

## **WOMEN IN BLACK: MOBILIZATION INTO ANTI-NATIONALIST, ANTI-MILITARIST, FEMINIST ACTIVISM IN SERBIA<sup>1</sup>**

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### ***Abstract<sup>2</sup>***

*This article presents a study of mobilization into a specific type of political contention—anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activism in Serbia. It is based on qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews with individuals active in the anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist organization Women in Black conducted in Serbia between April and May 2008. By analyzing the data gathered through the prism of social movement theory, the article identifies specific patterns of mobilization that are facilitated through various structures and mechanisms. These include the various functions of social networks, collective action frames, and collective identity and solidarity incentives—that guarantee sustained participation in Women in Black and the continued existence of anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist political contention even in circumstances of strong social and political repression.*

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2 I would never have been able to carry out this research project without the participation of all of the Women in Black activists I interviewed during my time in Serbia. Special thanks go to the following people: Stasa Zajovic, Lepa Mladjenovic, Nevzeta Josifovic, Zorica Trifunovic, Nadja Duhacek, Boban Stojanovic, Jasmina Tesanovic, Katie Mahuron, Jelena Memet, Lina Vuskovic, Ana Imsirovic, Snezana Djordjevic, Marija Perkovic, Magda Anastasijevic, and Adam Puskar for their willingness, their hospitality, and for finding time in their busy schedules to participate in this project. I also thank my research supervisors at the Central European University (CEU), Francisca De Haan (CEU Department of Gender Studies) and Dan Rabinowitz (CEU Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology); my academic writing instructor, Thomas Rooney (CEU Center for Academic Writing); as well as Orli Fridman, Dragan Nikolic, Milica Jeremic, and Viktoriya Zhukova.

## 1. Introduction

This article presents an analysis of mobilization into the anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist organization *Women in Black*. It is an organization, founded in Serbia in response to the wars that destroyed former Yugoslavia, that persists to this day and that has, since its inception, undergone much social and political repression. *Women in Black's* activism represents a case of what Dough McAdam calls high-risk/cost activism. According to him, in the context of the study of social movements (SMs) and social movement organizations (SMOs), cost "refers to the expenditures of time, money, and energy that are required of a person engaged in any particular form of activism," while risk "refers to the anticipated dangers—whether legal, social, physical, financial, and so forth—of engaging in a particular type of activity," where "certain instances of activism are clearly more costly and/or risky than others."<sup>3</sup> Throughout the years, there have been instances of *Women in Black* activists being threatened, slurred, physically attacked, intimidated, unlawfully detained, tortured, and illegitimately criminalized.<sup>4</sup> These social and state practices have had the aim of frightening and exhausting *Women in Black* activists and of promoting distrust and divisiveness among the members of the organization in order to inhibit the advancement of its mission.<sup>5</sup> I thus locate this study within the framework of

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3 Dough McAdam, "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The case of Freedom Summer," *The American Journal of Sociology* 92 (1986): 67.

4 Stasa Zajovic, "Dis/continuity of Repression towards Women in Black," in Women for Peace, eds. Marija Perkovic, Milos Urosevic, and Stasa Zajovic (Belgrade: Women in Black, 2007), 49-55; Danas, "Hooligans Attack Women in Black Activists," Danas, January 2007 [article on-line]; available at:

[www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&lang=en&id=285](http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&lang=en&id=285), last accessed September 16, 2009; Orli Fridman, "Alternative Voices in Public Space: Serbia's Women in Black," *Ethnologia Balkanica* 10 (2006): 291-303; Amnesty International, "Serbia and Montenegro: The Writing on the Wall: Serbian Human Rights Defenders at Risk" Amnesty International, 2005 [article on-line]; available at: [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/016/2005/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/016/2005/en), last accessed September 16 2009; Lepa Mladjenovic and Donna M. Hughes, "Feminist Resistance to War and Violence in Serbia," in *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War and Resistance*, eds. Marguerite R. Waller and Jennifer Rycenga (New York : Routledge, 2000). 247-271.

5 Ibid. 51; WiB's mission statement is the following: "We bring visibility to women's nonviolent resistance to war, nationalism, sexism, militarism, all forms of ethnic homogenization, fundamentalism, xenophobia, homophobia, and all other forms of discrimination; we create space for women's voices and actions against all forms of patriarchy, war and violence; we build networks of women's solidarity on the global and regional

the study of contentious politics, defined by McAdam et al as “episodic, public, collective interaction among members of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants.”<sup>6</sup> The research question that propelled this study was, considering the systematic social and political repression that *Women in Black* have endured ever since the start of their activities, how and why have activists become mobilized into this type of anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist political contention?

In this article, I argue that mobilization into *Women in Black* takes place through specific structures (the “how”) and mechanisms (the “why”) of mobilization. When analyzing the data gathered for the purpose of this project through the lens of social movement theory, I share in the contention of McAdam<sup>7</sup> and Tarrow<sup>8</sup> that participation in activism—and in this type of anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist high-risk/cost contention in particular—does not by any means occur in the context of disorder, social marginalization, and irrational outbursts of collective behavior but is instead facilitated first, by the various functions of social networks. These include the capacity of ties to the SMO to link potential participants to it and to thus structurally

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level across all state, national, ethnic, and all other divisions and barriers; we build peace networks, coalitions, and associations to stimulate the active participation of women in peace-building, peace processes, and peace negotiations; we demand confrontation with the past and the application of models of transitional justice; we create new forms of transitional justice from a feminist perspective; we educate women about feminism, pacifism, antimilitarism, nonviolence, women’s peace politics, new concepts of security, civil society, women’s activism, interethnic and intercultural solidarity, reproductive rights, transitional justice and fundamentalism; we create an alternative women’s history by writing about women’s resistance to war and the history of those who are different; we start campaigns and legislative initiatives that sensitize the public to important societal issues,” *Women in Black*, personal correspondence.

6 Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5.

7 Doug McAdam, “Beyond Structural Analysis: Toward a more Dynamic Understanding of Social Movements” in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, eds. Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 281-298.

8 Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement. Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 123-138.

facilitate recruitment, to underscore the connection between participating in the social movement and identities that potential recruits identify as central to their concepts of self, and to shape decisions through bonds of community, solidarity, and support.<sup>9</sup> In addition to social networks, mobilization into this type of contention takes place through the organization's construction of a specific collective action frame<sup>10</sup>—that is not only anti-nationalist, antimilitarist, and feminist but that also provides a course of action that is set forward through emotions in the movement. And last but not least, mobilization into this type of contention takes place through the incentive that the collective identity of the organization offers for promoting and sustaining participation in this type of contention.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Relevance of the Study

Previous studies of *Women in Black* have included the qualitative sociological study of *Women in Black* in the context of the transnational women's peace movement;<sup>12</sup> the study of *Women in Black* and the work and politics of social memory;<sup>13</sup> the relationship between *Women in Black* and the construction of responsible citizenship;<sup>14</sup> the role of *Women in Black* in the process of redefining women's political subjectivities in Serbia in the context of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and nation-state building;<sup>15</sup> the anthropological study of the role of women during

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9 McAdam, "Beyond Structural Analysis," 286-289.

10 Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 106-122.

11 Debra Friedman and Doug McAdam, "Collective Identity and Activism: Networks, Choices, and the Life of a Social Movement" in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 156-173.

12 Cynthia Cockburn, *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism, and Feminist Analysis* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 79-105.

13 Fridman, "Alternative Voices in Public Space," 291-303.

14 Dasa Duhacek, "The Making of Political Responsibility: Hannah Arendt and/in the Case of Serbia," in *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Jasmina Lukic, Joanna Regulaska, and Darja Zvirsek (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). 205-221.

15 Dasa Duhacek, "Gender Perspectives on Political Identities in Yugoslavia," in *From Gender to Nation*, eds. Rada Ivekovic and Julie Mostow (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2002), 113-126.

the Yugoslav wars of secession;<sup>16</sup> and the study of women's organized resistance to war and domestic violence during the collapse of Yugoslavia in Serbia.<sup>17</sup> These previous studies provide biographical information on members of the organization, map how the organization emerged, and sketch motives for participation—as part of the background necessary to the development of the specific topics of inquiry they address. However, none of them focus exclusively on analyzing why and how people join *Women in Black*—namely the process of mobilization into this high risk/cost SMO. Considering that in the face of constant social and political repression ever since its inception, *Women in Black* has managed to maintain a cohesive organizational structure and has been characterized by the sustained participation of founding members, the recruitment of new members into it, and the expansion of the organization's sphere of influence beyond Belgrade, an analysis of the structures and mechanisms that prompt mobilization into this type of political contention becomes ever more timely.

In what follows, I first provide a rationale for my research methodology and its application to this research project. I then situate *Women in Black* in the context of civil society as politics of resistance in Serbia during the 1990s, which is the locus in which the organization emerged. I also provide an account of the history of suppression of *Women in Black* that is strictly tied to the demands they have been making from the Serbian state ever since the inception of the organization. Subsequently, I analyze my empirical findings through the lens of social movement theory in order to shed light on how an organization that has undergone much social and political repression ever since its inception can not only survive but also flourish and expand its sphere of influence against all odds.

There is one important limitation to this study. I do not attempt to analyze here the impact of *Women in Black* in generating social and political changes in Serbia. Although relevant to assessing

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16 Svetlana Slapsak, "The Use of Women and the Role of Women in the Yugoslav War," in *Gender, Peace, and Conflict*, eds. Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 161-183.

17 Mladjenovic and Hughes, "Feminist Resistance to War and Violence in Serbia," 247-271.

how social movements matter in promoting social and political change, assessing the impact of this SMO on Serbian society does not constitute the primary research question addressed in this study, nor do the methods utilized for data collection—life-history semi-structured interviews—permit such an analysis. Instead, the focus here is on analyzing the conditions that have contributed to the emergence and sustained existence of *Women in Black* as an exemplary case of contentious mobilization.

Also, it is worth mentioning that while examination of the roles played by Yugoslav successor states other than Serbia during the Yugoslav Wars of Secession from 1991-1999 is obviously important, it goes beyond the scope of this article. Here, I refer exclusively to Serbia because it was the context in which *Women in Black* originated and the regime they were resisting.

### 3. Research Methodology

At the core of the research question for this study laid the question of motives in SMO research: motives for creating, for sustaining, and for joining a SMO such as *Women in Black*, whereas by paying attention to activists' motives for creating, sustaining, and joining *Women in Black* the structures and mechanisms that prompted mobilization into this organization could be elucidated. Several researchers have emphasized the suitability of semi-structured interviews and life-history interviews in particular in the study of motives for participation in SMOs. Della Porta and Blee and Taylor emphasize the advantages that this research technique offers in finding out about motives for recruitment and participation, identity construction, personal and ideological identification with a SM or SMO, and the emotional dimension of recruitment and participation in a SMO.<sup>18</sup> In this context, I deemed it appropriate to make use of semi-structured life-history interviews for the purpose of this research project.

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18 Donatella Della Porta, "Life Histories in the Analysis of Social Movement Activists," in *Studying Collective Action*, eds. Mario Diani and Ron Eyerman (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 68-193; Kathleen M. Blee and Verta Taylor, "Semi-Structured Interviewing in Social Movement Research," in *Methods of Social Movement Research*, eds. Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 92-117.

Both Della Porta and Blee and Taylor underline the importance of choosing a purposive rather than random sample of interviewees based on their particular experiences in a SM or SMO.<sup>19</sup> They argue that sampling should rely on the technique of snow-ball sampling and that it should follow first a principle of completeness—where the researcher chooses interviewees who know about the topic being investigated. Second, the researcher should keep adding interviews to the study until a “saturation of knowledge”<sup>20</sup> occurs, that is, when “the interviews are garnering the same kind of narratives and interpretations.”<sup>21</sup> They also argue that the sample should strive for similarity and dissimilarity, that is, “interviewees are chosen to see how the interpretations or accounts of similarly situated respondents compare, as well as to ascertain how those respondents with very different characteristics or in different circumstances differ.”<sup>22</sup>

Following this research methodology, I conducted semi-structured life-history interviews in English and Spanish with different members of *Women in Black*.<sup>23</sup> I selected my interviewees via snow-ball sampling and continued adding interviews to the sample until I considered that a saturation of the knowledge that the interviews were garnering had occurred. Following the principle of completeness, the sample included interviewees actively involved in the organization at the time of the interviews. Following the principle of similarity and dissimilarity, they included founding members and relatively recent members of the organization (i.e., members who had been involved with *Women in Black* for six months at the time of the interviews), members of different age groups, women as well as men. Eight of the interviewees accounted for participants in *Women in Black* in the very beginnings of its existence (the period comprising the start

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19 Ibid. 68-193; Ibid. 92-117.

20 Ibid. 182.

21 Blee and Taylor, “Semi-Structured Interviewing in Social Movement Research,” 100.

22 Ibid. 100.

23 With the exception of two interviews, all of my interviews with Women in Black activists were conducted in English. One of the interviews was conducted with the help of a Serbian-English translator while another one was conducted in Spanish.

of the Yugoslav Wars of Secession and the fall of the Milosevic regime, 1991-2000) while seven accounted for later recruits (the post-Milosevic period).

I conducted the interviews with the help of an interview guide that included open-ended questions that allowed for flexibility to add more questions along the way when appropriate in order to delve deeply into the respondents' subjective motives for participation in *Women in Black*. The interviews traced respondents' trajectories as activists and as anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activists in particular. Questions inquired into how and when they became interested in socio-political activism, how and when they became interested in and involved with *Women in Black* in particular, how they feel about the socio-political repression that *Women in Black* have endured and whether this type of opposition to the organization has had an impact on their decisions to participate, as well as to the meaning of activism in their lives. I conducted a total of 15 interviews in Belgrade and Krusevac between April and May 2008. I gained initial access to *Women in Black* via e-mail correspondence with the organization prior to my arrival in Serbia and, most importantly, through personal contact with Zorica Trifunovic (a member of the organization I was acquainted with from a previous research project I had conducted in Serbia in 2006) and through Milica Jeremic (an acquaintance who had worked as a translator for a publication by *Women in Black* in the past).

#### **4. Setting the Context: Civil Society as Politics of Resistance in Serbia during the 1990s and Three Phases of Repression**

##### **4.1 Civil Society as Politics of Resistance in Serbia during the 1990s**

According to Einhorn and Sever, during communism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the notion of civil society went hand in hand with the notion of political dissidence as politics of resistance to the pervasiveness of an all-intrusive authoritarian state-apparatus. During state-socialism in CEE, political or civic initiatives that could pose themselves as alternatives and



potentially challenging to the state were usually suppressed. In this context, the citizen was defined in her right to work, to welfare, and housing at the expense of her right to political subjectivity and individual autonomy.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, Watson argues that since during communism the realm of public politics was pervaded by the power of the communist state, civil society became private. Under state-socialism, all citizens were equally disempowered before the state as their rights to political citizenship were equally limited. All citizens were equally excluded from the polity.<sup>25</sup>

Einhorn and Sever argue that in countries of CEE, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the advent of multi-party elections, predominantly male intellectuals who had been part of the dissident movements of resistance against communism became part of the governing elites and the process of democratization and political pluralism was advanced as such.<sup>26</sup> In Serbia, however, the passage from communism to post-communism did not involve a passage from state-socialism to democracy but rather the passage from state-socialism to state-nationalism.<sup>27</sup> Although nominally post-1989 Serbia showed the apparent features of a liberal democratic regime (multi-party plurality), in actuality it remained a system of one-party, authoritarian rule.<sup>28</sup>

Socialist Yugoslavia had been more open to the development of independent civic initiatives in comparison to the other socialist

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24 Barbara Einhorn and Charlotte Sever, "Gender and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe," *International Journal of Politics* (2003), 163-190.

25 Peggy Watson, "Civil Society and the Politics of Difference in Eastern Europe" in *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in Contemporary Politics*, eds. Cora Kaplan, Debra Keates, and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1997), 21-29.

26 Einhorn and Sever, "Gender and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe," 163-190.

27 Zarana Papic, "Women in Serbia: Postcommunism, War, and Nationalist Mutations," in *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans. Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). 153-169.

28 Eric D. Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia. Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 1-230.

regimes in CEE and less prone to official censorship.<sup>29</sup> However, the political and institutional structure of socialist Yugoslavia was also a structure of authoritarian, one-party rule.<sup>30</sup> According to Stojanovic, "during the 1970s and 1980s, with the exception of narrow liberal and civilly-oriented circles, resistance to the ruling regime had been largely based on national arguments and ideas about the conceived exploitation and engenderment of existing nations by the regime, but even more, and more importantly, by other Yugoslav peoples."<sup>31</sup> As a strategy for arising to power, Slobodan Milosevic from the League of Communists of Serbia (SKS) appropriated the rhetoric of nationalism and the alleged defense of Serbianism that had been the ideological basis of much of the Serbian opposition prior to 1987.<sup>32</sup>

Following Milosevic's rise to power in 1987, the institutional and political structures that had characterized the communist regime prior to 1987 were maintained. At the same time, the collusion of the ideological interests of much of the pre-1987 Serbian opposition with the newly emerged Serbian leadership devoid the opposition of its ideological bases. This political move enabled the regeneration and consolidation of the power of the SKS, named the Serbian Socialist Party (SPS) in the advent of multi-party elections, camouflaged in its alleged defense of the Serbian people and their right to live together in one state.<sup>33</sup> The passage from communism to post-communism in Serbia should hence be understood as the passage from state-socialism to state-nationalism, where the institutional structures that formed the bases of the former communist regime remained almost untouched but where the ideology that the regime used to

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29 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe. The Sources and Meaning of the Great Transformation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 1-598; Svetlana Slapsak, "Yugoslav War: a Case of/for Gender History," in *War Discourse. Women's Discourse. Essays and Case Studies from Yugoslavia and Russia*, ed. Svetlana Slapsak (Ljubljana: Topos, 2002), 17-68.

30 Duvravka Stojanovic, "The Traumatic Circle of the Serbian Opposition" in *The Road to War in Serbia. Trauma and Catharsis*, ed. Nebojsa Popov (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000). 449-478.

31 Ibid. 451.

32 Ibid. 449-478.

33 Ibid. 449-478.

maintain its power was, on the outlook, fundamentally changed from socialism to nationalism.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, the regime of Slobodan Milosevic managed to maintain a total monopoly of power. It systematically prevented the development of a normal parliamentary system by resisting all alternatives to its overbearing rule. The regime systematically depoliticized the population, manipulated election results, maintained control over the most important media sources, discredited political opponents and limited their public visibility, and co-opted part of the right-wing nationalist political opposition to its own cadre of allies.<sup>35</sup> Most importantly, the regime played the main role in instigating the wars that destroyed Yugoslavia, where "the war constituted a vital part of the destruction of alternatives."<sup>36</sup> Not only did the wars signify an incredible humanitarian catastrophe but also provided the regime with "the ability to categorically disqualify political opponents as treasonous, unpatriotic, and fomenting division when unity is needed" and as "a pretext for severing communication between anti-war and anti-regime forces in different republics."<sup>37</sup>

In a context where the ethno-fascist nationalist state pervaded public politics, civil society in Serbia during the 1990s became private.<sup>38</sup> Papic describes the socio-political context of Serbia during the 1990s as one of fundamental civic disempowerment and state/nationalist/patriarchal authoritarianism. "From the beginning Milosevic worked consistently to disempower all political institutions, and therefore all men except himself to preclude any possibility of competition between equals."<sup>39</sup> What Papic calls the structural emasculation of men's power at the

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34 Papic, "Women in Serbia," 153-169.

35 Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia*, 1-230.

36 Ibid. 24.

37 Ibid. 24.

38 Here, I borrow the term ethno-fascist nationalism to describe the political situation in Serbia during the 1990s from Zarana Papic. Please see Zarana Papic, "Europe after 1989: Ethnic Wars, the Fascistization of Civil Society and Body Politics in Serbia," in *Thinking Differently: a Reader in European Women's Studies*, eds. Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti (London: Zed Books, 2002), 127-144.

39 Ibid. 130.

public level went hand in hand with what she calls the "retraditionalization, instrumentalization, and naturalization of women's identities, social roles, and their symbolic representations."<sup>40</sup>

With the realm of formal politics and decision-making bodies completely monopolized by one party and one man, civil society in Serbia during the 1990s emerged as the locus of resistance to state-nationalist authoritarianism. Blagojevic characterizes the 1990s in Serbia as a "history of protests,"<sup>41</sup> in which she highlights the role of the 1991/1992 and 1996/1997 students' and citizens' protests in the development of a culture of civil resistance and in furthering a democratic political culture. In addition to the protests, other initiatives provided also exemplary cases of resistance to the overbearing power of the Milosevic regime. These initiatives included pan-Yugoslav political movements that sought a peaceful settlement of disputes and a stabilization of the Yugoslav state, autonomous women's organizations that worked toward refraining the curtailment of women's rights and freedoms in the context of the rise of nationalism in Serbia, anti-war organizations such as *Women in Black* that worked toward the demilitarization of all aspects of life in Yugoslavia as well as on aiding deserters and conscientious objectors, organizations that promoted the development of civil society, and independent intellectual organizations.<sup>42</sup> The development of civil society anti-nationalist and anti-war initiatives was an almost exclusively urban phenomenon and was frequently attacked and discredited by the regime since it posed an alternative to the politics of the nationalist state.<sup>43</sup>

Within the context of the development of civil society anti-nationalist and anti-war initiatives, *Women in Black* initiated a

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40 Ibid. 128.

41 Marina Blagojevic, "Belgrade Protests 1996/1997: From Women in the Movement to Women's Movement?" in *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Jasmina Lukic, Joanna Regulska, and Darja Zavirsek. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 147.

42 Bojana Susak, "An Alternative to War," in *The Road to War in Serbia. Trauma and Catharsis*, ed. Nebojsa Popov (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 479-508.

43 Ibid. 479-508.

specific feminist response to nationalism, militarism, and war. *Women in Black* have been an organization with a clear feminist orientation since the start because the founders of *Women in Black* had long been involved with the feminist movement in Yugoslavia in a variety of different ways prior to the inception of *Women Black* as such. Founders of the organization had been involved in the production of feminist academic scholarship, in the organization of feminist conferences and groups, and in the foundation of women's centers and the first SOS Hotline for women and children victims of domestic violence.<sup>44</sup>

*Women in Black* originated on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1991, after the outbreak of war in Croatia, when a group of feminists from Belgrade held a vigil in front of the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade's city center and peacefully protested against the war. They wore black as a sign of mourning for all the victims of the war, held signs, and had been inspired by a group of Israeli women who, in 1988, held weekly vigils to peacefully protest the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories.<sup>45</sup> The *Women in Black* were one of the first groups in Serbia to publicly protest the war in Croatia and to denounce the regime of Slobodan Milosevic for the atrocities it was committing. As other conflicts developed in the Balkan region, *Women in Black* continued protesting publicly against the wars on a strict regular basis.<sup>46</sup> What started in 1991 as a group of ten women who were protesting against the wars that were destroying multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Yugoslavia has become one of the most important organizations in the international women's peace movement, initiating the International Network of *Women in Black* and the Women's Peace Network – Network of *Women in Black* Serbia.<sup>47</sup>

The founders of *Women in Black* first took part in the mainstream peace movement in Serbia, where they worked together with other pacifist women and men. The women who came to found

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44 Duhacek, "Gender Perspectives on Political Identities in Yugoslavia," 113-126.

45 Mladjenovic and Hughes, "Feminist Resistance to War and Violence in Serbia," 247-271.

46 Cockburn, *From Where We Stand*, 79-105; Duhacek, "Gender Perspectives on Political Identities in Yugoslavia," 113-126.

47 Ibid. 88.

*Women in Black* noticed that, within the peace movement, issues of gender were not being addressed in any way and that "the peace movement was...repeating certain patriarchal models, using patriarchal language and ignoring the inequalities between women and men."<sup>48</sup> Thus they saw the need to organize pacifist resistance to war outside the realm of the mainstream peace movement and to form a "specifically feminist initiative against the terrifying upsurge of patriarchal militarism now dominating politics, pervading the media and swaggering the streets."<sup>49</sup>

For *Women in Black* activists, the peace movement was to a certain extent replicating a patriarchal model because the work of women in peace groups was taken for granted and deemed invisible. The women who came to found *Women in Black* wanted their presence in the peace movement "to be VISIBLE, not to be seen as something natural, as part of our woman's role," they "wanted it to be clearly understood that what we were doing was our political choice."<sup>50</sup> In search for visibility and as a way to assert their political subjectivity, *Women in Black* took to the streets in the form of non-violent resistance. They held vigils on a regular basis during the war years and on especial dates once the war period was over.<sup>51</sup> Today they are one of the most important projects in Serbia to confront Serbia's criminal past. Paradoxically, because in this way they fight the general social tendency to forget about the past in order to move on, *Women in Black* have been accused by many in Serbia of disrupting the process of restoring normalcy and peace.<sup>52</sup>

*Women in Black* activists have asserted their political subjectivity not only by their public condemnation of the wars that destroyed Yugoslavia, but above all by taking responsibility for the wars that were committed in their name and by demanding accountability for the wars from the Serbian state. Since the inception of the

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48 Zajovic 1994 in Ibid. 84.

49 Ibid. 85.

50 *Women in Black* in Mladjenovic and Hughes, "Feminist Resistance to War and Violence in Serbia," 262, capital letters in the original.

51 Fridman, "Alternative Voices in Public Space," 291-303.

52 Ibid. 291-303.

organization, they have positioned themselves explicitly against the Serbian nation-state.<sup>53</sup> They have rejected identification with the state because for them "identification with the states, with the male militaristic states means to assume the role of an accomplice in war and war propaganda."<sup>54</sup> *Women in Black* activists are "building a model of citizenship that is based on responsibility *for the political unit* they belong to."<sup>55</sup> Building this new model of citizenship based on responsibility has not, however, come without immense costs—and it is to an account of this phenomenon that I now turn.

#### 4.2 Three Phases of Repression

According to Zajovic, the state and social repression that *Women in Black* have endured throughout the years are interwoven and can be divided into three distinct phases identified in chronological order: the period comprising the Yugoslav Wars of Secession and the fall of the Milosevic regime (1991-2000), the period between the fall of the Milosevic regime and the murder of democratically-elected prime minister Zoran Djindjic (2000-2003), and the period following Djindjic's assassination and the election of nationalist leader Vojislav Kostunica as prime minister up to the present (2003-).<sup>56</sup>

During the first period of repression the state promoted a denial of its belligerent reality by claiming that Serbia was not at war and consequently claimed an alleged lack of responsibility for the wars while blaming others—such as anti-war activists like the *Women in Black*. In this context of "state-organized crime and denial of criminal reality"<sup>57</sup> between 1991 and 2000, *Women in Black* were in 1995 unlawfully banned to conduct humanitarian work in a refugee camp. From 1993 onwards, they also faced illegitimate legal proceedings against their public declarations following their street actions in several opportunities. In addition,

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53 Duhacek, "Gender Perspectives on Political Identities in Yugoslavia," 113-126.

54 Zajovic in Ibid. 120.

55 Duhacek, "The Making of Political Responsibility," 214, emphasis in the original.

56 Zajovic, "Discontinuity of Repression towards Women in Black," 49-55.

57 Ibid. 49.

throughout this first period, over twelve *Women in Black* activists were subject to police interrogation “as a form of threatening, frightening, blackmail [sic], and breaking solidarity and group cohesion.”<sup>58</sup> Between 1992 and 2000, the regime purposefully frustrated meetings of the International Network of *Women in Black* through a variety of means as a way to sever *Women in Black*’s connections with international solidarity networks. In 1998 following the outbreak of violence in Kosovo, the government banned an anti-war rally organized by *Women in Black* and other anti-war groups. *Women in Black* and other peace groups condemned this government ban through a public statement, which was followed by the aggressive rhetoric of extreme-nationalist right-wing member of the Serbian parliament Vojislav Seselj, who labeled the *Women in Black* and other human rights organizations as “Serbia’s inner enemies” that should be caught.<sup>59</sup>

Between June and September 2000, several *Women in Black* activists were subject to daily interrogations by the Serbian State Security (SSS), one of them was subject to illegitimate detention and torture from this same state entity, while two *Women in Black* activists were prosecuted through an arrest warrant. Also during this period, *Women in Black* were criminalized through financial control and the passport of one *Women in Black* activist, as well as some of the organization’s materials and documentation, were confiscated by the SSS. In addition, *Women in Black* activists were subject to apartment searches, secret monitoring of phone-calls, and installation of bugs in some of their apartments, while international *Women in Black* volunteers were expelled from Serbia. At the social level, during the 1991-2000 period, *Women in Black* were not only subject to physical and verbal attacks during their anti-war street actions but also socially stigmatized and criminalized.<sup>60</sup>

During the period of the Djindjic government (2000-2003), *Women in Black* experienced a “disburdening of fear”<sup>61</sup> and the

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58 Ibid. 50.

59 Ibid. 49-55; Mladjenovic and Hughes, “Feminist Resistance to War and Violence in Serbia,” 247-271.

60 Zajovic, “Discontinuity of Repression towards Women in Black,” 49-55.

61 Ibid. 52.



promotion of their activities outside of Belgrade; at the same time, the legal financial proceedings that had been initiated against them by the Milosevic regime were not dropped until February 2003. Despite the change in government, "the ouster of Milosevic in October 2000 did not bring an end to his legacy—a legacy entrenched in the institutions of the country and in the persons at the highest levels of those institutions."<sup>62</sup> Following the assassination of Djindjic and the rise to power of Vojislav Kostunica, *Women in Black* experienced a renewal in the repressive measures taken against them both at the social but most important, state, level.

As stated by Zajovic, "parallel to the rehabilitation of representatives of the previous (Milosevic's) regime, methods from that period were rehabilitated as well."<sup>63</sup> Since 2003, *Women in Black* have been unjustifiably banned from conducting a variety of street actions on significant dates—including International Human Rights Day on December 10<sup>th</sup> 2004 and International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2005. Also, they have been subject to state intimidation through visits of police officers to the main office of *Women in Black* and they have been accused of legal offenses. Most importantly, they have been unjustifiably subject to investigations on financial irregularities and have been accused of the crime of organization of women for prostitution. Consequently, they have undergone police interrogations and hearings in the Department of Organized Crime and Prostitution at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and at the Economic Crimes Department and they have also had unannounced visits from police officers to the main office of *Women in Black* in regards to these alleged offenses.<sup>64</sup>

These incidents were particularly prominent between the months of April and October 2005. Apparently, they were part of a campaign of systematic harassment and intimidation conducted

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62 Fridman, "Alternative Voices in Public Space," 293.

63 Zajovic, "Discontinuity of Repression towards Women in Black," 53.

64 Ibid. 49-55; Amnesty International, "Serbia and Montenegro: The Writing on the Wall: Serbian Human Rights Defenders at Risk" Amnesty International, 2005 [article on-line]; available at: [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/016/2005/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/016/2005/en), last accessed September 16 2009.

by state and non-state parties against human rights organizations in Serbia like *Women in Black* who were involved in a campaign called "Facing the Past." This campaign commemorated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide of 8000 Bosnian Muslim boys and men in the town of Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina in July 1995 at the end of the Bosnian war, and demanded for responsibility and accountability from the Serbian state for the wars and war crimes committed in the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.<sup>65</sup>

At the social level, since 2003, *Women in Black* have been subject to media harassment and physical attacks and threats by non-state actors—including, but not limited to, individuals affiliated with extreme nationalist and clerical-fascist organizations including Obraz<sup>66</sup> and the Fatherland Movement of Serbia.<sup>67</sup> In 2004, *Women in Black* were attacked during a street action opposing the rise of violence in Kosovo and the attack of mosques and non-Serbs in Serbia and during the public commemoration of nine years since the genocide in Srebrenica. In 2005, *Women in Black* activists were attacked during a street action in Novi Sad that demanded that those prosecuted for war crimes be sent to the Hague tribunal, during a commemoration of 10 years since the genocide in Srebrenica, and during a public celebration of the International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism on November 9<sup>th</sup>. They also received numerous threatening phone-calls in their office during the days prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica. In several occasions, the police blatantly condoned this violence by ignoring the charges that *Women in Black* pressed against the attackers.<sup>68</sup>

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65 Amnesty International, "Serbia and Montenegro: The Writing on the Wall: Serbian Human Rights Defenders at Risk" Amnesty International, 2005 [article on-line]; available at:

[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/016/2005/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/016/2005/en), last accessed September 16 2009.

66 Obraz means "honor" in Serbian.

67 Amnesty International, "Serbia and Montenegro: The Writing on the Wall: Serbian Human Rights Defenders at Risk" Amnesty International, 2005 [article on-line]; available at: [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/016/2005/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/016/2005/en), last accessed September 16 2009; Zajovic, "Dis/continuity of Repression towards Women in Black," 49-55.

68 Ibid. last accessed September 16 2009; Ibid. 49-55; Fridman, "Alternative Voices in Public Space," 291-303.

In 2005, Amnesty International launched an international campaign requesting the Serbian state to increase the protection of human rights defenders in Serbia. This campaign resulted in an increase of police custody in all of the street actions organized by *Women in Black*. At the same time *Women in Black* "think that some forms of this protection led to an increased degree of ghettoization of *Women in Black* and separated us from public participation."<sup>69</sup> The international recognition of the problems faced by human rights defenders in Serbia like *Women in Black* did not by any means put an end to the social and state repression they have been subject to. In January 2007 two *Women in Black* activists were attacked by skinheads upon return from an election night party organized by a coalition of parties and associations of the opposition and *Women in Black* were unjustifiably banned from carrying out a peace march and performance in celebration of International Women's Day on March 8th 2008.<sup>70</sup> According to Zajovic, these events serve as evidence to show the continued and planned repression of the Serbian government over human rights defenders like *Women in Black* that aim to "discredit, frighten, and exhaust *Women in Black*" as well as to inhibit individuals to join the organization.<sup>71</sup> More recently, on July 10<sup>th</sup> 2009 during a silent vigil in Belgrade's Republic Square to commemorate 14 years since the genocide in Srebrenica, *Women in Black* activists were verbally attacked by a group of people belonging to clerical-fascist organizations who were holding a protest at the same time of the silent vigil. The police had to intervene in order to stop the clerical-fascist individuals from physically attacking the *Women in Black*

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69 Zajovic, "Discontinuity of Repression towards Women in Black," 55.

70 Danas, "Hooligans Attack Women in Black Activists," Danas, January 2007 [article on-line]; available at: [www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&lang=en&id=285](http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&lang=en&id=285), last accessed September 16, 2009; Women in Black, personal correspondence. The Belgrade police refused to grant Women in Black a permit to carry out a street performance and a peace march on March 8th on the alleged basis that the street performance and the march would constitute a threat to public safety and public property. Belgrade was the only capital city in Europe where street actions in commemoration of International Women's Day 2008 were banned. Women in Black were finally granted permission and police protection to carry out the activities they had planned for International Women's Day on March 16th 2008.

71 Zajovic, "Dis/continuity of Repression towards Women in Black," 55.

activists. At the same time, the attackers were allowed by the police to stay on the square—despite the fact that their official time to make use of the square had expired before the starting time of the *Women in Black*'s vigil.<sup>72</sup>

Despite these social and state practices of intimidation, *Women in Black* continue to exist and to recruit new members into the organization. It is to a discussion of the structures and mechanisms that enable such sustained existence and the recruitment of new members into it that I now turn.

## **5. Analyzing the Findings: The Role of Social Networks, Collective Action Frames, and Collective Identity in Mobilization into *Women in Black***

### **5.1 Social Networks and their Relevance to Participation into Women in Black**

According to McAdam, it is nowadays a well-known “fact” in the study of social movements that the structural proximity of social actors to a SMO would facilitate their involvement in it.<sup>73</sup> Having a tie to somebody already involved in a SMO is crucial in determining actors’ decisions to participate. In this context, ideological identification with a social movement would not be enough of an incentive to take action; outsiders to a social movement organization may share in its grievances and mission but it is not until a structural opportunity through a tie—such as a friend, an acquaintance, or a family member—emerges that actors would actually consider the opportunity to join. Ties to a SMO act as mediators between the SMO and potential recruits. McAdam claims that this thesis has been proven through a wide variety of empirical examples in an array of different contexts.<sup>74</sup> The data found through this study contributes to confirming this thesis.

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72 Women in Black, “Srebrenica 10.july.2009.Belgrade,” Women in Black, [article on-line]; available at: [www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=561&Itemid=1](http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=561&Itemid=1), last accessed September 16 2009.

73 McAdam, “Beyond Structural Analysis,” 284-289.

74 Ibid. 283.

A common pattern of mobilization among the activists interviewed for this study was their structural location in activist networks or having ties that linked them to such networks. The function that social networks play in structurally connecting people to join this SMO becomes clear from activists' account of how they came to create *Women in Black* but even more so of how they came to join *Women in Black* after its foundation. The founders all knew each other, as they were linked structurally through specific networks prior to the inception of the organization: from joint activism in organizations such as the Center for Anti-War Action from the peace movement in Serbia, from joint work in the SOS Hotline for women and children victims of domestic violence, as well as through common ties of friendship. In the case of latter recruits into the organization, friends, family members, acquaintances, and colleagues served as the nexuses for movement participation.

However, according to McAdam the structural ties that social networks provide do not suffice to account for participation.<sup>75</sup> They give an account of the micro-mechanisms of participation but do not shed light on the actual meso-level processes that actually mobilize actors into action. The structural paradigm does not consider that social actors do not possess only ties that link them to social movements and that may motivate them to participate but also other non-activist ties that may discourage participation, as well as that people located near social movements do not decide to participate by "contagion" but are rendered with individual autonomy and agency to decide ultimately whether to join or not. In this context, the significance of the tie is crucial in motivating actors to participate, as "a viable model of individual action must take account of the fundamentally social/relational nature of human existence" and where "most individuals act routinely to safeguard and sustain the central sources of meaning and identity in their lives. As a practical matter, this means frequently prizing solidarity incentives over all others and, in particular, conforming to the behavioral dictates of

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 286.

those whose approval and sustenance are most central to our lives and salient identities."<sup>76</sup>

Prior ties to a SMO work as primary catalysts for movement participation when they "(a) reinforce the potential recruit's strong identification with a particular identity and (b) help to establish a strong linkage between that identity and the movement in question."<sup>77</sup> Steps (a) and (b) are what McAdam qualifies as the "identity-movement linkage."<sup>78</sup> When the linkage is supported by those who are significant in a person's life and the person in question encounters no opposition—or rather, more support than opposition from other significant others—activism becomes almost inevitable.<sup>79</sup> The link between identity and movement becomes evident when examining the accounts of those who joined *Women in Black* from the very beginning. A common pattern in the accounts of those who joined the organization from the beginning is that they all had prior activist experiences of one form or another prior to joining the organization and that they identified strongly with the values of feminism and anti-militarism. In this context, activism, feminism, and anti-militarism stood as salient identities propelling decisions to participate, enhanced through common ties of trust and solidarity. No accounts of opposition to participate by people significant in activists' life appear in any of their accounts. Instead, people insignificant in their personal lives presented the primary source of opposition, as explained in the previous section—the government and clerical-fascist groups. When full support comes from the inside of a movement, when a community of activists stands strong, the impact of repression from the outside is minimized and the chances of sustained participation increase.

According to McAdam, the process of 1) structural connection, 2) identity/movement linkage, and 3) the attempts of significant others to facilitate movement participation can occur

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 287.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 287.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 288.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 288.

independently but they definitely guarantee activism when they take place together in the order outlined.<sup>80</sup> The fact that these processes do in fact occur independently can be elucidated when considering the participation of latter recruits into the organization, some of whom were linked not through strong ties such as friends or family members, but acquaintances and colleagues. In this context, the fundamental catalyst for decisions to participate in a movement is not primarily the influence of the tie but the collective action frame shaped by the organization, a discussion to which I now turn.

## 5.2 The Collective Action Frame of Women in Black

Framing, according to Tarrow “not only relates to the generalization of a grievance, but defines the ‘us’ and ‘them’ in a movement’s conflict structure.”<sup>81</sup> Frames set limits to who can have access to the movement and who cannot by defining allies and opponents; they not only identify a grievance but historicize it by contextualizing it into specific social and political milieus that can—and, according to social movements, should—be subject to change through collective contentious action.<sup>82</sup> “Inscribing grievances into overall frames that identify an injustice, attribute the responsibility for it to others, and propose solutions to it, is a central activity of social movements.”<sup>83</sup> Frames not only specify ideological orientations but also set forth a *modus operandi* for movement action and are fueled and sustained by emotions<sup>84</sup> and by the use of specific symbols that are “taken selectively by movement leaders from a cultural reservoir and combined with action-oriented beliefs in order to navigate strategically among a parallelogram of actors, ranging from states and social opponents to militants and target populations.”<sup>85</sup> Frames and the ideological, emotional, and cultural baggage tied to them define socio-political

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80 Ibid. 288.

81 Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 21.

82 Ibid. 21-22.

83 Ibid. 111.

84 Ibid. 111-112.

85 Ibid. 111-112.

situations not as given, but as subject to change and mobilize people out of passivity into socio-political activism.<sup>86</sup>

In the case of *Women in Black*, the collective action frame defined since the inception of the organization by its founders has been substantiated by a specific ideological orientation—anti-militarism, anti-nationalism, and feminism. This ideological orientation defines war as inextricably linked to the joint work of militarism, nationalism, and patriarchy, and not as something inevitable that has always happened in human history, but as an injustice that should be fought against by concerned people and for which specific parties in society should be held accountable—in this context, the Serbian state. The ideology of *Women in Black* specifies allies—anti-militarists, feminists, and anti-nationalists—and opponents—war-mongers, sexists, and fascists. And underlying ideology, anger and indignation at the injustice of war and the feeling of solidarity with war victim survivors propel the collective frame into an action frame.

In addition to the role of social networks, the collective action frame described above served as a crucial mechanism to propel the activists interviewed to mobilization into *Women in Black* not only during the initial phases of its existence—the Milosevic period—but even more so during the post-Milosevic period. The activists interviewed who joined the organization way after its inception did stand structurally close to the organization, but in their cases it was not primarily the salience of the tie to the organization but the collective action frame defined by *Women in Black* that propelled their decisions to participate. As an activist put it in one of the interviews, “the reason I got involved with *Women in Black* is because it was the only thing that made any sense, it was the only place where somebody would sort of make a structured effort to explain how war is not inevitable, how it is something that we can and should avoid and stop and how it starts and what are the warning signs.” A collective action frame does not only provide a mechanism to promote movement participation, but also acts as a collective identity incentive to

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 111.



sustain movement participation. It is to a discussion of the role of collective identity as an incentive that I now turn.

### 5.3 Collective Identity as an Incentive for Sustained Participation into Women in Black

According to Friedman and McAdam, "the collective identity of a social movement organization (SMO) is a shorthand designation announcing a status—a set of attitudes, commitments, and rules of behavior—that those who assume the identity can be expected to subscribe to."<sup>87</sup> "It is also an individual announcement of affiliation, of connection with others. To partake of a collective identity is to reconstitute the individual self around a new and valued identity."<sup>88</sup> In this context, participation in *Women in Black* does not include only subscribing to a set of attitudes, commitments and rules of behavior, but also developing a sense of belonging to a particular group of people and acquiring a new definition of the self. In this context, collective identity acts as a powerful motivation for movement participation.<sup>89</sup>

Friedman and McAdam identify three stages in the life of social movements in which collective identity as an incentive plays a fundamental role.<sup>90</sup> First, social movements emerge out of associations or groups that build upon pre-existing identities, which provides them with a framework to become established social movements organizations and develop. This can be seen very clearly in the case of *Women in Black*: they began their activism within the framework of the mainstream peace movement and were located primarily in the Center for Anti-War Action, from the basis of a clear anti-militarist and anti-nationalist identity that they co-joined with their feminist identity. They were first 10 women or so protesting and later they became a formal social movement organization (SMO). The passage from group to SMO constitutes the second stage in the life of a social movement. The third refers to the decline of the movement. In

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87 Friedman and McAdam, "Collective Identity and Activism," 157.

88 Ibid. 157.

89 Ibid. 162-166.

90 Ibid. 162-166.

the second stage, when a group becomes a SMO it will expand its reach from the original founders and will aim at recruiting new members into it. According to Friedman and McAdam, in this context, incentives for participation become fundamental. Friedman and McAdam point at the relevance of solidarity as an incentive in movement participation, which is linked to the collective identity by which a SMO comes to define itself—in the case of *Women in Black*, anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, and feminist. A specific collective identity such as this becomes a high incentive to participate when it becomes a resource in itself. At the same time that a SMO grants participants with the identity, it excludes non-participants from acquiring it and minimizes the chances of free-riding.<sup>91</sup> Collective identity becomes an incentive to participate when it makes its collective action frame a resource the movement can make use of to propel participation, since “one of the most powerful motivators of individual action is the desire to confirm through behavior a cherished identity.”<sup>92</sup>

A common pattern found in all of the activists interviewed for this study was how participation in *Women in Black* confirmed the identity of anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist activists through involvement in the organization. Participation in this kind of political contention was central to activists’ concept of self; it became a crucial part of who they defined themselves to be. In this context, refraining from engaging in this type of contention would signify a negation of the self as such—and the costs of non-participation would thus be much higher than the actual benefits of it. Solidarity, as mentioned earlier, goes hand in hand with collective identity and also acts as an incentive for movement participation. A common pattern found in all of the narratives of the activists interviewed for this study point at the sense of community found in *Women in Black* and at the framework of support, recognition, and belonging that participation in this type of contention provided. Their narratives pointed at the fundamentally life-affirming character of participation in this type of contention. Participation in *Women in Black* provided the interviewees a venue to transform feelings of

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91 Ibid. 162-166.

92 Ibid. 169.

anger, indignation, and helplessness by rendering them with a sense of agency. It provided a venue for the activists interviewed to affirm their senses of self by enabling them to act according to their values; it was an identity that became strengthened by the bonds of community, solidarity, support, recognition, and belonging created in the process of participation.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

The main research question motivating the realization of this study referred as to how and why activists become mobilized into this type of anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, feminist political contention—considering that ever since the beginning of *Women in Black* they have undergone systematic social and political repression. If during the Milosevic regime it was dangerous to become mobilized into this type of contention, what were the structures and mechanisms that facilitated participation, despite the risks involved? For self-evident reasons, the period following the demise of the Milosevic regime is significantly different from it; however, *Women in Black* still undergo state and social repression. Then how and why do they become mobilized into the organization? When considering the patterns of mobilization into *Women in Black* identified in this study, the answer becomes multi-fold.

Activism in *Women in Black* does not emerge simply out of strong political and moral convictions and out of anger and indignation at the injustice of war. Beliefs and emotions, although an extremely important component to account for participation, are only one determinant to it. More specific, complex structures and mechanisms make activism happen. As identified in this study, these include the structural and what McAdam calls the identity/social movement linkage function of social networks as well as their capacity to determine decisions when ties to the movement underscore bonds of community, solidarity, and support. But social networks and their various functions are not enough to account for participation; as explained in this study, the development of a specific collective action frame that defines who the SMO is vis-à-vis other parties in the conflict structure in question, that underlines specific ideological orientations and a

course of action, and that is set in motion through the power of emotions is also an important factor determining participation. At the same time, as explained in this study, the collective action frame of the SMO has the capacity to act as a collective identity and solidarity incentive that promotes and sustains participation in this type of contention despite the risks involved.

As far as subsequent research on *Women in Black* goes, future studies should take notice of the fact that *Women in Black* is not only a single organization located in Serbia but a network of *Women in Black* organizations that are located in many distant parts of the world. In this context, a network analysis of the *International Network of Women in Black* could shed light to the mechanisms that have promoted the development of the network and that contribute to its continual spread throughout the world—in order to elucidate how SMOs limited to specific national contexts transcend the border of the nation-state and define their claims not only in local but also in global terms. In addition, a comparative study of the role of social networks, collective action frames, and solidarity and identity incentives in other organizations belonging to the *International Network* could shed light on the similarities and differences found in prompting mobilization into *Women in Black* organizations and underline how different structures and mechanisms facilitate the entry of new recruits depending on the socio-political contexts they find themselves in. It would be worth inquiring whether *Women in Black* organizations situated in contexts where they encounter no social or political opposition to their existence like they do in Serbia mobilize potential recruits similar to their counterparts in Serbia and whether that could substantiate empirically a comprehensive, holistic theory of activist mobilization.

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