibilities centered on the formalization of PIFF's policies and procedures, which will serve to communicate the organization's responsibilities among members and relieve part of Collins' workload.

Next, PIFF has unique benefits and challenges because of its dependence on a volunteer workforce. PIFF volunteers share the passion for helping single mothers in the area and generously donate their time, funds, and resources to developing the organization. Yet, because PIFF's workforce is composed of volunteers who have no formal obligation, volunteers are not always reliable to help the organization. As PIFF's educational programs depend on volunteers,

the absence of volunteers could ultimately delay or halt members' progression through the organization.

Last, a large part of my intern responsibilities was ensuring that PIFF's programs and internal and external documents match its commitment to multicultural and feminist values. I wrote PIFF's multicultural commitment statement and threaded it throughout all of PIFF's documents. Although not all of PIFF's member or volunteers identified as feminist, Collins remained adamant that respect for diversity and inclusion was the best way to improve the lives of women. All individuals who affiliate with PIFF, including educators, speakers, and members, must respect and welcome differences among gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability.

Now, Mallory, the PIFF member I wrote about at the beginning of this narrative, speaks freely and comfortably in front of and with others. She is proud of her public speaking skills, and at PIFF's Volunteer Appreciation Dinner she spoke in front of a hundred community members about her journey to PIFF and the impact the organization has had on her life. She could feel the beaming pride of her family, friends, and Collins. Mallory's self-described personal growth is illustrative of PIFF's progress as an organization and reflects the intended outcome of feminist work.

References

- Adams, R. (2008). *Glass houses: Saving feminist anti-violence agencies from self-destruction*. Halifax, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.
- De León, E., Gigler, A. M., González, L., & Schellenberg, M. (2007). A model for social change: 15 years investing in Mexican women. In L. Alpizar Duran, N. D. Payne, & A. Russo (Eds.), *Building feminist movements and organizations* (pp. 99-108). London, England: Zed Books.
- Eisenstein, H. (2009). The Australian femocratic experiment: A feminist case for bureaucracy. In M. Ferree (Ed.), *Feminist organizations: Harvest of the new women's movement* (pp. 69-83). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- English, L. (2007). Feminists, factions and fictions in rural Canada. In L. Alpizar Duran, N. D. Payne, & A. Russo (Eds.), *Building feminist movements and organizations* (pp. 87-95). London, England: Zed Books.
- English, L., & Peters, N. (2011). Founders' syndrome in women's nonprofit organizations: Implications for practice and organizational life. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 22(2), 159-171.
- English, L. M., & Peters, N. (2012). Transformative learning in Nonprofit Organizations: A feminist interpretive inquiry. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 62(2), 103-119.
- Ferguson, K. (1984). *The feminist case against bureaucracy*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Hyde, C. A. (2008). The hybrid nonprofit. *Journal of Community Practice*, 8(4), 45-67.
- Kravetz, D. (2004). *Tales from the trenches: Politics and practices in feminist service organizations*. Dallas, TX: University Press of America, INC.

- Klausen, K. K. (1994). Denmark: From fringe to paragovernmental status. In F. D. Perlmutter (Ed.), *Women and social change: Nonprofit and social policy* (pp. 62-91). Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers Press.
- Markowitz, L., & Tice, K. W. (2002). Paradoxes of professionalization: Parallel dilemmas in women's organizations in the Americas. *Gender & Society, 16*(6), 941-958.
- Metzendorf, D. (2005). *The evolution of feminist organizations: An organizational study*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, INC.
- Mishra, Y., & Singh, N. (2007). An insight into feminist organizations. In L. Alpizar Duran, N. D. Payne, & A. Russo (Eds.), *Building feminist movements and organizations* (pp. 35-43). London, England: Zed Books.
- Pay It Forward Farm. (2014). Pay It Forward Farm Official Handbook. Retrieved from <http://www.payitforwardfarm.org>.
- Pennerstorfer, A., & Trukeschitz, B. (2012). Voluntary contributions and wages in nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership, 23*(2), 181-191.
- Sheridan-Rabideau, M. P. (2008). *Girls, feminism, and grassroots literacies: Activism in the girlzone*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Tandon, M. O. (2007). Zimbabwe women writers. In L. Alpizar Duran, N. D. Payne, & A. Russo (Eds.), *Building feminist movements and organizations* (pp. 131-139). London, England: Zed Books.
- United States Census Bureau. (2002). U.S. Summary: 2000. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office. U.S. Census Bureau.