Neoliberalism and Social Movement Politics: LGBT Organizing at the Federal and Local Levels[1]

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In Canada, as in other developed capitalist countries, the last twenty years have seen important economic, political and social shifts from the collectivist and solidaristic policies and values of the Keynesian welfare state to the neoliberal model of free markets, lean states, consumer choice and individual responsibility. A substantial literature has described the shift to the post-industrial economy and the neoliberal restructuring to which it has given rise across the developed capitalist world. The implications of the shift to neoliberalism for democratic citizenship have also been extensively explored. The shift to neoliberalism entails a restructuring not just of state policies, but of the relationship between the individual, the market and the state. The discursive and ideological impact of neoliberalism has been decisive in cementing political and electoral coalitions behind neoliberal political leaders and in shifting the terms of political discourse in ways that reduce democratic choice and present neoliberal policies and social practices as natural, commonsensical or unavoidable (Hindess 1997; Jenson 1999; Brodie 1996).

Neoliberalism has not gone unchallenged, however. Waves of protest against globalization have brought together a broad range of non-governmental organizations including environmental, labour, and women's groups in resistance to neoliberalism. In Canada, anti-globalization protest have built on longstanding networks of opposition to North American economic integration as embodied by the trade agreements, with the U.S. and Mexico and the ongoing project of free trade across the Americas. Yet the picture of progressive movements contesting the dominant neo-liberalism has been challenged by recent analyses which suggest that the progressive social movement organization may itself be implicated in the neo-liberal project (McKeen and Porter

2003), that left-liberal movements does not necessarily open up participatory spaces for democratic grass roots participation and that even the much-vaunted 'social capital' may simply serve to reconstitute and reinforce racialized collective solidarities (Hero 2003). For progressive scholarship, these analyses undermine the bifurcation of social movement, voluntary sector, and group actors into the 'good' movements, which challenge globalization and neoliberalism, and the 'bad' groups, which reinforce neoliberalism and traditional structures of power. In various ways, progressive movements may reinforce neoliberal values and social practices as well as resisting them.

This paper explores the ways in which neoliberalism has shifted the terrain of group and movement politics using a case study of local and national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organizing in Canada. The case study demonstrates the diverse ways in which collective actors are shaped by neoliberal policies and the political spaces, even as such actors may contest neoliberalism. Social movement organizations and voluntary sector organizations participate in different ways in reinforcing neoliberal values and practices and some may even implement neoliberal social policies. Collective actors are important agents in the reproduction and reinforcement of neoliberal rule, even as they also provide the most promising vehicle of resistance. Moving away from the binary opposition between progressive movements and regressive movements allows us to see the ways in which progressive movements may also be implicated in neoliberalism, and the ways in which backlash and regressive movements may inadvertently reinforce the conditions for successful resistance to neoliberalism (Buss and Herman 2003).

The LGBT movement is an archetypal 'new social movement' and it has often been relegated to the sidelines in political economy, defined as a movement that is

fundamentally concerned with 'recognition' rather than 'redistribution,' in Nancy Fraser's well known dichotomy. Yet, LGBT politics has been profoundly shaped by the project of neoliberal restructuring. While Fraser's dichotomy between recognition and redistribution dichotomy may be useful for certain analytical purposes (Fudge 2001), it is not useful for understanding the relationship between social movement organizations and the broader context in which such movements operate. The distinction forecloses the analysis of the political economy of social movements, at least for the movements (such as LGBT) which are slotted into the category of "recognition." This binary picture fails to capture the profound complexities of contemporary collective action.

The paper explores the ways in which the LGBT movements has been shaped by the political economy and social practices of neoliberalism by comparing two LGBT organizations, which are active at different levels in the Canadian context – one at the local level in the city of Toronto (*Supporting Our Youth* or SOY) and the other at the pan-Canadian or federal level in Ottawa (*Egale*). These two 'levels' of activity are conceptualized using the sociological concept of the 'field,' drawn from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, as it has been most recently adapted and used in American social movement scholarship. The comparison of the 'local' and the 'federal' levels of social movement activity demonstrate that the impacts of neoliberalism on collective action and the ways in which neoliberalism shapes the field for group activity, are different at the local and federal levels. The impact of neoliberalism on group activity must be differentiated according to the field in which the group operates.

The first section of the paper situates the comparison of local and pan-Canadian LGBT organizing in terms of theoretical debates about the impact of neo-liberalism on

group politics and on the nature of LGBT politics. The concept of the field is introduced to show how the local and the federal levels are shaped by neoliberal policies and citizenship practices, although in very different ways. The comparison of Egale and SOY demonstrates the ways in which the local level is a more promising arena for resistance to neoliberal values of consumerism, privatization, responsibilization and individualism, even as the neoliberal restructuring of the welfare state has shaped the field in which SOY operates. The second section of the paper presents a brief overview of the history of each of the groups while the third section of the paper presents a systematic comparison of their organization and politics. The final section of the paper draws out the implications of the comparison for understanding the impact of neoliberalism on shifting the terrain of collective action in the context of developed capitalist societies. Collective actors both reinforce and resist neoliberalism. The analysis presented here suggests the possibility that the local field provides more space for political resistance than does the field at the level of the nation-state, i.e. the 'national' or, in the Canadian case, the federal or pan-Canadian level.

Comparing fields: Neoliberalism and social movement politics

Recent developments in sociological approaches to social movement politics emphasize the usefulness of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the field to understanding the different spaces in which social movement activism occurs. Although these developments were intended to apply to social movements, the concept can be usefully applied to voluntary sector or non-profit organizations. In Bourdieu's definition, "to think in terms of field is to think relationally" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 96). As political sociologist Raka Ray has characterized it, "[a] field can be thought of a structured,

unequal, and socially constructed environment *within* which organizations are embedded

and *to* which organizations and activists constantly respond (Ray, 1999, 6, emphasis

hers)." As Ray points out, drawing on Bourdieu, "fields are understood both as

configurations of forces and as sites of struggle to maintain or transform those forces

(Ray, 1999, 7)." The concept of the field encompasses the political relationships between

a broad range of actors, including governments, social movement organizations, and

other groups, as well as the prevailing assumptions about the way politics is conducted or

the prevailing political culture. The local and federal levels (or local and pan-Canadian

levels) form different fields for LGBT organizations and differences between the fields in

part shape the forms of social movement politics which occur in each field as well as

opening up different types of opportunities for organizations to influence the shape of the

field. Again, as Ray emphasizes, the field is both a *site* of contestation and a

configuration of political forces. Thus, it encompasses both static and dynamic

dimensions of social action for the social movement or voluntary sector group.

Social movement theories, especially the American resource mobilization and

political process approaches, tend to ignore the problem of the shaping effect of capitalist

market power on political actors and agents. The concept of the field permits the

introduction of systematic consideration of the effects of broad societal shifts on political

activism and organizing. These effects may be felt through neoliberal state policies or

through the norms and practices of state society relations. Moreover, neoliberalism

encompasses state policies as well as norms and practices of state-society relations.

Jenson and Phillips have conceptualized the complex and profound shifts in state-society

relations and practice in terms of changes in the terms and concept of democratic

citizenship (Jenson and Phillips 1996). Neoliberalism has entailed not only a reconfiguration of citizenship rights in social policy and the welfare state, but also in terms of the legitimacy of collective action itself. Jenson points out that, at the federal level, the credibility of political advocacy and the capacity for civil society to represent itself to the state has been undercut by social policy changes which refocus state obligations from the pan-Canadian to the local levels, by the dismantling of federal programs which funded advocacy for disadvantaged groups, and by the accelerating trend to public consultation through 'partnership' and service provision (Jenson 1999). At the federal level, the credibility and legitimacy of group actors is also under a constant barrage of attack from the evangelically-rooted right wing Reform/Canadian Alliance party, which has conducted a fifteen year attack on political advocacy as an undemocratic vehicle for so-called special interest politics (Patten, 1999). Neoliberal norms of marketization, resonsibilization and individualism present civil society interests as based on the model of the responsible individual, exercising free choice in politics and markets, free to consume and free to 'volunteer.' The growing emphasis on volunteering and the voluntary sector fits in with the neoliberal model of the freely choosing citizen as collective social obligation reverts to its historic origins in charity.

The case study suggests that the effects of neoliberalism on collective actors vary according to the field in which they occur. The differences in the fields at the local and pan-Canadian levels demonstrates that conclusions about the impact of neoliberalism at the national level may not hold true in other fields, such as the local level. There is less reason than ever for generalizations about issues such as the impact of neoliberalism to be based solely on conditions of political evolution in national level polities as nation-states

have clearly been decentred from their former Westphalian prominence. The focused comparison of two different LGBT organizations operating in different fields at the local and pan-Canadian levels shows that the effects of neoliberalism at the local level are quite different from the effects of neoliberalism at the federal level.

Most importantly, neoliberalism is often conceptualized as if it is a set of policies and beliefs that are imposed on social actors and, in the case of progressive social actors, imposed against their will. However, the concept of the field suggests that social action and political agency will be influenced by the external environment. Neoliberalism is not just imposed from 'outside' social movements and voluntary sector organizations. Neoliberalism may also be practiced within movements and organizations as a set of values, beliefs and organizing practices and very actively embraced by and reproduced by political actors, including seemingly progressive political actors.

Comparing SOY and Egale: LGBT politics in Canada

For the federal or pan-Canadian side of the comparison, the paper uses the case of Egale, the only LGBT organization in Canada which operates federally. For the local level, the paper uses the case of Supporting Our Youth (SOY), a Toronto non-profit which assists LGBT youth. A Toronto organization was selected because of the fact that Toronto is a global city, comparable to (if smaller than) other 'global cities' such as London and New York and the home of the largest LGBT community in Canada. Toronto is a major site for global migration and diaspora politics. A city of over 4.6 million, its population increased by almost 10% between 1996 and 2001 (Statscan) and 44% of Toronto's residents were born outside Canada, one of the highest in the world (Statscan 2001 *Community Highlights*, Toronto *Immigration Characteristics*, 2002).

Since the rise of the gay liberation movement in 1971, the city has built up a substantial 'gay village' with many LGBT-owned businesses and bars, an LGBT Pride celebration that is the third largest in the world and a substantial infrastructure of local LGBT institutions and community groups. A survey of LGBT non-profits in the Greater Toronto Area in 2002-03 revealed that there were over two hundred such groups in the city, ranging from social services to recreation to political advocacy work.[2]

SOY is an example of a social service group which plays out the ambiguities of voluntary sector organizations which have close ties to the state and which deliver social services. The organization of SOY was a response to perceived needs in the LGBT youth community in Toronto, which were defined in part by LGBT professionals working in social services. Social service groups in the city view queer youth as a particularly vulnerable group and this vulnerability constructed in material terms, as well as in terms of symbolic recognition. According to local social service agencies, queer youth are more vulnerable to poverty, suicide, street involvement and violence than straight youth because they are more likely to lack family support or to have been kicked out of the family home before they are able to be independent. These vulnerable youth face a social services system which does not recognize their specific needs for shelter, food, education, freedom from violence and adult nurturing and guidance. This local understanding of the impact of the welfare state on queer youth is not reflected in the literature on the welfare state, which tends to 'gender' the welfare state in entirely heternormative terms. In the view of those working in local social service groups such as SOY, cuts to social services, welfare and education in the city of Toronto have had important and specific impacts for LGBT youth. According to SOY, local voluntary sector groups in Toronto are on the

receiving end of the final outcome of social service cuts – where the rubber hits the road – when they see young people who live in the street because of their inability to access affordable housing, young people who drop out of school because they no longer have the support of Toronto School Board's special needs counsellors for street-involved youth or young people who are victims of suicide, violence, and gay-bashing in part because they do not have a home. These issues are brought to a head by catalyzing events such as the 'Victoria Day murders' of 1996 when three young sex trade workers (a woman, a gay man, and a transsexual woman) were murdered in Toronto in one night (*Xtra*, 23 May 1996).

Thus, SOY began in response to or in reaction to effects of neoliberal state policies as these shaped the definition and perception of LGBT youth needs at the local level. The group began its life as part of a local city-wide coalition of groups and individuals concerned about the situation of LGBT youth. This coalition, the *Toronto Coalition for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth* was composed of social service providers and educators as well as queer youth, parents and community activists. The purpose of the coalition was to recognize the distinctive needs of queer youth in Toronto, including the way in which they are treated in the provision of social services such as education, social assistance and health care. The Coalition was established in 1991 and its stated aims were to assess the needs of LGB youth in social services; to raise awareness of and access to services for LGB Youth; to hold a forum on poverty in the LGB youth community and to hold a province-wide conference on queer youth issues in social services in Ontario (SOY, *Background information*).

Although SOY was formed in part in reaction to the effects of neoliberal social policy restructuring in social services and education and out of concern for the particular effects this restructuring has for LGBT youth, SOY is closely connected to the local state. Although funding has been provided through donations from individuals and businesses, the bulk of SOY's financing comes from government agencies, including the Ontario Ministry of Health, the Ontario AIDS Bureau, the Trillium Foundation (an arm's length para-public organization which administers Ontario's sizeable lottery funds), Central Toronto Youth Services, and Toronto Public Health (SOY, *Background information*). The Coalition was housed in Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS), a local youth agency which provides mental health services. The close relationship between SOY and local state and para-public agencies demonstrate the neoliberal shift toward marketization, individual responsibility and what Giddens and others have called the 'social investment state' (Giddens 1998). As social policies are restructured, local state agencies are funding groups such as SOY which, by 'investing' in youth, are producing healthy citizens and responsible consumers. It is noteworthy that much of SOY's funding has come from through the mechanisms of the provincially administered public health care system, including the provincial Ministry of Health, its AIDS bureau (staffed in part by LGBT people who supported SOY's goals), Toronto Public Health and the main agency responsible for the mental health of youth in the city (CTYS). Initially, the youth conferences of 1995 and 1996 were in part funded by the AIDS Bureau of the Ontario government which was one of the few organizations that was not cut by the Harris Tories. SOY enjoyed strong support from sympathetic allies in the AIDS bureau who saw the need for community development with queer youth in the city, a concern that could be

clearly linked to assessing the overall health needs of queer youth, including HIV-AIDS

transmission and treatment. Moreover, SOY was the first lesbian and gay group to

receive funds from the Trillium Foundation, an arm's-length Ontario government agency

which administers the charitable lottery funds from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming

Corporation.

Social work expertise is dominant in SOY as the organization has three paid

employees, all of whom have some background in social work. In the eye of the social

work expert, LGBT youth in the city are "clients" who are "served" by the experts in

SOY. However, SOY is not simply administering the policies and practices of the

neoliberal social investment state. SOY's activities demonstrate the distinctive ways in

which collective agents seek to pursue and shape their own agendas, despite the

structuring effects of neoliberalism. This can be seen in three specific respects: first,

SOY's leaders have attempted to resist capture by local state funding and to exploit

foundation and government funding to reflect their own agenda. Second, SOY has

resisted the definition of LGBT youth as "clients" and has invited youth to define and

organize their own projects. Third, SOY has organized participatory intergenerational

mentoring which invites the LGBT people to "support our youth."

The Toronto Coalition which gave rise to SOY was interested in more than

simply using social work expertise to ensure that state polices and social services

"served" LGBT youth as "clients." The specific history of the idea of "supporting our

youth" points to SOY's roots as a grass roots participatory project that reached LGBT

professionals in social services in Toronto, as well as many others who have participated

in SOY's projects. From the beginning, the Toronto Coalition was interested in how the

adult members of the LGBT community in Toronto could best "support our youth."

Support Our Youth began as a three-year community development project of the Toronto

Coalition and, in 2000, it became independent of the coalition. In many cases, the desire

to 'support our youth' stemmed from first hand knowledge by LGBT adults of the many

barriers faced by youth in the process of coming out and a desire to use the resources of

the LGBT adult community in Toronto to improve the services available to youth. Those

working at SOY came from social work and social service backgrounds, in which they

were well aware of the problems faced by queer youth. Several key SOY leaders had

worked at Central Toronto Youth Services had first hand experience of young people

who had committed suicide or had been victims of violence, either in their families or on

the street (Purdy, 2002). In the wake of the 1995-96 Other Young Lives conferences for

LGBT youth, which were held in Toronto, there was a realization that "nobody's going to

do it if we don't do it" (Purdy interview) and that, for LGBT youth, "this is not young

people where their parents are going to create community for them and help them learn

about what it is to be gay and what are the values and histories of our communities." As

SOY director pointed out, in minority communities, families play a key role in cultural

transmission which, in the case of queer youth is not possible. Therefore, there was a

realization among the social service works and youth conference organizers, most of

whom were in their twenties themselves at the time, that there needed to be mechanisms

put into place which would institutionalize intergenerational support for queer youth. One

of the barriers was "to resist the internalization of the pedophilia stereotypes and to resist

the internalization of the suspicion cast upon queer adults if they reach a hand out to

queer youth (Purdy)."

SOY is organized to enable youth to establish, participate in and direct their own projects, using SOY's space and resources and it has organized a system of intergenerational mentoring for queer youth. With regard to youth-defined projects and services, a broad range of activities have been organized for and by queer and trans youth through SOY. These projects have included politics, ecology (pink meets green), writing, and spirituality. SOY provides a venue in which youth have organized the Fruit Loopz cabaret, the Rainbow Book Club as well as initiatives and projects which focus on racialized queer youth such as Black Queer Youth and newcomer immigrant groups. In all of SOY's activities, politics, queer culture and social issues mix. As has often been the case in the history of LGBT politics, socializing is inherently community-building and political activity.

Thus, SOY can also be understood not just as a voluntary sector organization which is shaped by neoliberalism, but also as a participatory social movement organization which is positioned as part of the subculture of lesbian and gay life in Toronto and as part of a rich tradition of local organizing. In the early history of lesbian organization, second wave feminism and gay liberation in Toronto, the line between politics and social service provision had often been meaningless, as the provision of early services such as 'gay line' or gay dances were in themselves important political acts. Creating a sense of political identity among LGBT people, establishing an institutional infrastructure through which the community could function, and providing for communication with the community (dances, gay line), were inseparable from the provision of what might be called "social services."

Egale: The politics of rights

In contrast to SOY, which is organized around the "needs" of LGBT youth, Egale is organized around the "rights" of LGBT people. Egale's main goal is to secure political equality for LGBT citizens through litigation under the Charter. Egale plays out the ambiguities of neoliberalism. One the one hand, as Lise Gottell has argued, litigation for LGBT equality rights under the Charter has often entailed the legal and political construction of the responsible, middle class (usually white) LGBT citizen, who wishes to assimilate into the mainstream of consumer society as the equal of straight citizens (Gotell 2002). This drive for formal equality legitimates neoliberalism by eliding class issues and reinforcing privatized social provision (Fudge 2001, Young 1994). On the other hand, Egale's leadership is sensitive to the critiques made from the left, and attempts to move beyond legal equality to other LGBT issues.

The field in which Egale operates makes resistance to neoliberalism very difficult. The most important characteristics of the field are the structuring effect of the Charter-based human rights machinery which privileges political action through litigation and the strong opposition to lesbian and gay rights from the religious right, which has a strong voice at the federal level through the official opposition party, the Canadian Alliance, a populist, right-wing party from Western Canada and through the governing Liberal party caucus. "Gay rights" is a hot button issue for politicians, which greatly increases the incentive for them to shift responsibility to the courts. Under the new human rights regime created by the Charter, the courts have been relatively positive to LGBT rights claims, increasing the incentive for LGBT groups and litigants to use the courts in pursuit of a broad range of political goals ranging from censorship to same sex marriage. As

scholarship in critical legal studies has extensively discussed, engagement with human rights law through the strategy of litigation produces certain types of political claims, centred on the individual citizen. Individual rights claims focus on the disadvantage of lesbian and gay citizens relative to heterosexual citizens in ways that stress the sameness of lesbian and gay people rather than the distinctive cultures of lesbian and gay (or queer) life. The engagement with a legal system which is mainly centred on describing the rights of citizens against the state in a capitalist economy privileges state-centered discrimination, which entails allocating to lesbian and gay citizens the same rights and obligations as other citizens without contesting the actual substance of social policies (Gotell 2002). Thus, lesbian and gay couples are entitled to spousal support upon the break-up of their relationships, as are straight couples, a policy which reinforces privatized social provision. New obligations for same sex couples in the name of equality generally privilege higher income lesbian and gay couples, while creating new 'spouse in the house' rules for same sex couples on social assistance.

Egale's organization and strategies in part reflect the shaping effect of the Charter in the field at the federal level. Egale began in 1986 as a small informal group of lawyers, trade union activists and public servants in the Ottawa area who were concerned to exploit the opportunities provided by the coming into effect of section 15 (equality rights) of the Charter for lesbian and gay people. Entrenched in the constitution in 1982, the Charter's section 15 promised equality rights based on an open ended list of legal grounds. Although sexual orientation was not included in section 15, the open ended listing of grounds of discrimination, opened up the possibility that sexual orientation might be 'read in' to the Charter (or informally added) through court decision. In 1985,

the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney held parliamentary

committee hearings on section 15 in order to hear the views of the stakeholder groups.

The lesbian and gay community furnished about a third of the total briefs, which were

submitted to the committee (Smith 1999). However, there was no national lesbian and

gay organization which could coordinate legal and political efforts to secure human rights

protections for lesbians and gays. Hence, Egale's initial purpose was to provide a

'watching brief' on political and legal developments with regard to human rights and the

Charter.

Thus, Egale was born as a federal level organization which was primarily

concerned to change public policy and law to obtain human rights for lesbians and gays.

Although homosexual sex between consenting adults twenty-one years of age or over had

been 'legalized' in 1969 by the Trudeau government as part of its overhaul and

modernization of Canadian laws on divorce, abortion, and homosexuality, the rise of the

gay liberation and feminist movements in the sixties and seventies had not resulted in

human rights protections for lesbians and gay men in federal and provincial law. The

Charter promised a means to shape Canadian law at both federal and provincial level to

ensure that discrimination in areas such as employment, housing, and relationship

recognition would be constitutionally prohibited, a prohibition which would mark an

important advance for lesbian and gay people.

Egale's main political activities then, have focused on lobbying government and

on participating in various ways in the substantial amount of Charter litigation that has

been brought forward by lesbian and gay litigants. Egale has kept up pressure on the

Prime Minister's Office, the Justice Department and other government departments on

LGBT issues as the federal government has become more receptive to lesbian and gay rights claims because of changing public opinion and because of successful lesbians and gay Charter litigation. With regard to litigation, Egale has informally coordinated many of the important cases, acting as a clearing house for information about Charter litigation, intervening as a 'third party' in Charter cases on lesbian and gay rights, and providing legal networks for Charter litigants. There are close links between Egale and the LGBT legal network, the group of lawyers who most often work on LGBT cases, most of whom are based in Toronto and Vancouver. Legal expertise is privileged within Egale as the organization's longstanding executive director, John Fisher, is a lawyer and several key members of the Egale board are lawyers and legal experts.

Local and federal: SOY and Egale compared

Table 1 summarizes the main organizational differences between SOY and Egale. Egale is independent of government funding and is financed in large part by individual membership dues. In contrast, although SOY receives individual donations, most of its funding comes from governments and foundations.

The goals and methods of Egale and SOY are distinctive, reflecting the differences in the fields in which they operate. Operating federally, Egale's main goal is political equality for LGBT people and its main means to this goal are litigation under the Charter and advocacy work at the federal and, in some cases, provincial levels. The primacy of the legal struggle at the pan-Canadian level is reflected in Egale's formal organization which attempts to reflect the diversity of the LGBT community through an accountable and elected board of directors which is balanced by gender and region, with one member for each gender from each region of the country. Within Egale, legal

expertise dominates. Although litigation under the Charter bubbles up from the grass roots as individual litigants take up legal issues and bring cases to court, grass roots litigants tap into pan-Canadian networks of legal advocacy which, over the last ten years, are increasingly centred around Egale.

In contrast, SOY's formal organization is dominated by paid employees, rather than by elected members of a board of directors. The board of SOY is not formalized. While individuals may join Egale, individuals do not join. Participation in Egale is based on the traditional model of political participation in which individuals with common interests or a common sense of identity come together in the pursuit of their goals. In SOY, political participation is based on the voluntary sector model of volunteering or on the social work-based model of the empowerment of "clients" though participation. In this schema, the youth served by SOY are "clients" and subjects of social work expertise. Yet, the professional social workers and paid employers of SOY are systematically reflexive about the use of professional expertise to dominate and potentially disempower the "clients" or "subjects." Many SOY projects are organized at the initiative of youth such as Black Queer Youth and Fresh Off the Boat (Purdy 2002). Because Egale is an openly non-partisan but political organization, whose main activity is advocacy, the individual participates in Egale as a member while, for SOY, as a community development non-profit group, the individual participates as a volunteer, participant or client.

Table 1: Organizational Characteristics in LGBT Organizing, Federal (Egale) and Local (SOY), 2002

Characteristics	Federal (Egale)	Local (SOY)
goal	political equality	community development
method	advocacy, litigation	social space, mentoring

organization	formal	formal, with informal projects
membership	yes, mainly individual	no, participation/volunteer
professionals	lawyers	social workers
paid staff	3	2
services	none	mentoring, housing, social
charitable status	no	no
parent group/agency	none	Central Toronto Youth Services[3]
board of directors	regional/gender	not formalized
annual revenue, 2002	$375,000	$185,000
funding sources	membership dues	government/foundations/individuals

Table 2 summarizes the main political differences between SOY and Egale in terms

of political issues with which they are concerned, positions they have take on issues

affecting the LGBT communities and services they provide.

Table II: Political Positions, Federal (Egale) and Local (SOY)

LGBT Issues	Egale	SOY
poverty	no position	non-profit housing support intergenerational mentoring bursaries for postsecondary education programs for street-involved youth
legal equality	anti-discrimination relationship recognition same sex marriage	no position
race	community consultation, 2002 participation in World Forum on Racism, 2002	youth-established Black Queer Youth initiative and Fresh Off the Boat immigrant group
censorship	intervened in Little Sister's bookstore case	no position
homophobic violence	hate speech legislation hate crimes legislation	intergenerational mentoring access to social services
spiritual	no position	youth-established spiritual groups
policing	condemns local police behaviour	no position
environment	no position	youth-established eco-queer group
education: activism	annual gala	intergenerational activist forum
education: schools	intervened in Surrey book banning, Trinity Western University, and Marc Hall cases	informal contact with Toronto-area queer programs such as the Triangle program in the Toronto District School Board
age of consent	should be the same for all	no position

The comparison of political issues demonstrates that SOY has taken up a much broader range of issues than Egale, particularly with respect to class, race and poverty. SOY is both closer to and farther from the state than Egale. On the one hand, SOY has much closer funding links with state agencies than Egale. Although SOY is a newer organization, paid employees dominate, while, in Egale's history, volunteers have dominated. Yet, SOY is better able to take up class, race, and social issues, while Egale's state focus makes it more difficult to resist neoliberalism. Neoliberal values stress the importance of the responsible, individual, consuming citizen in an unmediated relationship with the state. Collective action and group activity is delegitimated in neoliberal ideology and practice. The issues taken up by Egale reflect this individualism and define equality in terms of the individual's relationship to the state and to state policies, whether it is on same sex relationship recognition, same sex marriage or censorship. SOY's programs reflect broader collective social values permitting the organization to take up issues relating to poverty and violence. These paradoxical differences reflect the fields in which the two organizations operate. Faced with a constant barrage of "special interest" and homophobic rhetoric from the religious right, Egale is forced to respond. SOY operates in a field in which the religious right is largely absent or politically weak. The Charter provides an institutional opening in the field at the federal level for Egale, even as, is some ways, engagement with law legitimates neoliberal social policies and values. For SOY, the field is structured by panoply of local social service agencies which LGBT employees have exploited to provide services to queer youth. One field is structured by 'rights' and the other by 'needs,' giving rise to different political possibilities for resistance to neoliberalism.

Conclusions

One of the key differences between social movement organizing at the pan-Canadian or national level and the local level is in the ways in which such organizing relates to the emergence of neoliberal citizenship practices. At both levels, LGBT organizations are shaped by neo-liberal policies and neo-liberal citizenship practices, although in different ways. At the national level, LGBT organizations contend with the neo-liberal citizenship practices which are encoded in claims for equality rights for LGBT people through the mechanisms of public policy and legal change. At the local level, LGBT organizations act as agents in the implementation of what Anthony Giddens and others have called 'the social investment state.' At both levels, there is some 'freedom' for LGBT organizations to resist neoliberalism. On balance, though, there is more space at the local level for challenges to neoliberalism Ironically, despite the fact that the local group profiled here – SOY – is funded by government and began as a project of a local social services agency, it has managed to create a space for vital political participation and citizenship for queer youth in Toronto.

The federal level and the local level provide different fields for social movement activism and voluntary sector organization. The contrast between the local and the 'national' or federal level demonstrates the complex patterns of social movement activism which are shaped in part by the types of issues that are privileged by the different levels of governance and by the fields of social movement activism that are in play. At the federal level, LGBT politics is legally driven by the homogenizing and Canadianizing forces of Charter politics, which tends to nationalize political issues, as intended by the framers of the Charter. At the pan-Canadian level, the LGBT movement

engages with law and the Charter as Charter litigation pushes LGBT politics in this direction. Each time a Charter case is litigated, it has national implications. At the federal level, 'gay rights' has strong opponents in the Reform-Canadian Alliance party and even within the federal Liberal caucus. With a strong opponent in the field, movement organizations tend to be drawn into the defensive and conservatizing framework of rights claiming, and the political issues that follow from a liberal civil rights framework. The politics of rights fits in with and reinforces neo-liberal ideals of privatized social responsibility and choice.

Ironically, at the local level, there is more resistance to neo-liberal citizenship practices as the effects of homophobia, heterosexism and heteronormativity make themselves felt in grass roots organizing, which is based on closer connections to the lived experiences of the urban community. Although government and foundation funding of local voluntary sector groups might be feared as a force for cooptation and conservatization of local groups, in fact, at least in the case study presented here, such cooptation has not occurred. Rather, the community development goals of local LGBT groups have fit well with the demands of foundations and government agencies which have funded local initiatives. Further, the field for grass roots queer organizing is more favourable at the local level in Toronto[4] than at the federal level. The well organized evangelical opposition to 'gay rights' at the federal level does not exist in the same organized form at the local level in the city of Toronto. Local organizing is oriented to issues and needs that are mainly the direct responsibility of the provincial government, municipal government and para-public institutions such as the Toronto District School Board, local social service agencies such as Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS),

hospitals or health care clinics. This local level is the final repository of neo-liberal state policies.

The comparison of SOY and Egale undermines one of the great stereotypes about lesbian and gay politics that has been repeated over and over again in depictions of the movement by both supporters and opponents, namely, that LGBT politics are mainly concerned with 'recognition' rather than with 'redistribution' or that LGBT politics is more concerned with the "identity" than with the "material." Comparing SOY and Egale shows that there are 'material' concerns at the heart of both the local project (SOY) and the pan-Canadian project (Egale). While Egale's material project of same sex marriage rejects redistribution and, hence, provides an avenue for the reinforcement of the disciplined and respectable homosexual or lesbian couple who are fit consumers in a neo-liberal society, SOY's project is both material and redistributive as it is, at its heart, concerned with queer youth poverty, vulnerability to violence and access to social service, educational and community resources. SOY is all about redistributing opportunity to the most marginalized queer youth and about creating spaces in which such youth can create their own communities and collective solidarities. While the distinction between "redistribution and recognition" may be helpful for certain purposes such as the analysis of court judgments and human rights litigation (Fudge 2001), the analysis presented here suggests that distinguishing between "redistribution" and "recognition" may not be useful for the purpose of understanding the nature and effects of social movement activism and voluntary sector organization at different levels. LGBT politics provides a mix of "redistribution" and "recognition." Local LGBT organizing is concerned with material issues such as poverty and with the effects of cutbacks mandated

by neoliberal governments at the provincial and federal levels; therefore, it is not appropriate to generalize about LGBT as primarily a question of "identity" and "recognition," let alone cultural politics.

Finally, comparing the impact of neoliberalism on social movement activism at the local and Canadian levels, the analysis demonstrates that there are important differences between politics 'at the top' of the movement, and politics 'at the bottom,' or at the local level, which may be more community focused and less state directed. The tendency of traditional political science analysis is to privilege politics 'at the top', rather than to explore politics at the local level. The hierarchical and spatialized conception of the 'national' and 'local' levels in Canadian politics in which the federal government sits atop the provincial and municipal governments must also be rethought. The assumption that policy and legal change at the national/federal level is the most important or main target of popular contestation and group mobilization must be questioned.

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[2] This numbers are based on a count of non-profits listed in the *519 Community Centre*, the Toronto LGBT newspaper *Xtra,* LGBT website directories such as gaycanada.com and through thirty-five interviews with a sample of participants, volunteers and paid employees within the sector, conducted in 2002 and 2003.

[3] A community mental health agency for youth in Toronto.

[4] Obviously, the field for local activism will vary according to the nature of the local community. Large cities are the sites of LGBT subcultures the world over and, in Canada, LGBT youth have historically migrated from smaller communities and provinces to the three Canadian meccas of LGBT life in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto.