

A Living History (1973-1993): How the Experiences of
Early Activists Shaped the Violence Against Women (VAW)
Movement in Ontario: A Case Study

by

Deborah Ann Sinclair

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work
University of Toronto

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2019

Abstract

This dissertation shines a light on a group of women who helped to create a violence against women (VAW) movement that changed the course of history in Ontario, Canada for countless women, their families and their communities. This study centres the voices of activists, positioning them as knowledge producers with expertise and wisdom gleaned during five decades of work in the VAW movement in Ontario.

A feminist analysis of the VAW movement begins from the standpoint of women. In particular, an intersectional feminist analysis begins from the standpoint of diverse women who embrace the tenets of critical feminist standpoint theory. This study draws on social movement theory (SMT) literature, particularly the scholarship of feminist SMT researchers, to examine the state of the VAW movement in Ontario, Canada. This dissertation is a story about a social movement, specifically the VAW movement in Ontario—a strand of the women’s liberation movement frequently referred to as the *second wave*, but also on the cusp of ushering in *third wave* feminism. I document the time period from 1973 to 1993—a period that spans the start of the era when all of the participants in this study began their activist work—until the time of their interviews, which took place between 2014 to 2018.

In this dissertation, I challenge the notion that the VAW movement has been reduced to a VAW sector, merely creating and delivering services to select populations of women. This

interpretation suggests that there is a loss or erosion of an expressed political commitment to uncovering and eliminating the root causes of VAW. Using a case study methodology, I argue that the VAW activists in this study have been persistently engaged in and committed to ending VAW, although their activism shifts and manifests in several forms throughout the life cycle of the movement. The findings of this dissertation research are intended to bring practical and useful implications that can enhance future strategies for change in the VAW movement, contribute to the knowledge base of social work, and infuse the VAW movement with renewed energy and critical vision.

Dedication

To those who have gone before me, I miss you.

For my parents, Leona Josephine Trainor and Peter Sinclair, who instilled in me the importance of doing meaningful work in the world and living a life of gratitude, joy, love, laughter, curiosity, creativity, and lifelong learning.

For my older sister Patricia Lee Sinclair-Faulkner, who journeyed with me for my first 51 years. My beloved Pat was the first social worker I ever loved. She embodied all the values I have come to know and admire. My life was enriched by her and she remains in my heart always.

For my little brother, Peter Sinclair Jr.—you were not here on this earth for long but your short three years in this world have impacted me for a lifetime. I know you are the angel on my shoulder.

To those who will carry on, I support and encourage you.

While I was in the final stages of completing this thesis, my daughter Meg and her partner Craig gave birth to a healthy, gorgeous, perfect little boy—Lachlan Arthur Morantz—born on November 5, 2018. What a gift to be in the presence of a precious new life where anything seems possible.

Welcome to the world, little Lachlan. We are leaving this legacy of striving for justice and equity for your generation. Carry us in your hearts and you will never be alone. I love you, my wise little man, from your very own Dr. Yaya.

*Strong women and strong men, protect the children, tend the ailing,
and in fact, reassure the entire world.*

Maya Angelou

Acknowledgements

It is an emotional experience for me to look back and reflect on how this massive project was completed. I tend to think in visual pictures and in memories, so as I sit here and write this final piece, I am flooded with images of kindness from family, friends, and colleagues near and far—indeed everyone who has generously supported me throughout this dissertation journey with their wisdom, compassion, insight, and ongoing care.

There are so many people to thank but let me begin with my participants: twenty-one activists who not only generously gave of their time to meet me but loved the project so much that they continually sent me inspiring notes, articles, clippings, videos, and more questions to consider. It was truly a collaborative project, although I, as the researcher, take full responsibility for how I tell this collective story of the VAW movement in Ontario, Canada.

All of the participants demonstrated the capacity to sustain a critical social movement lens of the VAW movement, to inspire and motivate others, to embrace an anti-racist, anti-oppression, anti-colonial framework, to maintain their energy and compassion for the movement, and to strengthen their resilience as they meet their challenges. They now thrive in the work. They did not give up; they persisted—they struggled, they laughed, they cried, they raged, they held the tensions, but they did not give up. They had an ability to hope even in the midst of despair. Their message to the rest of us is to never give up. We have much to be proud of and we have much still to do.

I am very thankful to my committee members. First and foremost, my supervisor, Dr. Ramona Alaggia, has guided me with patience, genuine care, and astute insight. She applied just the right amount of pressure when it was needed and then allowed me to go off on my own when it was clear I was on the right path. Her faith that I could complete this dissertation never wavered and her belief inspired confidence in me. While I knew my content area well after so many years in the field, I was a “newbie” when it came to applying my front-line experience to

a scholarly research paradigm. I could not have asked for a better guide—Ramona is a researcher extraordinaire and the very person I needed to lead me through the many hurdles of the academic process. We are destined to be lifelong friends.

I was blessed to have the amazing support of an intellectual giant, Dr. Sheila Neysmith, on my committee from the beginning. In my first paper for her epistemology course, Sheila called me out as a “feminist elder” and with that title she informed me of my responsibility to be bold and to challenge our field. I hope I have done that! I have memories of Sheila greeting me in the hall, with hands gesturing to indicate that I need to choose one side or the other—micro or macro analysis. (I could never make the choice, so in true Gemini fashion I chose to do both.) Sheila stayed with me every step of the way, teaching me the language of the academy and the underlying assumptions that make one take a scholarly approach to topics such as mine. We agreed she would stay with me until the end (barring death). We are blessed—both of us made it to the finish line. Hats off, Sheila.

Dr. Holly Johnson (University of Ottawa) kindly agreed to join my committee during an earlier phase of my work. There is no doubt that her insight into the development of my thesis proposal strengthened my work. Then she graciously agreed to step down from my committee to become a participant in the study. I will always be grateful for her generosity and unwavering support.

I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Kyle Whitfield (University of Alberta) at the Qualitative Research Conference in Ottawa a few years ago while attending her workshop on case study research. I was so taken by her approach that I asked her if a social movement could be the sole focus of a case study. She said “yes,” and she kindly agreed to be the case study methodologist on my committee. She has taught me a lot about the rigours of case study research and for that I am grateful. She did so with enthusiasm, encouragement, and warm, inspiring, confidence-building affirmations. She was always only one phone call away.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to my external examiner, Dr. Colleen

Lundy (Carleton University), for her thoughtful and generous feedback on my work. Also, thank you to my internal examiners, Dr. Charmaine Williams and Dr. Stephanie Begun, who took time from their busy schedules to read my work in depth and as well as make my oral defence a most pleasurable and informative experience. Their comments will indeed strengthen my ongoing work.

Thank you to the Factor-Inwentash and OISE faculty staff: Michael Saini, who made NVivo training palatable and fun; Aron Shlonsky, who taught me to be both a compassionate and constructive reviewer of my peers' work; Tahany Gadalla, whose kind and patient teaching style made statistics understandable; Esme Fuller-Thomson, whose sustaining and stimulating chats, impeccable organizational and research skills, and exuberance for research inspired me to tackle complicated questions; Marion Bogo, a consummate scholar and teacher who taught me how to think critically and develop my own pedagogy; and Rupaleem Bhuyan, who challenged me to think outside the box and confront racism and colonialism within our own movements, and who introduced me to the work of her colleague, Robin DiAngelo. DiAngelo's work made all the difference, for I fell in love with Critical Whiteness studies.

At OISE, I found solace in the mentorship of two wonderful professors, the late Dr. Roxanna Ng, who taught me to teach in a compassionate, embodied way and encouraged me to applaud the achievements of the VAW movement rather than diminish them, and who made me proud of my work, and Dr. Creso Sá, who allowed me to audit his Case Study Research course but still made me do all the homework assignments. I can see why now: he showed me how to think and write like a case study researcher but encouraged me to draw on my own research. That helped me enormously in the writing of my final dissertation.

Once a PhD student finishes all the course work, then the lonely and sometimes isolating part of the journey begins. What softened that stage for me were the warm and familiar faces of the office staff. Day in and day out, they are there to shepherd students through the process with kind smiles, warm hugs, words of encouragement, and the right answers—all of which make the

unfamiliar a little easier. I would like to thank Sharon Bewell, Angela Umbrella, Kay Ramdass, and Julie Javier—you all made my day brighter every time I was greeted by your beautiful smiles and helpful assistance.

I am also deeply grateful for my PhD peers. I had always heard horror stories about the competitive atmosphere of academic life. That was never my experience. My original cohort of ten brilliant students was a kind, big-hearted, and helpful group. We bonded in our many conversations and debates, which were sometimes challenging yet always supportive. I would never have arrived at this point without their early and generous assistance. Their astute insights and creative input throughout this process were invaluable. Later in the program, I met two more PhD candidates—Dr. Stephanie Baird and Dr. Leslie McCallum. Our mock defences and our many chats to get each other through the final, often brutal, stages of the writing process were truly supportive and, no doubt, life-saving for each of us.

More outstanding women deserve special mention. One evening, I received a phone call from a dear colleague, Dr. Robin Mason, telling me about the Strategic Training Initiative in Health Research Program (STIHR) funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CHIR) and hosted by the B.C. Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and the B.C. Women's Hospital and Health Centre, known as the Integrated Mentor Program in Addictions Research Training (IMPART). I applied and the rest is history. I received a generous two-year fellowship. Robin became my “mentor” and I became her “mentee.” She took on a time-consuming role with grace and generosity and accompanied me through this excellent program. I am indeed grateful for her steady encouragement and support. Two prominent scholars, Dr. Lorraine Greaves and Dr. Nancy Poole, were leaders in the program and gave me every opportunity to learn about the critical connections between women's health, addiction, and trauma. For this opportunity, I will be forever grateful.

Beth Northover has walked beside me throughout this journey—always helpful with her editing expertise and encouraging words. We first met when she was a leader in the Toronto

District School Board, introducing family violence awareness into the school programs. We have stayed close allies since then. Despite her personal loss of her dear lifetime partner, Dr. Wallace Northover, Beth stayed connected to my work and her confidence in the project never wavered. Dr. Adriana Berlingieri and I met in Roxanna's class, where we became immediate allies. Adriana is an accomplished scholar and fellow "nerd" with a huge, loveable, and generous heart. Her "Roman" driving talents are legendary (though still somewhat terrifying). She was always at the ready to proof parts of the chapters, offer much-needed tips, encouragement, and impeccable and generous IT assistance—and was my go-to IT guru in any thesis crisis I encountered—of which there were many. She never failed me, and I am blessed to have her in my corner. Karen Kurtz, a skilled and passionate Jungian analyst, dropped into my life at a pivotal time when I needed someone to help me deal with the unconscious way, I had of undermining my higher pursuits. She understood me and helped me uncover hidden strengths I did not even know I possessed. Dr. Pat Cane, founder of Capacitar, strengthened my belief in the power of mind, body, and spirit practices that truly do heal. Her service to the world is unparalleled. Dr. Molly Dragiewicz, thank you for our early chats; your enthusiasm for activist scholarship encouraged me to take the plunge and your supportive emails were always a boon to my heart. To my dear friend and trusted confidante, Dr. Christine Courtois: I loved your pioneering scholarship long before we met in person. Our lasting friendship is a gift that keeps on giving. Your love and support mean the world to me.

Thanks to my editing and transcription team: Amanda Urquhart, with her excellent transcribing skills, warmheartedness, and quick turnaround; Sean McDermott, beloved cousin who enthusiastically edited all my early papers and taught me to be a better writer; and lastly, Julie McGonegal, a talented and kind editor who knew the PhD process intimately and helped me in the best of ways to say exactly what I mean.

Thank you to my friends—life is better because of them: Faye Mishna, my closest confidante since our MSW days in the seventies when we completed a joint Master's thesis

together—always present, always understanding, always compassionate; Jennifer Witzel for loaning me her tranquil cottage to write my thesis proposal; and Susan Wiseman in Puerto Vallarta, who shared her Dad’s casa, filled with her beautiful, heart-warming art, so I could escape harsh Toronto winters for the Mexican sun. Beautiful sunsets, margaritas, and morning coffee chats with my soul brother, David Hallman, made it all the better; and Carolyn Butts and Hans Honegger, opened their writing retreat space, Bon Echo Design in Tamworth, so I could escape and find the stillness in a rural setting that felt like my island roots. I completed my data analysis phase in that still, private space and it was like heaven on earth. I never felt alone because as I played and replayed the taped conversations with my participants, their voices filled the air and it was like having a hot cup of tea with old friends.

My annual summer escapes to my P.E.I. island home were surrounded by my huge extended family (all 60-plus of them) and my dear island “gal pals” whose presence in my life provides security, roots, and a sense of belonging in the world.

Thanks also to my circle of soul sisters here in the city and afar (too many to mention by name but you know who you are), whose love for me warmed my heart and fuelled me with encouraging words, notes, hugs, flowers, endless cups of tea, cookies, the famous Verity fries (and wine), along with stimulating and challenging conversation that sharpened my critical thinking and renewed my spirit. I still have never perfected my 30-second elevator speech about my thesis—I doubt I ever will.

Gratitude also to all the male allies and friends in my life—David Adams, Lundy Bancroft, David Currie, Walter DeKeseredy, Ed Gondolf, Mark Holmes, Peter Jaffe, Jackson Katz, Michael Kaufman, Tim Kelly, Carl Lyons, Keith Marlowe, Martin Rutte, Oliver Williams and more—your steady support and ongoing commitment to end violence against women and children are exceptional. You are truly authentic allies—get ready for the next project, I am coming for you!

Thank you to my family, in which this project has been affectionately called “Deborah’s

Journey of Joy.” I have been blessed with a large, boisterous, talented, smart, musical, strongly opinionated, politically inclined, dear and wonderful extended family. Then I had the added gift of blending forces with an equally dear and wonderful family on my partner’s side. All six of our children—Helen, Kathryn, Sue-Ann, Gordon, Meg, and Colin—as well as their partners and our nine grandchildren, have enriched my life a hundredfold. They have supported me throughout my life and especially through this last decade of the doctoral process. They have endured many missed Sunday dinners, working vacations, long hours, cancelled events, and more. Not once did they ever complain about my doctoral journey—their support and love for me and my work have been immeasurable.

Finally, my gratitude to the dearest of men in my life, my life partner and husband, David MacDonald, an honourable man who has devoted much of his life to public service. It was his suggestion and encouragement that launched me on this journey. He has been with me in body and spirit every step of the way, through all the highs and lows —always helpful, providing wise counsel, reading endless drafts, keeping an eye on the big picture, and picking up the domestic minutiae of life, allowing me to focus on my work. I am eternally grateful for his love, encouragement, and steadfast support. He is the wisest, kindest, and most patient man I know. Our shared commitment to a just world sustains me always and I am the better for his unwavering belief in my ability to get this doctorate completed. And yes, my love, it is now finally done!

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List of Acronyms

ARAO—Anti-racist, anti-oppression
BSCC—The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
BWAC—Battered Women’s Advocacy Clinic
CACSW—Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women
CEDAW—Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CF—Compassion Fatigue
CRIA—Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
CSVAWS—Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy (CSVAWS)
DAWN—Disabled Assaulted Women’s Network
DV—Domestic Violence
DVAP—Domestic Violence Action Plan
DVDRC—Domestic Violence Death Review Committee
DVP—Domestic Violence Project
FIGS—Feminists Inside Government
FRC—Family Resource Centres
FSA—Family Service Association of Metropolitan Toronto
IMPV—Intimate Male Partner Violence
IPV—Intimate Partner Violence
LEAF—Legal Education and Action Fund
LGBTQIA—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, intersexual, and asexual
LIP—Local Initiatives Program
MCSS—Minister of Community and Social Services
METRAC—Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on VAW and Children
NAC—National Action Committee
NAWL—National Association of Women and the Law
NDP—New Democratic Party
NWAC—Native Women’s Association of Canada
OAITH—Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses
OCASI—Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
OCRCC—Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Center
OWD—Ontario Women’s Directorate
PTG—Post-traumatic Growth
RCC—Rape Crisis Centre
RCSOW—Royal Commission on the Status of Women
SMO—Social Movement Organization
SOWC—Status of Women Canada
SVAP—Sexual Violence Action Plan
TRCC—Toronto Rape Crisis Centre
VAW—Violence Against Women
VAWS—Violence Against Women Survey
VT—Vicarious Trauma
WA—Wife Assault
WB—Wife Battering

Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

But then grassroots organizers rarely receive the acknowledgment they deserve—they are too daring, too threatening to the status quo. As a result, many people are deprived of knowing who they are and what they are doing—a piece of living history which may help the rest of us understand where we've come from, where we may want to go and how we might get there (Lopez, 2012, p. 4).

Activists in social movements are rarely recognized or understood, yet collectively contribute to the liberation of oppressed peoples across the globe (Lopez, 2012). Little is known about activists as individuals, yet they represent an essential part of a living history that is seldom documented. Their invisibility prevents us from knowing who they are, how they think, what motivates them, what inspires them, and most importantly, what sustains them in their everyday social movement work. Social movement activists most often associate themselves with marginalized communities because these communities have the least influence on policy, least access to funding for their services, fewer resources than other populations, and even fewer advocacy groups available to understand and dismantle their unique obstacles (Weldon, 2011). By association, many activists who represent the needs of marginalized communities find their voices equally marginalized. My aim in this study has been to showcase the work of activists in the violence against women (VAW) movement in Ontario so as to make visible their goals, aspirations, claims-making efforts and strategies they learned as they collectively worked to end the epidemic of VAW.

In my case, the issue of violence against women has been my life's work for the past 45 years, ranging from local to international levels. Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of working in many different capacities—as clinician, writer, speaker, trainer, researcher, policy advisor and expert witness. I currently have a clinical practice specializing in work with activists, trauma survivors, and their families and allies in Toronto, Ontario. During the late 1970s, I co-founded the Domestic Violence Project, one of the first community intervention

models in Canada. Over the years, I have been a part of establishing several coalitions formed to address issues of gender-based violence, including the Emily Stowe Shelter for Women, the Women We Honour group, which facilitated the first Intimate Femicide study in Canada, and Luke's Place, the country's first national family law resource center. I continue to consult and provide training workshops to government ministries as well as other professional and grassroots community groups across North America. Since 2002, I have been a founding member of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC), an expert advisory committee of the Ontario Chief Coroner's office that reviews all intimate partner homicides in Ontario. The DVDRC is Canada's first death review committee and has served as a model for other provinces to encourage the development of a national strategy to end intimate femicide.

On June 20, 2000, in a small community in southern Ontario, Ralph Hadley, estranged husband of Gillian Hadley—released on bail on a promise to have no contact with his wife due to outstanding charges of criminal assault (intimate partner violence)—chose to murder Gillian, the young mother of his three children, before killing himself. I had the honour of serving as an expert witness at the inquest into the murder of Gillian Hadley and suicide of Ralph Hadley. I also served in the capacity of consultant to the Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) throughout the four-month inquest and was able to offer expertise to the DRPS as well as to a number of the 11 organizations who had standing at the inquest in 2002. What I have learned from that experience and in my work reviewing the murders of women and children in Ontario is that the public, professionals, and lay people alike, know very little about what really goes on behind closed doors in the lives of abused women, except when those women die (Office of the Chief Coroner, 2016). I see my role in these inquests, trials, and DVDRC reviews as a way to honour the voices of women murdered by their intimate partners/ex-partners and ensure that they are always at the forefront of our movement work as we advocate for change, particularly in the criminal and family court systems where women are still very vulnerable. As a member of the DVDRC, I have had the privilege to examine and create lethality indicator tools and best

practices for the management of high-risk abusers, to enhance safety assessment and risk management strategies for survivors of intimate partner violence, and to create solutions for community engagement in all court jurisdictions across Ontario. All of the annual reports are currently available online from the Office of the Chief Coroner.

From 2013 to 2014, I served as a resource person for the National Task Force on Sex Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2015). As an inevitable extension of my work in ending gender-based violence, I have become a passionate spokesperson for protecting the mental, physical and spiritual health of high-risk professionals and activists who courageously face unspeakable human atrocities in their everyday work situations. I am an ally and a resource person to a diversity of sectors that include the criminal justice sector, the social service sector, the health sector, and the activist and survivor grassroots sector.

My starting point for the development of my initial critical consciousness was in the heady days of the 1970s; the first women's studies program was beginning at the University of Toronto where I was an eager participant—a young, White, middle-class, English-speaking, Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied woman¹. Unknowingly at that time, I filled all areas of the dominant space except gender. Looking back, it is no surprise that gender oppression would become my focus. I was not alone in my thinking. Simultaneously, Women's Place began in 1971; the first women-only space provided safe haven for budding activists like myself and the energy, focus and planning years for the first shelter for women abused by their intimate partners in the country. Interval House opened its doors in 1973. Later, in 1978, fresh out of a Master's program in social work from the University of Toronto, I was unaware the arena I was entering would become my life's work. In those days, armed with a passion for social justice, a budding feminist awareness and some personal experiences yet to be deconstructed, I had the good

¹ In similar fashion to the work of Lopes & Thomas (2006), I chose to capitalize the racial designation 'White' throughout this thesis because "one of the ways that racism operates is to leave the racial identity of White people unidentified. We capitalize White to interrupt the privilege of having Whiteness go unnamed" (p.272).

fortune to be mentored by Jewish feminist social workers (one male, two females) committed to a high standard of social work activist practice and keen to make a difference.

I was first employed in a mainstream family service agency where I was a member of the Domestic Violence Project (DVP). Our goal was to challenge the dominant discourse of battered women and their abusive partners held by professionals, institutions and the community at large. The key messages of the DVP team fell in line with the White middle-class women's movement, with its overall goals of liberation. These messages included: 1) wife-beating is an assault, not interaction gone wrong; 2) it is violence against women, not family violence; 3) it is a crime, not a sickness; 4) freedom from assault is every person's basic right; 5) men beat their wives because they are permitted to; 6) wife-beating should no longer be defined as a woman's private dilemma; and 7) the community has a right and a responsibility to become involved (Harris & Sinclair, 1981). In 1978, there was little written to guide our thinking, so we turned to the experts—women themselves. We privileged women as the 'knowers' of their own experience and we became their students and allies. We learned that women wanted to end the abuse in their relationships, not necessarily their marriages. Subsequently, we developed a community intervention model that provided a visual map of effective intervention aimed at both micro and macro levels (Harris & Sinclair, 1981). This document expressed a radical departure from the 'pathology-based', 'logical-positivist', 'social worker as expert' view that was the dominant discourse in the social work profession at that time (Sewpaul, 2003). I am proud of that early work. It seemed radical thinking at the time, but it was neither anti-racist thinking, nor anti-colonial thinking. The anti-oppression (AOP) framework currently common in social work education did not exist in those days (Baines, 2007).

As I read some of my earlier writings (Harris & Sinclair, 1981; Sinclair, 1985), especially in light of my current academic studies, it is painfully clear how unaware I was that I was operating from an 'essentialist liberal' perspective; this perspective dictated that if women similarly located to myself—White, middle-class women—benefit, then all women will benefit.

I viewed our shared gender as the bridge to our political solidarity. I am grateful to the work of Professor Vijay Agnew (1998), an intersectional feminist scholar at York University, for opening my eyes to this unexamined aspect of how I understood and used my privilege and power in my life and work. Such lack of critical examination is what Beth Richie (2000) calls the ‘universal woman’ trap. This notion leads some activists and scholars to expect to “build an alliance on the foundation of shared victimization” without acknowledging their own social location of White privilege (Collins, 1998, p. 936). It is in the spirit of this critique that Audre Lorde (2000) notes:

By and large within the women's movement today, White women focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class, and age. There is a pretence to homogeneity of experience covered by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist (p. 289).

Despite the articulated social justice goals of the VAW movement to advance equity and access for all women, mainstream women have been the primary beneficiaries, leaving an ever-widening gap between the stated ideals and the actual practice of social justice. This is an unacceptable situation that needs to be remedied. It is rooted in mainstream feminist thinking that does not embrace intersectional feminism in an authentic way, although currently many mainstream feminists name intersectionalism as their current orientation. Deep reflexivity, what Sandra Harding (1987) refers to as ‘strong reflexivity’, is the idea that each of us has the power to use our social location to critically examine the frameworks, the conceptual schemes, and underlying political ideologies such as neoliberalism which too frequently remain under the surface, invisible to us unless we have help to uncover the connections. Dorothy Smith (1987) refers to this phenomenon as the everyday ‘ruling relations’ that, when unexamined, rule our way of thinking in unconscious ways and impede our ability to be true allies because we become complicit in maintaining the very power structures that we as activists and social workers wish to dismantle. The real work of political movement activism must be to learn how to decolonize ourselves and make the connections between gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, and

other forms of oppression so as to be effective in our movement-building work. Dian Million (2008) states that to “decolonize means to understand as fully as possible the forms colonialism takes in our own times” (p.55). Samia Neheh’s (1992) definition of decolonization captures my attention and reminds me of the responsibility I bear to deconstruct the legacy of my colonizer roots if the liberation process is ever to be complete.

Decolonization continues to be an active confrontation with a hegemonic system of thought; it is hence a process of considerable historical and cultural liberation. As such, decolonization becomes the contestation of all dominant forms and structures, whether they are linguistic, discursive, or ideological. Moreover, decolonization comes to be understood as an active exorcism for both the colonized and the colonizer. For both parties it must be a process of liberation: from dependency, in the case of the colonized, and from imperialist, racist perceptions, representations, and institutions which, unfortunately, remain with us to this very day, in the case of the colonizer. Decolonization can only be complete when it is understood as a complex process that involves both the colonizer and the colonized (Neheh, as cited in hooks, 1992, p. 1).

Dorothy Smith’s (1979, 1986) notion of the ‘necessity of deconstructing our social location’ resonates as well. Smith normalizes the human struggle and suggests that, depending on our social location, men will have to struggle harder than women to see sexism accurately, White people will have to struggle harder than people of colour to see racism accurately and that people from the North will have to struggle harder than people from the South to understand the impact of post-colonialism. Her work suggests that as a member of a dominant group, each of us has a vested interest in subjugating that knowledge, though perhaps not consciously and that, if and when each of us chooses to critically understand our privilege, we will have a harder or easier time depending on where we sit in the power relations hierarchies. In each of our lives, moments of privilege and moments of oppression exist simultaneously – at different points, in different contexts and in relation to different people. Therefore, we all hold a partial view of power depending upon where we sit at any given moment. This notion encourages us to remember that the journey to critically interrogate our own subjectivity can still have value no matter our age or stage of life, as there is no such thing as perfect knowledge for any of us (Yuval-Davis, 2006). One of the critical teachings I embraced from this academic journey is

that to live in a fully embodied manner is to be present, to be awake and to engage in a life-long consciousness-raising journey in the service of ourselves and each other (Ng, 2010).

Therefore, it stands to reason, that only when we effectively address the needs of our community's most vulnerable women—Indigenous women, Black women, women of colour, immigrant and refugee women, disabled women, lesbians, trans women, old women, young women, geographically isolated and rural women—will we be effective in our strategies for all women. These underlying assumptions that were intentionally concealed from my view were embedded in racist, colonialist practices that are both historic and contemporary. Being raised to believe in the false notions of 'colour blindness' and the 'level-playing field' as fair, just and equalizing practice invites a "denial of difference [that] is really a denial of the unfair power imbalance that exists in society" (Sue, 2004, p. 762). Being raised to not see or understand the connections between patriarchy, imperialism, capitalism, and colonialism allows inequities to continue unchallenged. This ignorance then perpetuates a sociopolitical system that permits discrimination and unjust practices, cementing in place racialized and gendered hierarchies—structures that uphold the Eurocentric worldview which is the story of White, middle- and upper- class men of European descent that places the rest of us in the Other/inferior position. As someone who grew up learning the history of the patriarchal colonizer, this academic journey at this late stage in my life has been an effort to unlearn or decolonize myself, sifting through the literature with a critical eye and unearthing the truths that have been masked from my view.

With this decolonizing perspective in mind, my aim in this study has been to showcase the work of activists in the VAW movement in Ontario so as to make visible their goals, aspirations, claims-making efforts and strategies they learned as they collectively worked to end the epidemic of VAW. These activists began their journey during the early decades of what is commonly referred to as the *second wave* of the women's liberation movement in Canada and continue their activism into the present day. By centering the voices of activists and championing them as knowledge producers with the expertise and wisdom they have gleaned

during the past five decades of their work in the VAW movement, my study has aimed to shine a light on a little-known group of women who helped to create a movement and collectively changed the course of history in Ontario for countless women, their families and their communities in the field of violence against women.

To address the critical social problem of ending VAW, early activists were faced with building a social movement purposely focused on the dual goals of creating and delivering services to abused women and their families, rectifying the lack of services for battered women in the 1970s, while simultaneously centering a social change agenda to address systemic inequities (Brodie, 2008; Bush, 1992; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Hilton, 1988; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Schechter, 1982; Tierney, 1982; Walker, 1990). There is little doubt that the VAW movement has been resoundingly successful in achieving the first goal of service provision: that is, creating and building a vast array of services from scratch—a network of rape crisis services and women’s shelters across the country; legislative and policy reforms; mandatory intervention programs for abusive men; group programs for children exposed to domestic violence; and public and professional violence prevention materials and training curricula for all sectors. Simultaneously, the movement shifted a dominant narrative, garnering public support for the plight of battered women and negotiating with the state to fund movement work. Yet, activists and researchers alike expressed doubt about whether we had achieved the second goal of building a social movement to end VAW that had a social change agenda at its center (Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009; Sinclair, 2012). This notion of the necessity of a social change agenda being at the center and forefront of our everyday movement work will be the focus of my investigation in this dissertation research.

While I am most familiar with the Canadian context, current conversations and debates among feminist scholars and activists around the globe make this an exciting yet challenging time to be grappling with one of the most severe health and safety risks to women (Johnston, 2006; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). Currently, there is substantial evidence

to suggest that VAW occurs across most societies and cultures (Heise, 1994; Johnson, Ollus & Nevala, 2007; Kristoff & WuDunn, 2009; Levinson, 1989). Activists and governments representing as many as 180 countries around the world have identified the elimination of violence against women as an issue of critical importance (Weldon, 2011).

In the past two decades, social movement theorists have suggested that the concept of the ‘framing perspective’ has become a popular tool through which to understand the meaning-making powers of social movements in defining the problematic, maintaining momentum and producing sustainable change. In other words, ‘framing’ refers to how we construct meaning (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow & Soule, 2010; Taylor, 2000). Social work theorists have long emphasized the importance of framing social issues in ways that challenge the status quo and lend support to the transformative aspirations of social movements (Dominelli & Campling, 2002; Lee, 2010). Developing micro and macro interventions to address a wide range of social problems—such as intimate partner violence, poverty, colonialism, racism, privilege and power, childhood obesity, cyberbullying, mothering and health inequities—is an integral part of the everyday practice of social work (Alaggia, Regehr, & Jenney, 2012; Baskin, 2006; Bhuyan, 2008; Eliadis, 2006; Lee & Bhuyan, 2013; Mishna, 2012; Spector & Kitsuse; 1973; Swift, 1995; Williams, 2005). Social work theorists and activists recognize the complexities of multiple forms of oppression and systems that interact to strengthen conditions of discrimination and social injustice. Critical feminist scholars and activists within the social work profession are committed to changing these practices (Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2009; Alaggia, Regehr & Jenny, 2012; Bhuyan, 2008; Bograd, 1999; Lee & Bhuyan, 2013; Logie, James, Tharao & Loutfy, 2012; Mishna et al., 2018; Neysmith, 1999; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005; Sinclair, 2012; Williams, 2005).

Social movement theorists frequently point to the VAW movement as an “exemplar of a movement with a cultural change agenda” (Lehrner & Allen, 2008, p. 220). Indeed, S. Laurel Weldon (2011) uses the VAW movement as one of her case studies to explore the impact of

such a movement on the state. Weldon (2011) studies the influence and power of social movements to advance the interests of disadvantaged groups in our society. She defines a social movement as "a network of activists who attempt to change society, employing a wide range of tactics in a sustained confrontation with powerful opponents" (p. 189). I use her definition in my dissertation to ground the research. Weldon suggests that, within this definition, she was able to determine that the most responsive democratic countries in her cross-national dataset were Canada, Australia, and the United States.² She further states that, of all examined countries, Canada had the strongest working relationship between the women's movement and the state, which may have accounted for Canada's adoption of the most advanced policies on VAW issues in the briefest period. Weldon's research points to what is possible when there is the political will to support a robust state-movement relationship and thus provides hope for the possibility of stronger state-movement relationships in the future. Janine Brodie (2008) concurs that Canada did indeed emerge as a leader among Western liberal democracies regarding the development of policies and programs promoting gender equality for a period of time; it was only for a brief moment, however, during the 1970s and 1980s. Brodie's political analysis traced the effect of the shifting political agenda, the erosion of the Canadian women's movement under the Harper government, and the devastating impact on the movement. Further, by the mid-1980s, a 'racial' neoliberal agenda took hold among governing political leaders and dominated the Canadian political stage meaning racism was seen as a phenomenon of the past and not subject to current investigation. Meanwhile the negative effects of an increasingly harsh neoliberal agenda differentially impacted racialized people in profoundly harmful ways (see Badwall, 2016). Exposing and challenging neoliberal ideology became a key political strategy

² "The countries in this study are Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Vietnam" (Htun & Weldon, 2012, p. 560).

for the feminist movement at large, and VAW movement activists in particular, given the limits placed on feminist efforts in Canada to end violence against women in all its forms, and particularly the additional harms facing marginalized women and their communities (Bonisteel & Green, 2005; Jiwani, 2006; Rodgers & Knight, 2011; Sinclair, 2003).

This then leads me to my area of interest for my dissertation research: to explore the gains and challenges of the VAW movement in Ontario, how it has evolved during the past 50 years, 1968 to 2018, including lessons learned and possibilities for future directions. I investigated this research area by conducting a case study of the Ontario VAW movement using a purposive sampling method for identifying activists as my unit of analysis (Maddison & Shaw, 2012). I conducted in-depth interviews with activists in Ontario, with a unique focus on the southern Ontario landscape where I located the majority of my own work over the past five decades. I drew on the experiences and perspectives of early activists to understand how they viewed the progression and setbacks of the VAW movement in Ontario, using the well-established method in qualitative feminist research of interviewing women as a means of making their voices audible (DeVault & Gross, 2007; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Reinharz, 1992).³ Using a case study methodology, my overarching research question for participants was: How have the experiences of early activists shaped the Violence Against Women (VAW) movement in Ontario from 1973-1993?

As stated earlier, there is little doubt that the VAW movement has been successful in achieving the first goal of service provision. There is a great deal of uncertainty, however, expressed by VAW activists and VAW researchers alike, about whether we have achieved the

³ Throughout my dissertation research, I used the term activist or early activist to describe the women who began their work in the VAW movement during the period from 1973 to 1993 and have a minimum of 20 years of experience in the VAW movement. I chose 1973 as my beginning point, for that was the year when the first VAW shelter in Canada—Interval House in Toronto, Ontario—opened its doors. There is some debate as to whether Anduhyaun in downtown Toronto was the first emergency hostel for women in Canada; it opened its doors in 1968, sponsored by the Ministry of Indian Affairs and the YWCA, and specifically focused on the needs of Indigenous women and the multiple oppressions and abuses they experience. In the literature, different terms are used to describe VAW activists from the *second wave* of the women's liberation movement, such as 'veteran' activists (Miller, 2010) or 'first generation' activists (Arnold & Ake, 2013). In my dissertation research, the study participants preferred the term 'activist' as confirmed at the member-checking group held in December 2017.

second goal of building a social movement to end violence against women with social change at its center. To date, there has been a substantial body of research conducted on the development, delivery, and effectiveness of services and organizations for abused women and their families (Lutenbacher, Cohen, & Mitzel, 2003; Tutty, Weaver & Rothery, 1999; Zosky, 2011), but very few theoretical and empirical studies on the VAW movement as a social change movement, especially through the eyes of long-time activists like myself (Fraser, 2014; Lehner, 2008, 2009; Miller, 2010). Moreover, most of these studies focusing on social change were conducted in the United States; few have been done in Canada and even fewer in Ontario. This opening is the research space that my study addresses.

For ease of reading, I will outline my objectives in the five chapters of this research study. They are as follows:

In Chapter 1, I introduce my problem statement, the purpose of my study and I address the relevance of this study to advance the knowledge, education and practice of social work.

In order to provide some historical context for my study, I include three background pieces that will provide a foundation for my present study. They are as follows: First, I argue that the issue of violence against women is a global epidemic that the social work profession has had, and will continue to have, a critical leadership role in solving. I define the nature of women's experience of violence, the prevalence, the impact on women's health and life chances, the societal harms/costs, and the differential impact for marginalized women. I draw on Liz Kelly's conceptualization of violence as a continuum that may occur over the course of a woman's lifetime (1987). Second, I provide a brief overview of the "three waves" of the feminist movement. In the *first wave* of the women's movement, I trace the efforts of suffragists early in the nineteenth century who remained active until World War I (Sheehy, 2002). I pay particular attention to those early suffragists in the temperance movement who focused on promoting men's abstinence from alcohol as a means to improving the safety of women and children in the home (Swigonski & Raheim, 2011). Historically, women

(particularly women in the role of wives) possessed no legal recognition or rights under the law. As such, they lived without any legal option to challenge their husband's use of physical force and neglect. In the *second wave*, I examine early theoretical underpinnings of the women's liberation movement where I locate the beginning of my work. I pay particular attention to the theoretical analysis guiding the early days of the VAW movement, by outlining the assumptions underpinning liberal, radical, and socialist feminist orientations. In the *third wave*, I briefly outline the contributions of intersectionality theory as my overarching theoretical framework, and I highlight the contributions of contemporary critical feminist theorists who have shifted my theoretical understanding of VAW in the twenty-first century. Third, I examine the political context in which the study participants began their activist work, underscoring an important point: it was not one of choice but rather the climate in which we were living during the 1970s: that is, the erosion of the welfare state post-World War II along with the rise of the neoliberal agenda (Brodie, 1995).

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the theoretical framework I use for my dissertation research. I also include my epistemological orientation and my choice to draw on the critical paradigm to anchor my thinking as a feminist researcher given the nature of this dissertation research. In this chapter, I provide an in-depth examination of my epistemological perspective embedded in the seven critical feminist standpoints I chose to study, including: 1) Intersectionality theory; 2) Indigenous feminist theory; 3) Black feminist theory; 4) Post-colonial feminist theory; 5) Queer feminist theory; 6) Disability feminist theory; and 7) Critical White feminist theory. I then summarize the main features and shared tenets of critical feminist perspectives and standpoints. I map out the beginning of an intersectional feminist theoretical model for understanding the complexity of VAW and briefly articulate the practical implications of such an intersectional framework. Further, I review the relevant literature, which honours the scholarly work of those who went before me and aids me in anchoring my current study in evidence-based research.

In Chapter 3, I feature my study design and the methods that I chose for this study. As a critical feminist scholar, I chose to use a feminist approach for this case study because I wanted to understand the activists' standpoint from their lived experience as movement activists who helped shape the VAW movement in Ontario. In particular, an intersectional feminist analysis begins from the standpoint of diverse women who embrace the tenets of critical feminist standpoint theory as outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 addresses: 1) the study design and the rationale for choosing a case study approach, more specifically, a feminist-informed case study approach; 2) the process of data collection, including the sample and inclusion criteria, the recruitment strategies, the multiple methods employed to achieve triangulation—a hallmark feature of case study methodology—including in-depth semi-structured interviews, a member-checking group, document review, field notes, ethical considerations, reflexivity, and the social location of myself as the participant/researcher; and lastly, 3) the data analysis process where I draw on the scholarship of Braun and Clarke (2006) to guide me in developing the 'candidate' themes in the data, nested within a holistic intrinsic case study design.

In Chapter 4, I describe the findings of this dissertation research, and the ways in which the participants locate themselves in the VAW movement. This investigation offers a snapshot into the lives of 22 of these activist voices, in response to the research question—How have the experiences of early activists shaped the VAW movement in Ontario from 1973-1993? Using case study methodology and through the analytic procedures that I described in Chapter 3, five themes and related subthemes were identified (as seen in Figure 1) and are described in detail below. These five themes are: 1) The first theme, pathways to activism, with three subthemes, elaborates on how the participants became activists and identifies the most significant influences that assisted them in this process of beginning an activist life. The three subthemes are: a) developing a “felt” sense of justice; b) finding their voice and language; and c) finding their home and finding their movement. 2) The second theme is building a movement and focuses on how the participants began their activist work. The four subthemes are: a) challenging the

dominant narrative; b) creating safe space for women and children fleeing violence in their intimate relationships; c) engaging the state as a partner in their efforts to end VAW; and d) gaining public support for their work. 3) The third theme is surviving as a movement and elaborates on the following three subthemes: a) how activists responded to the growing backlash in the 1990s that devastated the VAW movement in Ontario; b) the impact that the backlash had on the movement as a whole; and c) moments of resistance and victory despite the backlash. 4) Opening up a movement is the fourth subtheme and depicts how participants in the VAW movement: a) challenged hierarchical structures in the movement; b) challenged racism and colonialism; c) integrated an anti-racist, anti-oppression (ARAO) framework⁴ into the VAW movement; and d) learned what it means to be an ally. Finally, 5) the fifth theme is holding hope for a movement and elaborates on how participants in the VAW movement: a) learned how to hold the tensions that arise when doing movement work; b) reflected on the importance of self-care for themselves and for the movement; c) named their successes; d) expressed their hopes for the future and where they need to focus their objectives from here onward and lastly; e) they provide a detailed list of the legacy that they want to leave for future activists, through their lessons learned and wisdom gleaned from a lifetime—more than eight hundred years collectively—of feminist activism.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the interpretation of the findings in light of the literature review provided in Chapter 2. I also demonstrate how the problem for investigation as described in Chapter 1 can be addressed through my findings. I address the ever shifting and sometimes theoretically messy grounds that underlie feminist interpretations of violence against women. I highlight the ways that critical feminist standpoint theories can assist us in deepening our

⁴ Maurice Moreau (1979), an educator and clinical social worker, was considered one of the early pioneers of radical social work, now referred to as structural social work. A core tenet of structural social work is the adherence to an ARAO framework which addresses not only the diversity of oppressions that people experience but places these oppressions within structures of systemic inequality. While there is a belief that there is no hierarchy of oppressions [similar to Audre Lorde's (1984) view], Carniol emphasizes that in using the umbrella term anti-oppressive practice (AOP), the experience of race is rendered invisible. In this study, I use the term ARAO, in similar ways to current critical social work scholars such as Baines (2007), Carniol (2005), Lundy (2011).

analysis and practice to include all voices of women while honoring their unique social identities and the social risks and structural barriers they face as result. I then describe the unique aspects of social movement theory that help us to understand how the VAW movement in Ontario has evolved over the past five decades I investigated. I draw the reader's attention to the significance the findings may have in strengthening the VAW movement in Ontario as well as outline the implications for the profession of social work. I end the study by suggesting future directions for research, articulating the limitations of the study and I offer concluding remarks.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation research has been to examine the state of the VAW movement in Ontario as a social change movement from an 'insider' perspective. Little is known about the views of early activists in the VAW movement, yet their activist work is readily held up as an exemplary social movement that has been sustained throughout the past 50 years. It is essential to understand how early activists thought because they have had a tremendous influence on how the VAW movement has evolved and they will continue to influence shaping the VAW movement into the future. What is known most often relates to research related to service provision goals, but little attention has been paid to the equally critical social change goals as described by activists of the VAW movement. This opening prompted my overarching research question:

How have the experiences of early activists shaped the violence against women (VAW) movement, in Ontario from 1973-1993?

Within the framework of this overarching question, I explored more specific questions on six topic areas through in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007). The topics areas comprise: 1) early reflections; 2) successes; 3) unanticipated consequences; 4) lessons learned; 5) impact of the work; and 6) wisdom for the future. The questions are contained in an interview guide (see Appendix G) and include the areas explored in each interview.

Relevance for Advancement of Social Work Knowledge, Education and Practice

Social justice matters are a life-and-death issue and thus should be of primary concern to the social work profession. Anderson and her colleagues (2009) developed the notion of using a critical social justice lens to make explicit the power dynamics that lay beneath the increasing inequities that limit people's opportunities for health and wellness and their access to resources. Unmistakably, VAW as a human rights issue falls into the broad category of women's health and safety—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual—globally and locally. The material realities of women's lives are critical social determinants of health and thus have a major impact on women's overall wellness and life satisfaction. These realities should ideally include safety in private and public spaces; access to safe housing; access to nutritious food and safe drinking water; adequate income; and access to meaningful education, safe and supportive work environments, affordable childcare arrangements, and culturally relevant social services and justice sector resources (criminal, family court, and child welfare).

Certain branches of the profession of social work have a rich history of engaging in social justice work and are committed to conceptualizing and developing effective strategies and methods pertinent to social change (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). One field of interest within our profession that is not well researched, however, is social movements, particularly as they relate to eliminating VAW. Most importantly, how can this topic be embedded in social work education as a means of building critical awareness for social work students by optimizing their capacity to become both allies and leaders in the VAW movement (White, 2006)? An impressive contribution to the social work profession is the substantial body of research conducted on the development, delivery, and effectiveness of services and organizations for abused women and their families.

Nevertheless, the research opening that commands my attention is the theoretical and empirical studies on the VAW movement as a social change movement, especially those studies

that showcase the voices of activists like myself. The few studies that address the social change aspects of the VAW movement have been conducted in the United States; even fewer studies have been conducted in Canada and of those studies, I could not locate any studies that specifically examined the VAW movement as a social change movement in Ontario (for one exception, see Fraser, 2014). This gap in the research is the space that my dissertation research addresses. My dissertation research set out to speak to this gap in the feminist and wider literature on social movements, and to strengthen the role of social work in playing a vital part in future efforts to end violence against women and in building better allyship with the VAW movement (Kanuha, 1998).

Addressing this issue means identifying and articulating what has been accomplished as well as reconsidering the goals of the VAW movement not only from a service provision perspective but also from a social change perspective. This issue brings me to the aim of my research study, which is to explore the goals of the VAW movement in Ontario regarding successes, challenges, and unanticipated consequences and setbacks, and to ultimately deepen our understanding of the power and limits of social movements. I conducted a case study of the VAW movement through the voices of early activists in Ontario, how they experienced the movement, and how they gained their perspectives on its evolution over the past 50 years. Only a few studies have been conducted to date, none from a social work perspective (Fraser, 2014; Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009; Miller, 2010; Morrow, 1998; Timothy, 2007). Further exploration of this topic will bring practical and useful implications that can enhance future strategies for change in the VAW movement and contribute to the knowledge base of social work. In the conclusion, I make recommendations for social work to assume a more explicit role in advancement of the VAW movement. The findings of this dissertation research are intended to add to the body of feminist social work literature and thus guide the development of future policies and strategies which will support social workers to strengthen their positions as allies, educators, and leaders in the efforts to end violence against women. While individual

social workers have played a leading role in the pioneering efforts of the VAW movement in North America, they are frequently identified as VAW activists rather than as social workers within the social work profession. Well known leading social work scholar activists include Kathryn Conroy, (1982), Ginny NiCarthy (1987), Beth Richie (1996) and Susan Schechter (1982). The literature review I conducted for this dissertation research brings to light the influence of social work scholars and activists in the VAW movement in Ontario and broadens the lens to include the work of prominent Canadian social work activist-leaders as well.

A Current Global Epidemic

It is currently accepted that violence against women is one of the most urgent human rights issues of our time, yet paradoxically, women do not benefit from a level of resources that would reflect this urgency (Amnesty International, 2003).

Violence against women, particularly intimate male partner violence (IMPV), intimate partner violence (IPV), and domestic violence (DV), has received widespread attention in both the scholarly literature and the actions of the grassroots women's liberation movement, specifically the battered women's movement that began in the 1970s (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Schechter, 1982). During the past 50 years, many terms have been used to describe violence in the family, including wife battering, wife assault, family violence, spousal violence, domestic violence, spousal assault, and intimate partner violence. When I began my specialized work on wife battering, the team I was a part of strategically chose to call our project the Domestic Violence Project (DVP) because it was less threatening to the status quo within the agency and to the social work profession at that time. It took five years to develop our credibility within the agency and field before the management could hear the term 'wife assault' without discomfort. Our work was seen as a radical departure from the traditional way of viewing social work with families, that is, wife battering was seen as a symptom of a mutually dysfunctional communication pattern between the husband and wife ('interaction gone wrong'), and traditional marriage counselling was the solution (Harris & Sinclair, 1981). We were well

aware that the use of gender-neutral language, which shapes gender-neutral attitudes, matters because it hides oppression and gender inequality, just as not naming race, class, sexual orientation, and ability also hides oppression. Over time we were able to bring people along and create a climate of tolerance for feminist work. The realities that feminist social workers/activists engage in create a showdown between the discourse that denies women's contexts and the oppression of women by men, and the worldview of feminism that is built upon the integrity and necessary integration of women's experiences, however diverse and historically constructed those are. Naming has a significant role to play in feminism, as it can empower women and draw us together (Razack, 1991). Still, the act of naming is a political act set in a particular political, social, and economic point in time, and we found we had to be strategic with our choice of words or face elimination (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004). For ease of reading, I will use the following terms interchangeably throughout the paper: violence against women (VAW), intimate male partner violence (IMPV), intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence (DV), wife assault (WA), and wife battering (WB).

To set the context for the findings of this dissertation research, it is important to understand the reality women across the globe face when suffering from the impacts of VAW. VAW and girls occurs in both private and public spaces, at work, home, school, and in the community at large. VAW can be defined on a continuum over a woman's lifetime and could include sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace, domestic violence in the home, sexual exploitation and targeting of girls within their families and/or in school, rape and stalking by dating/intimate partners or strangers, human trafficking, and rape, mutilation, and gender torture as a tactic of war (Berlingieri, 2015; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Johnson, 2008; Kelly, 1987, 1998, 2005; Kimmel, 1987; Stark, 2007). For the purpose of this dissertation research, I also draw on the definition of violence against women in the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women*, which states the term:

Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is

likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private (United Nations, 1993) (see Appendix D).

Whether in times of peace or in times of war, with rare exception, women are a primary target of men's violence because they are women—femicide being the most extreme and often invisible form of VAW (Weil, 2016).⁵ The World Report on Violence and Health conducted by the study team at the World Health Organization (Krug et al., 2002; Garcia-Moreno, Jansen Ellsberg, Heise & Watts 2006) posited that intimate partner femicide crosses all borders and is deemed an international phenomenon. For example, in the United States, one in three women murdered each year was killed by an intimate partner; in South Africa, an intimate partner kills a woman every six hours; in India, 22 women a day are murdered in dowry-related conflicts by their intimate partner or an extended family member of the intimate partner, and in Guatemala, two women are murdered daily by their intimate partner (UNIFEM, 2009). In Canada, a woman is murdered, on average, every six days by her intimate partner and in Ontario, every 12 days (Beattie & Cotter, 2009; Gartner, Dawson, & Crawford, 1999; Sinclair, 2003). In Ontario, 95% of spousal homicide victims are women (Statistics Canada, 2011). As a founding member of the Chief Coroner's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC), my task was to review every domestic violence-related death in the province of Ontario. From 2003 to 2016, the DVDRC has reviewed and analyzed 289 cases, involving 410 deaths, sixty-five percent of the cases reviewed were homicides and 35% were homicide-suicides. Over 95% of the victims were female and 95% of the perpetrators were male (Office of the Chief Coroner, 2016). The

⁵On November 26, 2012, in honour of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, a number of international experts and activists gathered in Vienna to discuss the issue of femicide. Under the auspices of the Academic Council on the United Nations System and the Small Arms Survey, the participants developed the *Vienna Declaration on Femicide* and proposed the following broad definition: "... that femicide is the killing of women and girls because of their gender, which can take the form of: (1) the murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence; (2) the torture and misogynist slaying of women; (3) killing of women and girls in the name of 'honor'; (4) targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict; (5) dowry-related killings of women; (6) killing of women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity; (7) the killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender; (8) female infanticide and gender-based sex selection foeticide; (9) genital mutilation related deaths; (10) accusations of witchcraft; and (11) other femicides connected with gangs, organized crime, drug dealers, human trafficking and the proliferation of small arms" (Laurent, Platzer & Idomir, 2013, p. 4).

life stories and deaths of more than 520 missing and murdered Indigenous women have been formally documented as part of the Native Women's Association of Canada's Sisters in Spirit Campaign (Amnesty International, 2004). The Royal Canadian Mounted Police [RCMP] (2014) reported 1,181 cases of missing or murdered Indigenous women in Canada from 1980 to 2012. These statistics are challenged by grassroots organizations and subsequent research findings suggest that the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada is closer to 4000 (Native Women's Association of Canada [NWAC], 2010). For women between the ages of 15 and 44 worldwide, violence perpetrated by men accounts for greater death and permanent disability than traffic accidents, cancer, malaria, and war combined (Krug et al., 2002).

The practice of shame, secrecy, and victim-blaming continues to silence women's experience of violence at the hands of their most intimate partners, resulting in statistics that reflect only a small portion of actual victims. In Canada, IPV is considered the most common form of VAW and potentially the most lethal (Jaffe & Dawson, 2013; Status of Women Canada, 2013). Women are the most likely victim of IPV, and according to Statistics Canada (2009) represented 83% of all cases of spousal assault. The most in-depth exploration of women's experience of violence on a continuum across their lifetime was conducted by Dr. Holly Johnston and a team of interviewers in 1993. The Canadian Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS), the first national-level, dedicated study in the world, reported more than 50% of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16, and 29% of Canadian women who are married or living in a common-law relationship disclosed that they had been physically or sexually assaulted by their intimate partner (Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Sacco, 1995; Rodgers, 1994). Women and girls account for 80% of the sex trafficking victims in Canada (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2015). In a Canadian survey, the majority of participants disclosed that they knew at least one woman who had been sexually or physically assaulted (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2007).

More concerning is that the research literature rarely addresses psychological injuries as a

result of abuse despite the emergent research evidence that suggests the lasting impacts of complex trauma resulting from psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse in IPV are often more harmful than physical abuse (Blasco-Ros, Sanchez-Lorente & Martinez, 2010; Humphreys & Thiara, 2003). My experience as a clinician and community trainer in VAW work and gender equity issues echoes the research findings. The testimonies of survivors and VAW activists in the field share a similar perspective (Sinclair, 2000, 2003). Research supports these clinical observations, which suggest that the impact of non-physical abuse on victims of IPV has been linked with higher rates of PTSD (Bensley, Van Eeuwijk, & Simmons, 2003) and depression (Calvete, Estevez, & Corral, 2007).

It must be emphasized that not all women experience violence similarly. Their experience depends on where they are currently located on the hierarchy of organizing relations, often referred to in the literature as their ‘social location’ (class, race, nationality, immigration status, citizenship, ability, age, and sexual orientation) (Alaggia, Regehr, & Rishchynski, 2009; Bhuyan, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991, 1995; Razack, 2002; Smith, 1987; Sokoloff & DuPont, 2005). Marginalized women suffer as much from the dangers of their social locations as they do from the dangers of IPV (Richie, 2000; Statistics Canada, 2013). For example, Indigenous women report higher rates of victimization from both their intimate partners as well as strangers than do non-Indigenous women, and when they do report to the authorities, they report suffering greater injury than their non-Indigenous sisters (Statistics Canada, 2013). Women who self-identify as lesbian and bisexual also report experiences of IPV at rates three times higher than of heterosexual women (Statistics Canada, 2013). Women who struggle with ability issues—mentally or physically—report almost double the rates of able-bodied women. It is critical to acknowledge and document this factor, as it has a significant impact on marginalized women’s disclosure rates and help-seeking responses (Katz, 2006; Mederos, 2004; Richie, 2000). I use the term ‘marginalized’ similarly to Weldon (2011) in her research with disadvantaged groups and in her study of the power of social movements to mobilize citizens and states to respond to

their concerns.

The policy implications and meanings of such an international public health issue experienced by so many women across time, location, culture, and context are profound (Krug et al., 2002). VAW persists worldwide as a pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender/race/class equity and access to necessary material resources—decent housing, fair wages, safe shelter, accessible day care, and clean drinking water, to name a few. The unrelenting pressure on the United Nations from grassroots activists across the globe, from the 1970s until now, has resulted in a number of international declarations, culminating most recently in the words of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

...such violence is unacceptable, whether perpetrated by the state and its agent or by family members or strangers, in the general public or private sphere, in peacetime or in times of conflict ... [and] as long as violence against women continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace (United Nations, 2006, p. 9).

Historical Background: Feminist Struggles in Canada

Before I address the historical achievements of the *second* and *third waves* of the women's movement, where I locate my own work, I will provide an overview of the *first wave*, *second wave*, and *third wave* of feminisms in both the lived experiences and everyday activities of feminist activists (Smith, 1987) and in the scholarly literature, particularly in Canada.⁶ It is critical to note that many voices have been left out of the official record of the history of the women's liberation movement. The 'waves' interpretation of understanding the history of feminist movements is a contested metaphor, particularly for critical feminist scholars and activists. Highlighting common themes that unify each wave implies a universal experience of women's struggles and minimizes the diversity of competing feminisms. Contributions by individuals, smaller collective actions, more radical factions of the feminist movement such as White anti-racist feminist allies, and marginalized groups of women in each of the waves are often not acknowledged or documented as part of the

⁶ Refer to Sinclair, D. (2012).

official history of the women's movement. However, Mann and Huffman (2005) challenge us to define our space as it applies to 'mass-based' feminist movements. Applying the metaphor of 'waves' to a social movement makes sense when one thinks of an ocean that ebbs and flows, ascends and descends, and culminates in major historical victories or crushing defeats. Mann and Huffman (2005) "are not suggesting that the waves of feminism are equivalent with the history of feminism. Rather waves are simply those historical eras when feminism had a mass base" (p. 58). In another activist's voice "the feminist movement is like the sea: it comes in waves and cannot be stopped" (Dahlerup, 2013, p. 20).

The *first wave* of the women's movement began early in the nineteenth century and remained active until World War I (Sheehy, 2002). Even earlier, the roots of *first wave* activism can be traced to three social movements: the French Revolution that focused on the rights of 'man' and citizens, the antislavery movement that focused on ending slavery, and the temperance movement that focused on sobriety as a means to improving the safety of women and children in the home (Swigonski & Raheim, 2011). Historically, women (particularly women in the role of wives) possessed no legal recognition or rights under the law. As such, they lived without any legal option to challenge their husband's use of physical force and neglect. During the 1860s and thereafter in Canada, public condemnation of "wife assault" was noted in newspapers, local courts, and temperance literature (Sheehy, 2002). An Ontario property reform act of 1859 provided 'Orders of Protection' for abused wives, giving them some financial protection and child custody rights. In 1909, for the first time in Canada, 'wife abuse' was recognized as a crime separate from 'common assault' (McLean, 2002). Gradually divorce laws were liberalized, allowing women to divorce on grounds of 'extreme' cruelty, although it took until 1968 in Canada for the Federal Divorce Act to recognize this human right (Pleck, 1987; Schechter, 1982; Sheehy, 2002; Sinclair, 2003).

In Canada, the dominant documented voices tended to be White, middle-class, English-

speaking, Christian women who were fighting to correct injustices they were experiencing themselves, often conflating temperance and suffrage. Meg Luxton (2004), one of my first professors of women's studies at University of Toronto in 1973, would emphasize that working-class women have always been a part of the women's movement in Canada, though they are often not a part of the official record. The same can be said for many women whose social location based on race, ability, sexual orientation, age and geographic location prevented them from being part of the official record of the women's movement in Canada. Nonetheless, what has been documented is White women's struggle to achieve formal legal equality for equal status, rights, and obligations, meaning equality of treatment with White men. The suffragists were successful in their efforts to win the right to hold property, to vote (federally), and ultimately to achieve the status of 'legal persons' with the passing of the Person's Case in 1929. They opened up women's access to post-secondary education and increased the number of women in professions. Not all women, however, benefited immediately from the efforts of the early suffragists. French-speaking women in Quebec were excluded from voting until 1939, as were women (and men) of colour until 1947, and Indigenous women (and men) until 1961, confirming the view that marginalized people's needs were not on the agenda for the *first wave* of the women's movement in Canada (Sheehy, 2002; Sinclair, 2003).

The *second wave* of the feminist movement, a term made popular by feminist activist Marsha Lear (Walker, 1995), spanned the late 1960s to the 1980s and referred to the increased feminist consciousness developing within the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, and the student political movement occurring across North American campuses (Schechter, 1982). In Canada, women fought for 'substantive equality' as opposed to the 'formal equality' of the *first wave* (Sheehy, 2002). Substantive equality acknowledges gender differences such as childbearing, reproductive rights, and unpaid caring activities of women upon which the state, community, and family rely heavily (Neysmith & Reitsma-Street, 2005). As a result, substantive equality focuses on the end result of equal benefits and burdens for women and men.

These may be achieved either by formal equality (equality of treatment) or by substantial equality (rules and practices specific to women). The goal was to acknowledge gender differences without women being disadvantaged.

During the *second wave*, the faces of feminism were varied, representing strands of feminist thinking drawn from the voices of Black women, Indigenous women, lesbians, poor women, and disabled women. Women from the margins were pushing to expand the borders of feminist engagement beyond gender oppression to include race, class, sexual orientation, and ability, though their collective contributions often remained invisible (Campbell, 1973; Davis, 1981; hooks, 1984, 1989; Lorde, 1984; Tobique Women's Group, 1987).

Liberal, radical, and socialist feminist theories are typically identified in these early theoretical formulations of *second wave* feminisms (Bryson, 1999; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Evans, 1995; Harding, 2004; Walby, 1990; Walker, 1979). They held a number of views in common. These feminist theories challenged, resisted, reformed, and attempted to dismantle patriarchal systems and beliefs that hold men as essentially superior and dominant, and women as essentially inferior and subordinate (Hunnicuttt, 2009; Kandiyoti, 1988; McCann & Kim, 2003). Most importantly, feminism begins with the contention that women's lives matter and women should be considered full human beings. For liberal and radical feminists, gender was at the center of their analysis, whereas both class and gender are the central focuses for socialist feminist theorists—an early reflection of the importance of intersectional analysis (Luxton, 2004). Early feminists distinguished between 'sex', the biological characteristics that separate men and women, and 'gender', the socially constructed notions of what is 'masculine' and 'feminine' (Bryson, 1999; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Evans, 1995; Oliffe & Greaves, 2011). Regardless of their orientation, early feminists argued that VAW was of central concern to women because it reflected women's subordinate status and undermined their ability to achieve social, economic, and political equality with men. Early feminist theorists differed in their analysis, however, of the causes of patriarchal oppression of women, and more importantly how

to rectify it.

Liberal feminism was rooted in a similar framework to the *first wave* of the feminist movement described earlier. Gender socialization was considered the root cause of women's oppression, and feminist efforts were centered within 'equality' arguments (Sheehy, 2002). In other words, liberal feminists argued on a platform of promoting women's rights by emphasizing the need for equal treatment and equal opportunity for women in comparison to men. Women were seen as equal but different to men and therefore complementary rather than 'less than'. There was a belief in the 'universal' woman, which critical feminist theorists suggest really meant White, middle-class, heterosexual women (hooks, 1981, 1984; Richie, 2000). There was no intention of disturbing the capitalist status quo; rather liberal feminists focused on women's right to be equally represented in social, political, and economic spheres, if they so choose. Law reform was a major focus of their activity. Liberal feminists believed that if the law reflected the equal rights of women and if women were no longer economically dependent on men, equality between the genders could then be achieved. Little attention, if any, was paid to issues of power and privilege (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Enns, 2010).

In addition to law reform efforts, the family became a site of liberal feminist theorizing. Betty Friedan (1963), in her classic account of the White, middle-class housewife dilemma, 'the problem with no name', documented these struggles in her first book, *The Feminine Mystique*. Women's traditional role in the White, middle-class, Eurocentric nuclear family was put under scrutiny and became a primary concern for liberal feminists; unpaid work in the family was challenged, though women's paid work in the public sphere continued to be seen as additional to their primary responsibilities in the home (Sheehy, 2002).

Radical feminism considers the patriarchal foundations of social relations (e.g., male domination) to be the root cause of women's oppression. Sexism is seen as the primary system of ruling relations, wherein women are seen and treated as inferior human beings while men are seen and treated as superior human beings. Radical feminists preferred the dominance approach

to the sameness and difference approach promoted by liberal feminists, and thus paid attention to issues of power and privilege. The word ‘radical’, meaning ‘getting to the root’, was often conflated with exaggerated militant actions, and self-identified radical feminists were often depicted in the media as man-hating women (Millet, 1969). In reality, radical feminism opposed the system of patriarchy, not men themselves. This view was threatening to the dominant discourse at the time, and mainstream media played an instrumental role in undermining the efforts of radical feminists to link VAW with patriarchal values (Faludi, 2006; Schechter, 1982; Sinclair, 2003). Unlike liberal feminists, radical feminists did not accept the capitalist status quo and fought to change the system they believed to be inherently biased against women. Shulamith Firestone (1970), in her classic book, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, argues the case for a radical feminist position. Firestone was one of the earliest feminist theorists to argue that women's reproductive capabilities and accompanying sex roles/responsibilities were directly linked to women's oppression in a patriarchal society, and that until women could have full control of their bodies and reproductive rights, they could never participate in society as full human beings.

Socialist feminists occupied a very different space in their analysis and were among the first feminists to challenge the ‘single cause’ explanation of women’s oppression. Unlike liberal feminists who saw gender socialization as the primary source of women’s oppression and radical feminists who identified patriarchy, or male dominance, as the root cause of women’s oppression, socialist feminists were concerned at heart with deconstructing class (Enns, 2010). Building on Marxist feminist analysis, they ascribed the cause of women’s oppression to a subordinate class status within capitalist societies, and women were seen as subordinate because they were members of the working class rather than the elite ruling class. Socialist feminists combined tenets of both radical feminism and Marxist feminism to develop a gendered class analysis of women’s status in a capitalist society (Luxton, 2004). Socialist feminists embraced an integrated analysis that addressed multiple and intersecting oppressive systems including

rigid gender socialization concerns, male dominance and exploitation of women's bodies, racism and class interests. They were indeed the forerunners within the mainstream feminist movement to lay the groundwork for an intersectional analysis that recognized the differential impact of violence on different groups of women (Burgess-Proctor, 2006).

Socialist feminists argued against the concept of 'universal risk' which suggests that all women are equally vulnerable to VAW. White middle-class women, however, wanted to avoid what they saw as a class- and race-biased analysis (Fine, 1985). This reluctance was not rooted in actual knowledge of prevalence rates in different communities of women but rather was driven by a belief that if VAW was seen as a problem primarily for poor women and women of colour then their efforts to mobilize against it would be compromised (Crenshaw, 1991; Dobash & Dobash, 1992). In fact, because of their dominance in the VAW field, the strategy worked to bring attention to the needs of middle- and upper-class White women who were victims of IPV and ultimately was a class strategy to promote their own interests (hooks, 1984).

The *third wave* of the feminist movement was a term made famous by Rebecca Walker, the daughter of Black feminist activist Alice Walker and goddaughter of White feminist icon Gloria Steinem. She made headlines in 1992 when she wrote an article entitled, *I Am the Third Wave*, in a popular American feminist publication, MS Magazine (Walker, 1995). As Walker (1995) explains:

For many of us it seems that to be feminist in the way that we have seen or understood feminism is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn't allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories. We fear that the identity will dictate and regulate our lives, instantaneously pitting us against someone, forcing us to choose inflexible and unchanging sides, female against male, black against white, oppressed against oppressive, good against bad. This way of ordering the world is specifically difficult for a generation that has grown up transgender, bisexual, interracial, and knowing and loving people who are racist, sexist, and otherwise afflicted (p. xxxiii).

The *third wave* has spanned the period from the 1990s to the present time, with roots that began in the *second wave*. Radical feminist leaders expressed dissatisfaction with the prioritizing of White, middle-class women's voices, particularly with the exclusion of issues of

race and class (Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981, 1984, 1992; Lorde, 1984). Young women joined the struggle with older, more radical anti-racist feminists, insisting that equality for all women must acknowledge advantages of White supremacy, class privilege, the heterosexual presumption, and norms of ability. They insisted the struggle for equality must acknowledge the consequences for all marginalized and racialized women (Kinser, 2004; Sheehy, 2002; Sinclair, 2003; Walker, 1995). *Third wave* feminist action continues to focus on substantive equality, meaning all women's lived experience should be one of equity and access to resources—such as a fair living wage, child care, decent housing, and trauma-informed health and social services—and to the right to live a life free of violence. It aims to ensure that policies and practices reflect the diversity of women's lives. To this end, anti-racist and anti-oppression (ARAO) training are ongoing professional development expectations for those working in legal, health, education, and social and political institutions.

The goal of the collaborative women's movements in the *third wave* has been to continue public debate and political pressure to affect social and legal change within a historical context that is culturally specific. Legal—indeed, all—systems are to be held constantly accountable to women, grounded within guiding principles that recognize women live in everyday conditions that are fluid, particular, and specifically located rather than fixed and universal (Smith, 1987). Legislation, policy, and procedures are to be framed within an explicit analysis of power relationships, inequality of women's lives, and historical political relations. Laws and policies are to include internal mechanisms of ongoing monitoring and enforcement. Creative solutions are to be achieved by building coalitions and alliances with all equality-seeking groups and voices from multiple feminist movements and worldviews (Ashcraft, 2000; Bograd, 1999; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Burman & Chantler, 2005; Crenshaw, 1995; CRIAW, 2006; hooks, 1992; Ritchie, 2017; Ritchie & Eby, 2007; Sheehy, 2002; Sinclair, 2003; Todd & Lundy, 2006; Walker, 1990; Walker, 1995).

Gender as the primary form of oppression is now a contested issue among contemporary

feminist scholars (Montminy, 2005; Richie, 2000; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Todd & Lundy, 2006). It took the work of critical feminist scholars from a number of communities, traditions and world views—Black, Indigenous, post-colonial, queer, disability, and critical White feminists—to challenge us to understand that by focusing solely on the experience of intimate violence of particular women in their homes, we may exclude the experience of public and socio-structural forms of violence. It is often these experiences that shape the daily lives of Indigenous women, women of colour, immigrant and refugee women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, geographically isolated women, differently abled women, older women and poor women. Their theoretical contributions are placed in the *third wave*, while it is important to remember that much of the work of critical feminist scholars began in the *second wave* though they did not achieve the prominence they deserved until much later.

It is important to document the Indigenous worldview prior to contact with the patriarchal European worldview:

The coming of the White man created chaos in all the old systems, which were for the most part superbly healthy, simultaneously cooperative and autonomous, peace-centered, and ritual-oriented (Gunn Allen, 1992, p. 31).

These words reflect the views of many Indigenous feminists who write about the role of women in their culture's pre-contact world (Anderson, 2000; Baskin, 2006; Channsonneuve, 2006; Gunn Allen, 1992; Maracle, 1996; Smith, 2003; Yee, 2010). The Indigenous worldview held women in high regard and accorded them a position of high status. The prevalent Indigenous worldview was an egalitarian, gynocentric/matriarchal model wherein women's views were central to the well-being and survival of the community. Indigenous women held positions of great leadership and were often the wise women/elders. Their childbearing capacity was honoured and protected, and they were held sacred as givers of life and thus creators of the next seven generations.

The Indigenous worldview was diametrically in opposition to the worldview promoted in the androcentric/patriarchal ideology of the 'European White man'. This worldview promoted

the value of conquest, which LaDuke (1994) suggests is the essence of both capitalism and colonialism. After contact, the colonizers (my ancestors), as an essential part of the civilizing mission/colonial project, had to systematically and intentionally dismantle Indigenous women's power. Paula Gunn Allen (1992) provides guidance on how to reveal the 'colonial gaze and the subsequent political consequences of this transition from Indigenous worldviews to hierarchal, patriarchal systems. She identifies four strategies used to dismantle the power of Indigenous women. These include the following: 1) the replacement of the Indigenous belief in a female creator with the colonizing culture's belief in a male creator; 2) the destruction of the philosophies and the tribal governing institutions which form the foundation of Indigenous culture; 3) the denigration, dehumanization, and ultimate outlawing of Indigenous cultural beliefs, ceremonies, and spiritual practices (this included the disruption of people's sacred relationship with the land, which is an essential aspect of their self-identity); and 4) the replacement of the clan structure, which was collectivist and woman-centered, with the dysfunctional patriarchal European nuclear family model. A movement to emancipate women was not a necessity in Indigenous culture because women were considered equals (Gunn Allen, 1992). This Indigenous respect for women was so evident that, as Mrs. Teall, a White woman in the late nineteenth century, wrote in an editorial in the Syracuse Herald-Journal, reflecting on the high status of women in Iroquois society

They had one custom the White men are not ready, even yet, to accept. The women of the Iroquois had a public and influential position. They had a council of their own which had the initiative in the discussion; subjects presented by them being settled in the councils of the chiefs and elders; in this latter council the women had an orator of their own (often of their own sex) to present and speak for them. There are sometimes female chiefs. The wife owned all the property. The family was hers; descent was counted through the mother (Lopez, n.d., p. 101, as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 77).

In stark contrast, the patriarchal European worldview held women and children in the British Empire and the colonies in low regard, and commonly considered them the property of the husband/father (the patriarch) to do with as he wished. This colonial legacy of ours has not

only infiltrated every aspect of current life in Canada but also how the VAW movement has picked up and addressed issues of violence against women in Ontario, unwittingly participating in reifying colonial practices invisible to many of us at that time. My study is a contribution in the direction of uncovering those colonial practices and replacing them with decolonizing practices that will help move both the VAW movement and the social work profession forward in the service of developing greater awareness of colonial privilege and power and how to use it constructively in the goal of ending violence against *all* women.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

In the past four decades, many theoretical explanations have emerged to help guide the social work field in its micro-, mezzo- and macro-level work with women who have been abused and their families. These theories do influence the policies and practices on the front lines of social work agencies and grassroots women's services. Theories include but are not limited to the following: anti-discriminatory sensitivity theories; crisis intervention theory; developmental-ecological theory; empowerment and advocacy theories; evolutionary psychological theory; general systems theory; feminist theory; resource theory; social exchange theory; social learning theory; socio-biological theory; and structural theory (Payne, 2005).

More specifically, feminist standpoint theories, that is, theories that focus on women's lived experience of violence and its impact on their everyday lives, have deepened our understanding of the 'batterer-generated' risks that all women face in abusive relationships (Davies, 1998). These include but are not limited to: learned helplessness theory and the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979); empowerment theory (Rose, 1990; Sinclair, 1985); survivor theory (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988); trauma theory (Herman, 1992); the concept of gender entrapment (Richie, 1996); the notion of social entrapment (Ptacek, 1999); and most recently, Evan Stark's theory of coercive control (2007). These theories have made several contributions to the field in various ways, including: 1) increasing the field's understanding of woman abuse and its effects on the individual woman; 2) linking the underlying socioeconomic and political context in which abusers use control tactics against their partners; and 3) identifying the structural barriers that prevent many women from finding safety and men from accepting responsibility for their violent behaviour (Bograd, 1999; Lundy, 2012; Myers, 2006).

For the purpose of my study, I focused my attention on the contributions of critical feminist standpoint theories: theories that focus not only on the 'batterer-generated' risks that all

women face and the impact on their everyday lives, but also on the ‘life-generated’ risks (Davies, 1998) or ‘social’ risks (Jaaber & Das Dasgupta, 2009) that marginalized women face as a direct result of their social location.

Feminist standpoint theories originated in the social change movements of the 1960s and 1970s and the antipositivist challenges made in the fields of history, sociology and philosophies of science (Harding, 2004). By the 1980s, feminist scholars, including Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987), American political philosopher Nancy Hartsock (1983), and American historians Donna Haraway (1988) and Sandra Harding (1987), were among the leading theorists who were challenging sexist and androcentric research claims and processes which failed to address the gaps in knowledge production that were troublesome to women’s movements. They shared a common belief that “standpoint approaches to research could empower oppressed groups” (Harding, 2012, p. 46, as cited in Hesse-Biber, 2012). In a similar vein, bell hooks (1981), an American cultural critic, argued that Black people’s lives created a view of marginalized populations from ‘below’, advancing our understanding of race relations in a way that was not possible from those in the position from ‘above’, such as those who benefit from a perspective of White privilege. Building on hooks’ work, critical social theorist Patricia Hill Collins (1986) developed the notion that scholars from within marginalized populations, such as Black woman sociologists, could have an ‘outsider within’ standpoint that addressed aspects of social relations which could not be accessible to scholars in either ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ status positions only. In this chapter, I address the tenets of several critical feminist standpoint theories, how they assist me to explain the everyday work of movement activists in the VAW movement, and how we can advance our work once we understand better not only where survivors of violence are socially located but where we as activists are socially located as well. Audre Lorde (1984) reminds us that by using our own standpoint to the fullest we can each be empowered—those of us in the role of VAW activist and those who we serve through our movement work:

My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves, without the restriction of externally imposed definition. Only then can I bring myself and my energies as a whole to the service of those struggles which I embrace as part of my living (p. 121).

Intersectionality Theory

Critical feminist scholars and anti-racist feminist activists have challenged the primacy of gender oppression by opening up the discourse on VAW to include other forms of oppression and inequality such as ageism, class privilege, racism, heterosexism, ethnocentrism, colonialism, and capitalism in order to deepen the understanding of how these intersect with gender oppression. Historically in the *second wave* VAW literature and in practice, dominant domestic violence discourses have commonly relied on two models to express VAW's relationship with race, gender, class, and sexuality. These include the 'additive' model of multiple oppressions, similar to adding beads on a string, and the 'hierarchized' model of multiple oppressions, meaning that one form of oppression is considered more critical than others. Mann and Huffman (2005) suggest that "neither of these approaches come close to conceptualizing multiple oppressions as simultaneous, inseparable, and interlocking" (p. 59). Patricia Hill Collins (2000) helps us think through the problems with this approach by suggesting that additive/hierarchizing models of explaining oppression are firmly rooted in the either/or dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought. This emphasis on quantification and categorization occurs in conjunction with the belief that either/or categories must be ranked. Privilege becomes defined in relation to its other (p. 22).

Contrary to the intent of these models, the impact of simply adding categories of difference to the existing dominant VAW framework (considering only gender), and/or giving preference to one oppression over others, results in the White, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied women's experiences becoming the standard of comparison (Holmes, 2009). This phenomenon was sometimes referred to as 'hegemonic feminism' by White anti-racist activists and women of colour because of this exclusive use of such a female standard (Burgess-Proctor,

2006). On the other hand, an interlocking approach helps us sort out how different systems of oppressions, identities, categories, and space rely on one another to function (Collins, 1998, 2000; Razack 1991, 1998, 2002). Intersectionality scholars argue that our social identities and social locations are socially constructed concepts based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other aspects of group domination which define the social characteristics that mark each of us—they cannot be understood in isolation from one another. These axes of disadvantage intersect with one another, mutually modifying each other simultaneously. Therefore, they do not stand alone as autonomous categories. These categories are not stable but rather fluid and embodied in particular historical and political contexts (Collins, 1998, 2000; Crenshaw, 1995).

An interlocking approach stipulates that no form of oppression is considered more critical than any other; rather the impact of a particular disadvantage is understood within the interactions of all other forms of inequality to which a woman is subjected (CRIA W, 2006; Jiwani, 2006). While some feminist scholars think the analytic tool of ‘intersectionality’ has been one of the greatest feminist contributions to women’s studies in the past three decades (McCall, 2005), others suggest that the growing body of literature on intersectionality theory has not adequately addressed how this concept ‘subjectively’ plays out in our everyday lives (Yuval-Davis, 2007). On an individual (micro) level, an intersectional perspective has been essential in giving voice to women from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and social locations who have been abused. A monolithic model (i.e., all women who have been abused) has not been a useful tool to understand the complex forces that shape and constrain the everyday life of a woman inhabiting her multiple identities and the impact of those multiple identities on her experience of IPV.

In academic women’s studies, this ‘intersectional perspective’ is also known by a number of other terms: integrated feminism, intersectionalities theory, women of colour perspectives, and multiracial or multicultural feminism, to name but a few (McCann & Kim, 2003;

Thompson, 2002). The unifying theme in all of these approaches is the commitment to understanding the impact of multiple and interlocking experiences of oppression and their differential impact on the individual lives of women, their families, and their communities (Sokoloff & DuPont, 2005). Some scholars, however, are critical of the intersectional perspective when it remains focused solely on the unique differences and struggles of each group, entrapped in ‘identity politics’ to the exclusion of making visible the underlying systemic oppressions upon which the group rests (Collins, 2000).

Andrea Smith (2003) suggests that Crenshaw (1991) does not take intersectionality theory far enough. Smith says, “if sexual violence is not simply a tool of patriarchy, but is also a tool of colonialism and racism, then entire communities of color are the victims of sexual violence” (p. 71). With this in mind, social workers and activists must frame our work within a historical context and acknowledge and reveal the embedded power relations that are responsible for colonialism and that remain in place. For example, when speaking about the higher rates of family violence in Indigenous communities in Canada, it is important to explain those statistical findings within the historical context of colonization, the Indian Act of 1868, intergenerational trauma from the legacy of the residential schools and the ‘Sixties Scoop’, current extreme rates of poverty, unsafe drinking water, substandard housing, food insecurity, unemployment, and isolation. These circumstances were created due to centuries of racism and colonialism. The betrayal of the Original Peoples of Turtle Island continues, as the dominant White culture refuses to negotiate on issues related to self-government, remains unwilling to settle more than 1200 outstanding land claims, and denies that as settlers/invaders we all are living on stolen lands and thus benefit from the cultural genocide that has occurred historically and continues to this day (Anderson, 2000; Baskin, 2006; Razack, 1998; Sinclair, 2003).

Nowhere is that colonial practice more evident than in the long-standing Canadian legal case of racial discrimination against First Nations children who receive substantially less child welfare services when living on reserve than non-Indigenous children living in all other parts of

Canada. Despite a ruling in January 2016 by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in favour of the case launched jointly by the First Nations Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the federal government, which has refused to honour the ruling, is aggressively using legal and illegal tactics to avoid righting a historic and current inequity towards Indigenous children on reserve. Because of the blatant refusal to settle this case, Dr. Cindy Blackstock, a Canadian Indigenous social work scholar, has started a social movement in Canada known as the *I Am A Witness* campaign in an effort to wake up the people of Canada to such a mockery and to garner public support on behalf of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children (Blackstock, 2015, 2016). Such advocacy is paramount if current systems of privilege are to be deconstructed and dismantled. Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) cite the work of Anderson and Collins (2001) when they distinguish a structural approach as requiring “analysis and criticism of existing systems of power and privilege; otherwise, understanding diversity becomes just one more privilege for those with the greatest access” to resources and power (p. 39-40).

Hulko (2009) takes this examination further as she tries to articulate the difference between the theoretical concepts of intersectional paradigm and social location. She uses the term ‘intersectional paradigm’ to refer to the interaction of “identity categories (i.e. race/gender), processes (racializing/gendering), and systems (racism/patriarchy)” (p. 47). She expands on its use in the scholarly literature to explain the complex relationship between intersecting and interlocking oppressions, terms described earlier in this dissertation. She then uses the term ‘social location’ to refer to the result of this interaction of advantages and disadvantages which plays out in the everyday life of an abused woman and her family. As a social worker like myself, Hulko (2009) struggles to bridge the theoretical world of the academy with everyday anti-oppressive practice (AOP) social work activism on the front line. The development of critical consciousness is an essential aspect of an AOP social work approach and is defined as the ‘process of continuously reflecting upon and examining how our own biases, assumptions and cultural worldviews affect the ways we perceive difference and power

dynamics' (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). Hulko encourages contemporary intersectionality theorists to acknowledge their own privilege, analyze their own social location, including earned and unearned privileges and oppressions, and name their own lived experience across time and place, in all its complexity, as did her 'intellectual ancestors' (Anderson, 2000; Collins, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1994; Lorde, 1984; McCann & Kim, 2003).

Indigenous Feminist Theory

In Canada, the struggles of Indigenous peoples differ from those of other populations because the oppression of Indigenous peoples is the result of colonization. All Canadians, and in particular, the privileged sector of society, benefit from the stolen land of Indigenous peoples, the exploitation of resources, and the violation of treaties. In fact, Indigenous peoples across the world face similar situations (Baskin, 2011, p. 50).

Nowhere are the effects of socio-structural factors more pronounced than in the everyday lives of Indigenous women and girls across Canada. For centuries, Indigenous women and girls have carried the weight of living in a harsh racist and sexist colonial country. Of all women in Canada, Indigenous women suffer from the worst social problems—higher rates of poverty, unsafe drinking water, food insecurity, lack of housing, precarious employment, lack of education, higher incarceration rates, over-surveillance from institutions (particularly from the police and child welfare systems), poorer physical and mental health, negative racial and sexual stereotypes, and lastly, lack of respect on the streets and in their homes (Alaggia, Regehr, & Rishchynski, 2009; Baskin, 2006; Blackstock, 2015/2016; Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton, 2006; Channsonneuve, 2006; McMahon & Pence, 2003; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010; Pence, 2001; Smith, 2003). The statistics on Indigenous women's relationship to violence are even more staggering—they are four times more likely to be subjected to IPV and eight times more likely to be murdered by their intimate partner following a separation than non-Indigenous women (Statistics Canada, 2004). A lesser known fact recently uncovered by the *Sisters in Spirit Initiative* is that Indigenous women and girls are three times more likely to be murdered by strangers than non-Indigenous women; only six percent of

non-Indigenous women are killed by strangers (NWAC, 2010).

Indigenous feminist scholarship and activism help us to unravel this puzzle by addressing these social realities. Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, and Hampton (2006) make a compelling argument for the associations between gender and sex, race and ethnicity, and culture and colonization, and their cumulative impact on the health and life chances of vulnerable populations. They build their case by first reminding us of the theoretical distinctions between gender and sex—that gender is a socially constructed concept, whereas sex is a biologically determined concept. They also state that sexism is more likely to contribute to women’s poor health than any biological or genetic differences among men and women. In other words, sexism is dangerous to a woman’s health. They then make conceptual distinctions between race and ethnicity, ‘race’ referring to distinct biological similarities that groups of people have in common (i.e., skin colour) and ‘ethnicity’ referring to groups of people who claim a distinct, shared cultural identity. These terms are often conflated in population health research and fail to address the structural violence embedded in racism, which directly affects the health of racialized people.

It is helpful to understand the differences between the terms ‘racism’ and ‘racialization’ which are often conflated in much of the literature. Racism is defined as a socially constructed phenomenon by which people are marked based on particular physical characteristics, random racial or ethnic categories, and then treated accordingly, based on beliefs assigned to those labels of where they fit in the organizing hierarchy (Agnew, 1998, as cited in Donnelly, Cook, van Ausdale, & Foley, 2005). Racialization, on the other hand, is a social process that relates to the discourse drawn on to assign meaning to the behaviour of people who are from a different ‘race’ or ‘ethno cultural group’. The underlying assumption in this discourse is that it is natural, objective and neutral to categorize people into racial categories and that such groups have distinct behaviours that then characterize their belonging to a particular ‘race’ (Donnelly, Cook, van Ausdale, & Foley, 2005). Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, and Hampton (2006) argue that

racism is a biopsychosocial stressor that has a profoundly damaging impact on racialized populations. Both sexism and racism operate in similar ways in that they both result from external power structures rooted in socially constructed hierarchies. Sexism and racism are dangerous to racialized women's health and life chances.

But this is where Indigenous feminist scholars make an integral difference to our understanding of why Indigenous populations suffer from even greater health issues and social problems. Authors such as Anderson (2000), Baskin, (2006), Blackstock, (2015), Chansonneuve (2006), LaRocque, (2002), Lawrence and Dua (2005) and Maracle (1996) uncover the relationship between culture and the process of colonization; in particular, they articulate the past and contemporary destructive impacts of cultural genocide on the Indigenous population in Canada. The combined effects of sexism, racism, and colonialism result in a severe form of what Tim Rhodes (2009) refers to as 'oppression illness/oppression stress', which increases the dangers to Indigenous women's and girls' health and life chances. Sexism, racism and colonialism are dangerous to Indigenous women's health and life chances.

Reclaiming their history has been vital for Indigenous feminist scholars. Early narratives of Indigenous women's lives such as Maria Campbell's *Half-breed* (1973), Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee, Indian rebel* (1990), Ruby Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun* (1987) and more recently, Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence's collection of *Strong Women Stories* (2003) provide unique glimpses into the lives of Indigenous women and elders. Indigenous scholars teach us that Indigenous women have been political activists since the days of Christopher Columbus and take issue with the centering of White women's way of periodizing the *three waves* of feminist activism (Smith, 2003). More recent activist projects such as that of the women from Tobique Reserve in New Brunswick, who initially banded together in the mid-1970s to improve the terrible local living conditions for women and children, culminating in their famous march to Ottawa in 1979, reflect early efforts to fight gender discrimination embedded in the racist colonial Indian Act (Tobique Women's Group, 1987).

Mary Two-Axe Early, a renowned Mohawk activist from Caughnawaga, Quebec, was one of the first women on record to challenge section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act in the early 1950s. This was the section of the Indian Act that removed women's rights if they married non-status men. Mary Two-Axe Early remembers it this way:

We Mohawk women were the first to complain about Indian women losing our birthright. When the Tobique women came along and joined the fight, we were delighted. I was honoured to be with them when they started the march to Ottawa that triggered publicity about Indian women fighting for their rights. With their continued help we hope all our native sisters will be able to go home to their people in peace (Tobique Women's Group, 1987, p. 254).

Another early act of activism involved two Native women, Jeannette Corbière-Lavell (current president of NWAC) and Yvonne Bedard, who launched a lawsuit against the Supreme Court of Canada stating that the 1876 Indian Act violated the Canadian Bill of Rights by removing their status for marrying non-Native men. Although they lost this particular challenge, their efforts galvanized a strong response in the Native community and beyond, and their efforts, in unison with those of many other Native women activists, eventually led to the passing of the ground-breaking Bill C-31 in 1985, ending more than one hundred years of gendered sexual discrimination of Native Indian women in Canada (Tobique Women's Group, 1987).

Indigenous feminist scholarship grows out of these entwined histories of Indigenous women's culture and activism. Dian Million (2009) investigated the courage it took for Indigenous women to speak out and identify, through their personal narratives, the sexualized, gendered and racialized nature of colonization, "in doing so, they transformed the debilitating force of an old social control, *shame*, into a social change agent in their generation" (p. 54). For the first time, in the political climate of the 1990s, Indigenous women and men began to openly share their stories with the Canadian public, about the atrocities they experienced as result of the State's attempts to assimilate them into Canadian culture. From this standpoint, Million (2009) theorizes the traditional teachings of the Elders, *Felt theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach*

to Affect and History, by addressing the importance of oral storytelling traditions as a means of sustaining rich community knowledges. Despite the academy's historic disdain for feminist notions of 'lived experience' as 'feminine' experience and at times, not considering it knowledge at all, Million (2009) credits Indigenous women specifically for:

Insisting on the inclusion of lived experience, rich with emotional knowledge of what pain and grief and hope meant now in our pasts and futures...the importance of felt experiences as community knowledges that interactively inform positions as Native scholars (p. 54).

Although Indigenous feminist scholarship is a relatively new area of study within the body of critical feminist scholarship and one that is considerably under-theorized, there is a small but growing body of scholarly texts (Million, 2013; Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, & Barman, 2010). That said, while there are a number of Indigenous scholars who are women, to date I have located very few resources written explicitly on Indigenous feminist theorizing particular to the Canadian context (Green, 2008; Ouellette, 2002; Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, & Barman, 2010). Indigenous feminism continues to be a contested area of activism and scholarship. Those who identify as Indigenous feminists risk alienating their local Native communities, while within the mainstream feminist movement, Indigenous feminists are often misunderstood and accused of not standing in solidarity with mainstream feminists. Ouellette's (2002) question poignantly reflects this conflict:

Do Indigenous women perceive themselves as oppressed within their own Indigenous societies because of gender or as oppressed within the larger and more dominant Euro-Canadian immigrant settler society, or a combination thereof (p.12)?

Lina Sunseri (2006) helps us to understand that the struggles for the survival of feminism and the survival of nationalism within an anti-colonial struggle are not mutually exclusive movements. Western feminists are often confused about using a Western lens to examine the nationalism debate; that is, they see nationalism as representing exclusionary practices, privatization of land ownership, support of the market economy, and as embodying the Western notion that all progress is good (i.e., the promotion of the neo-liberal agenda). In many ways,

from a Western feminist lens, nationalism is the worst of both patriarchy and capitalism. Using an Indigenous lens to examine nationalism, however, produces a very different understanding. Within this worldview, Sunseri (2006) teaches us that the struggle for Indigenous self-determination is the struggle to be liberated from colonial rule, and that the struggle for feminism is to be liberated from patriarchal rule. Both are necessary struggles for the liberation of Indigenous women. In the words of distinguished Cree lawyer and scholar, Sharon Venne (1998):

Our spirituality and our responsibilities define our duties. We understand the concept of sovereignty as woven through a fabric that encompasses our spirituality and responsibility. This is a cyclical view of sovereignty, incorporating it into our traditional philosophy and view of our responsibilities. It differs greatly from the concept of Western sovereignty which is based upon absolute power. For us absolute power is in the Creator and the natural order of all living things; not only in human beings ... Our sovereignty is related to our connections to the earth and is inherent (as cited in Smith, 2009, p. 6).

In the service of my own professional growth as a feminist social work activist, the personal process of decolonizing my own mind and body is a critical step towards reclaiming a more truthful version of my past history. This academic journey has been an integral part of that learning process for me. In that process, I have found learning about the Doctrine of Discovery to be a useful tool in aiding my understanding of the mindset of those early settlers/invaders who were my ancestors (Venne, 1998). The *Doctrine of Discovery* was a set of theological and legal rulings that stated European powers, such as Spain, England, France, and Portugal, could legally appropriate any 'discovered' land in the Americas that was occupied by non-Christians who were marked as enemies of Christian states. Further, any land that appeared 'unsettled' in the eyes of the European explorers (i.e., Christopher Columbus, Samuel de Champlain) was land that could be claimed for European use. This provided European powers with the rationale for their claim of superiority over Indigenous peoples and thus the right to declare war—attack, pillage, destroy and ultimately subjugate the original inhabitants who were seen as a primitive people, non-believer pagans, 'savages', and thus of an inferior status simply because they were

non-Christian and non-European (Venne, 1998). Early treaties were negotiated with the original peoples primarily to serve the interests of the colonizers, and the *Doctrine of Discovery* became the justification for the ‘colonial project’, which continues to dominate all power relations in contemporary times as well.

Acutely aware of such power relations, Indigenous feminist scholars articulate the following distinguishing features in outlining Indigenous feminist thought as a critical social theory: 1) it centers the voices of Indigenous women and empowers them in their struggle to challenge patriarchy; 2) it acknowledges that patriarchy was a structure externally imposed on Indigenous peoples by Europeans during contact; 3) it confirms that Indigenous women held a place of leadership, respect, and reverence in traditional communities pre-contact; 4) it challenges White supremacy and colonialism in the mainstream White feminist movement by centering anti-colonial struggle within its activism and theory; 5) it increases public awareness about the negative and damaging stereotypes that sexualize and racialize Indigenous women and girls; 6) it identifies the intersections of sexism, racism, and colonialism that impact the health and quality of everyday life and limit the life chances of Indigenous women and girls; 7) it emphasizes the need for all people to decolonize their minds, bodies, and spirits from colonial rule as a prerequisite to engaging in the global movement for liberation of all peoples; 8) it is dedicated to articulating the contributions of Indigenous women in all their roles as elders, scholars, artists, activists (both inside and outside the academy), mothers, sisters, aunties, and intimate partners; 9) it reminds us that Indigenous peoples are land-based peoples who want what they had pre-contact with the Europeans—control of their land, their resources, and their destinies—and it clarifies their intentions to restore what the dominant population has removed from them, which is the basis of their self-identity; and 10) although it is shaped by Indigenous feminist scholars, it is inclusive, dynamic, and seeks to change the world through employing Indigenous values and forms of governance that will benefit all peoples (Anderson, 2000; Baskin, 2006; Chansonneuve, 2006; Denetdale, 2009; Green, 2008; Gunn Allen, 1992;

Lawrence & Dua, 2005; LaDuke, 1994; Maracle, 1996; Ouellette, 2002; Smith, 2003, 2009; Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, & Barman, 2010; Yee, 2010).

Black Feminist Theory

Black women have a long and courageous history of fighting for the liberation of their people. Scholars trace the earliest days of the slave trade to the seventeenth century, when millions of Black men and Black women from Africa were forcefully captured and transported in cages to the Americas in the most inhumane conditions (Collins, 1998). On this continent, they were sold to slave masters to work the lands and serve the slave masters. No human rights existed, marriage was not permitted, families were separated, and children were often removed from their mothers at birth. African-American women, in particular, were treated as sexual slaves and raped repeatedly by their White male slave owners (Potter, 2006; Washington, 2011). Wives of the slave owners were complicit in the racist treatment of Black women, sowing the seeds for the historic tensions between White and Black women (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). There are many documented accounts of Black women's resistance against the multiple oppressions they endured for generations (Hull, Bell, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Potter, 2006; Washington, 2011).

One of the earliest and perhaps best known of women's rights activists, pacifists, and abolitionists was Sojourner Truth (1797–1883), author of the famous speech, *Ain't I a Woman?* (2004). Renowned for her courage and bold oratory skills, she has been credited with greatly influencing the success of the suffrage vote victory for women at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851. White women, when pitted against Black men's right to vote, abandoned Black women in their own self-interest (Washington, 2011). This occurrence has proven to be a well-deserved, long-standing criticism lodged against the mainstream feminist movement to this day (Richie, 1996).

Harriet Tubman (1820–1913), another prominent Black woman who was initially known for her heroism in guiding slaves to freedom through the treacherous Underground Railroad

route to Canada, eventually became a women's rights activist as well (Larson, 2004). More contemporary Black feminist artists and writers documented the nature of Black women's experience of oppression and violence through art, such as the following: theatre—"for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf"—the first choreopoem to play on Broadway—later to become a best-selling book that documented Black women's experience of domestic violence (Shange, 1975); *The Colour Purple* (Walker, 1982), the book and later popular movie documenting family violence; and the moving autobiographical account of childhood sexual abuse, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (Angelou, 1969). The artists' courage in breaking the silence about domestic violence, sometimes viewed as a betrayal of their communities and an attack on Black men, was later embodied in one of the first anthologies for Black women's studies, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave* (Hull, Bell, Scott, & Smith, 1982).

As mentioned throughout this dissertation, women of colour, particularly Black feminist scholars and activists, have taken issue with the mainstream feminist analysis that focused solely on gender (Potter, 2006; Richie, 1996). Since the 1970s, long before the naming of the term 'intersectionality' in the scholarly literature, they had been working on the intersections of gender, race, and class. Most notably, members of the famous Combahee River Collective (1983) first named their lived experience as Black lesbians, thus differentiating themselves from the "universal we" of the White women's movement. Alice Walker (1983), social critic and literary icon, captured the essence of Black Feminist Thought (BFT) in the term 'womanism', the main objective of which is to deconstruct the social conditions and ruling hierarchies that make up the everyday realities of Black women's lives (Cannon, 1988; Collins, 2000; Taylor, 1998).

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) helps us understand the meaning of an Afrocentric standpoint, reflecting core African values that existed prior to racial oppression, and that binds Black men and Black women in their struggle for freedom from racial oppression (Collins, 2000). Of equal

importance to Black women scholars and activists is a feminist standpoint, which addresses the history of gender/sexualized hierarchies in a world dominated by White, Euro-patriarchal/masculinist values and ideologies, and with which White women, Black women, and other women of colour identify because of their shared experience of and shared desire to be liberated from gender/sex oppression (Collins, 2000). Because Black women have intimate knowledge of both worlds, they are perfectly poised to challenge the reductionist strategies that would have them betray loyalties by choosing sides, thus entrapping them in either/or binaries. Rather, Black feminist scholars teach us that these terms of difference cannot be mutually exclusive, suggesting that the complexity of Black women's lives is best understood using 'both/and' language, similar to the way that Riane Eisler and David Loye promote the use of 'both/and' language within a partnership model, rather than the 'either/or' language of a dominator model (Eisler & Loye, 1990).

Philomena Essed (1991) helps us understand how "systemic racism is reproduced largely through routine and taken-for-granted practices and procedures in everyday life" (p. 1), coining the term 'everyday racism' to highlight how it is mutually interwoven with other systems of oppression that socially construct our identities and thus our material conditions (Cramer & Plummer, 2009). These definitions change over time and location and, although rooted in separate histories of oppression, result in discrimination based on the multiple identities each of us inherits from our place and time of birth. To summarize, BFT is the theoretical perspective that places the lived experiences of Black women, including any forms of resistance to their situations, at the focal point of the analysis. It considers Black women as individuals encompassing numerous and interwoven identities (Potter, 2006).

Additionally, Collins (2000) identifies the central goals of Black feminism as: 1) raising awareness about the negative stereotypes of Black womanhood rooted in the long legacy of brutal slavery and oppression (e.g., the 'promiscuous Jezebel', the 'asexualized Mammy' or the 'profligate welfare queen' archetypes); 2) critically analyzing simultaneous and interlocking

oppressions as they relate to stigmatizing social identities that impact Black women; and 3) giving prominence to the tangible realities of Black women's lives that establish a platform for political action, linking insight with critical social justice efforts. Furthermore, Taylor (2005) outlines the distinguishing features of Black feminist/womanist thought as a critical social theory: 1) it unites the voices of Black women and empowers them in their fight against social injustice regarding intersecting oppressions; 2) it places their everyday lived experience as primary and valued testimony within a legacy of struggle through the generations; 3) it establishes a link between Black women as a diverse collectivity with resulting group wisdom and expertise; 4) it is concerned with the fundamental contributions of Black women intellectuals, leaders, artists, and activists (both inside and outside the academy); and 5) it is dynamic and values the importance of change.

Black women live simultaneously at the intersections of gender violence and 'cultural violence', defined as "the normative beliefs and practices of the society that can be a source of violence by allowing a dehumanization of certain persons or groups" (Pilisuk & Tennant, 1997, as cited in Taylor, 2005, p. 1474). This type of violence is often hidden, difficult to name, and supports the systemic violence embedded in our institutions. Spivak (1988) used the term "epistemic violence" to describe the daily brutality of how the ruling elite constitutes the colonial subject as 'Other', meaning lesser (p. 24). This type of violence then becomes the rationale for historical socio-political structural inequities that place Black women at increased risk based on the dangers of their social position. There is now an ever-increasing body of literature that confirms this reality of racial and cultural differences which have resulted in higher rates of IPV in marginalized communities; Black women's experience of IPV, however, remains largely under-theorized and under-researched, especially in the Canadian context. This has resulted in a lack of adequate theoretical and policy discussion to assist the social work field using Canadian data to meaningfully address the structural roots of oppression.

A small but leading-edge body of BFT researchers are demonstrating exemplary feminist

scholarship in applying critical social justice and intersectional lenses to capture the lived experiences of Black Canadian women and their families. These scholar activists are revealing the historic socio-political circumstances that give rise to the alarmingly higher rates of broad forms of violence against Black women, including contemporary forms of ‘epistemic violence’ and ‘everyday racism’, combined with the legacy of hundreds of years of colonial slavery (Brand, 2009; Dua & Robertson, 1999; hooks, 1995; Maynard, 2017; Wane & Massaquoi, 2007; Williams, 2001). It should then come as no surprise that these forms of violence and historical legacy manifest in higher rates of violence within Black women’s intimate relationships, families, and communities.

Additionally, more Black women, like so many other marginalized women represented in this study, live with the impacts of historical and socio-political structural inequities that limit their health, quality of everyday life, and life chances, including but not limited to the following: higher rates of poverty; lack of educational opportunities; lower paying jobs and unemployment; increased health risks for diseases such as HIV/AIDS, substance use, and mental health issues; lesser access to culturally relevant services and community-based resources; and higher rates of institutional surveillance, particularly from child welfare and policing systems, resulting in higher rates of child welfare intervention and incarceration (Bent-Goodley, 2007; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Conwill, 2010; Maynard, 2017; Nash, 2005; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Taylor, 2000; West, 2004).

Post-colonial Feminist Theory

Critical post-colonial feminist studies began in the 1980s in response to Western feminist representations of third-world women, including racialized and ethnicized women living in poor and marginalized developing countries. Similar to critical scholars who raised early challenges to the mainstream feminist movement, post-colonial feminist scholars bring our attention to the power relations between women in the global North and women in the global South (Mirza,

2009; Mohanti, 1988). Key terms that permeate the post-colonial literature include: 1) ‘imperialism’ or ‘neo-imperialism’, which originates in metropole/urban centres. It is a system of capitalist financial exploitation that occurs across the globe and is promoted as the highest form of progress which will ultimately benefit all parts of society; 2) ‘Eurocentrism’, which is the belief that European ideas and practices are the centre of the civilized world and thus should be adopted by the rest of the world. Every other culture is judged in comparison to that standard; 3) ‘colonization’ or ‘neo-colonialism’, which is the process of taking over a territory and the appropriation of its resources, often conflated with imperialism; 4) ‘post-colonialism’, which is independence from colonial power, a frequently contested term because it suggests that the colonial legacy is in the past. We know this to be untrue given the current living conditions of Indigenous peoples in our own country and the reality that their abject living conditions are not a post-colonial condition but rather a contemporary form of colonialism; and 5) ‘decolonization’, which is the process of transferring back to the colonized subjects the power that had been taken from them, the ‘subaltern’(Spivak, 1988). However, great inequities often remain. The decolonizing process, like colonization, occurs differently across time and space, thus leaving behind different legacies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000; Duara, 2004; Loomba, 2005).

The unique tenets of post-colonial feminist theory include the following: 1) a shift from a societal-level analysis (the macro lens of many *second wave* feminists) to a global-level analysis in order to embrace the unprecedented international migration of women and their families across borders; 2) a critique of Western hegemony and imperialism; 3) a strong rejection of the homogenization and subjugation of whole collections of people, races, and ethnic groups; 4) an unwillingness to accept the Western version of the gendered, racialized, ethnicized, and sexualized ‘Other’ and a determination to lift the colonial veil and make known local and specific Indigenous knowledges, particularly of women around the world; 5) a countering of the negative and demeaning stereotypes that often portray non-Western women as less than—

downtrodden, victimized, ignorant, tradition-bound—compared to Western women, who are characterized as modern, progressive, well-educated, independent, and fully in control of their bodies and lives; and 6) a recognition of the multiple views and opinions of women in the non-Western world and their own ‘ways of knowing’, connecting the production of knowledge with discourses of truth and power (Minh-ha, 1989; Mirza, 2009; Mohanti, 1988; Narayan, 1997; Razack, 1998; Spivak, 1988).

Post-colonialism has emerged as a significant set of scholarly endeavours and political practices, made most famous with Edward Said’s (1978) iconic contribution *Orientalism*, which challenged the unquestioned authority of the West over the production of knowledge about and power over the Orient. Although it was not a gendered analysis, his influence permeates the scholarship of many contemporary critical feminist scholars and activists, particularly that of Black, Indigenous, and post-colonial feminist scholars (Anderson et al., 2009; Bannerji, 1995; Collins, 2000; Jiwani, 2006; Mirza, 2009; Mohanti, 1988; Razack, 2002; Smith, 2003; Thobani, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2006). The underlying assumption of post-colonialism relates to a critique of and resistance to Western modernity.

The primary focus of study is the colonial encounter, that is, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. At the heart of the post-colonial tradition is the assumption that colonization has been the most significant and far-reaching social process to occur in the past five centuries (Prasad, 2005). While earlier powerful empires such as the Egyptians, the Aztecs, and the Mongols were also notorious for their practice of invasion and conquest, the European conquest of the last five hundred years differs in a number of ways, most significantly due to its massive global reach. At its peak in the 1930s, modern European colonialism usurped control over 84.6% of the world’s land mass and as such was the most pervasive of all colonial projects worldwide (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000; Duara, 2004; Loomba, 2005). European colonialist thought represented masses of people worldwide—those different from Europeans—as the Other.

Descriptions that originated in historic colonial thought continue to permeate many of our contemporary forms of oppression. The 'Other' is represented as backward and inferior, promoting negative attributes such as inhuman, savage, primitive, barbaric, evil, lazy, aggressive, violent, greedy, sexually excessive and loose, immoral, among other negative characterizations intended to demean and diminish people (Loomba, 2005). These representations were most often applied to anyone living outside of the dominant European countries (England, France, Holland, Spain, and Portugal), such as Arabs, Africans, Asians, North American Natives, Indians, Jews, and the Irish, but they were also applied to women, homosexuals, the disabled, the working class, and the poor (Loomba, 2005).

In other words, these negative representations applied to anyone who did not fit the European notion of goodness. This kind of historical representation was not only practiced by colonizers, but also operated as an ongoing worldwide legacy wherein all marginalized groups of people are essentialized as the Other and thus seen as less than, inferior, second-class citizens. Such representation then becomes the rationale for the unfair distribution of the world's resources, and thus race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, citizenship, and all other forms of social identity become inextricably connected to inequitable social hierarchies embedded in patriarchy, capitalism, globalization, and the like (Anderson, Rodney, Reimer Kirkham, Browne, & Lynam, 2009; Duara, 2004; Jiwani, 2006; Loomba, 2005; Mirza, 2009).

Post-colonial feminist scholars emphasize the importance of the 'situated knowledge' of non-dominant voices of women and honour their lived experience (Bannerji; 1995; Collins, 2000; Jiwani, 2006; Mirza, 2009; Nadeau, 2005). Critical post-colonial feminist scholars urge us to unpack our own history to render transparent these power relations (hooks, 1984; Nadeau, 2005). Building on the scholarship of Black feminist theorists, post-colonial feminist perspectives advance post-colonial theories to address issues of difference by drawing on the ways that historicized, gendered, and racialized power relations have structured inequities along the axes of socially constructed markers such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and so

on (Bannerji; 1995; Collins, 2000; Jiwani, 2006; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Mirza, 2009; Mohanti, 1988). Post-colonial feminist scholar Heidi Safia Mirza (2009) advises:

Post-colonial feminist approaches situate the ‘spectral’ power of colonial times as it appears and disappears in the production and reproduction of racialized and gendered knowledges in the spatially challenged present (p. 8).

In particular, post-colonial feminist scholars are keen to make transparent the forces that shape the quality of life and overall health of those women who have been displaced through migration (Anderson et al., 2009).

Canada has been settled by five centuries of colonizers and continues today to accept immigrants and refugees from around the globe. VAW and social work activists must understand the unique circumstances faced by immigrant and refugee women in Canada. First, it is important to understand that immigrant women are not a monolithic group—each woman who comes to Canada with her family has a unique pre-migration history, migration experience, border-crossing experience, and post-migration experience (Yoshioka & Choi, 2005). Her relationships with her family of origin, her country of origin, and her host country work together to shape her experience as a whole. As opposed to Euro-Canadian women who have grown up with a worldview based on individual rights and freedoms, many immigrant and refugee women come from worldviews based on collectivist values, wherein one’s own personal goals and desires may be inseparable from the family and community to which one belongs (Sokoloff, 2008a). There may be a higher value placed on respect and compliance in the service of maintaining harmony within the collective. Clearly there is a continuum within both individualist and collectivist worldviews, and it is imperative to learn how each woman understands her role within her family and community (Baobaid, Kovacs, MacDiarmid & Tremblay, 2015; Sokoloff, 2008a).

Immigrant and refugee women experience a number of barriers when faced with IPV, which have been well documented in both the social work literature and the VAW movement literature (Agnew, 1998; Jiwani, 2006; Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004; Sokoloff &

Pratt, 2005). These include but are not limited to the following: 1) individual factors such as fear of being deported; fear of loss of sponsorship; isolation; fear of being banished or evicted; and fear of her cultural cues being misunderstood or used against her; 2) institutional factors such as a lack of VAW training among helping professionals; a lack of culturally relevant screening tools; a lack of culturally safe environments; a lack of desire to understand and learn about unique circumstances that guide immigrant women's daily lives due to stereotyping, labelling, and racism; accent discrimination; and language barriers; and 3) systemic factors such as discriminatory treatment based on race, culture, accent, gender, class, ability, sexual orientation, and citizenship; fear of police and authority figures in general; fear of poverty and homelessness; lack of safe housing; food insecurity; lack of access to resources; immigration policies that heighten her risk for greater violence; and fear of a backlash in her own community that may prevent her from breaking the silence about her experience of violence (Alaggia, Regehr, & Rishchynski, 2009; Bent-Goodley, 2007; Jiwani, 2006; Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004; Sokoloff & Pratt, 2005).

Sokoloff (2008b) outlines a number of promising practices that VAW immigrant community workers have developed in their work with immigrant and refugee women, including: 1) an emphasis on a harm reduction model that focuses on women and family safety rather than on whether a woman stays or leaves; 2) the development of culturally competent services; 3) addressing both micro and macro structural changes that prevent women from finding safety from violence in all its forms; 4) the development of community-based models of social justice with an emphasis on community engagement and accountability rather than on a reliance on the criminal justice system, which often creates more, not less, problems for immigrant women and their families; 5) the development of coalitions between grassroots social justice and VAW movements that move from the creation of a social service model to a broader social change movement; 6) empowering immigrant women as agents for personal and social change in their own communities and encouraging them to become leaders, mentors, and

resources for abused women in their own communities; and 7) providing examples of empowerment and social change models that emphasize collaborations between women and men to become anti-violence leaders in their respective communities, in search of strategies that keep women safe and men accountable while emphasizing the strength of their cultures (i.e. the Cultural Context model) (Almeida & Lockard, 2005).

This being said, Canadians still need to deal with their colonial past. I am particularly interested in the legacy of the European colonial encounter and how it affects Euro-Canadians' relationships with Indigenous peoples, as well as their relationships with newer immigrant and refugee populations. Most Canadian institutions and policies are rooted in colonial thought, both historically and currently. The work of post-colonial theorists is particularly relevant to feminist engagement and practices in the healthcare field, the social work profession, and the VAW movement because it offers an alternative historical explanation for many commonplace social work and VAW practices that have their origins in colonial structures (O'Mahony & Donnelly, 2010).

Queer Feminist Theory

As a movement, queer scholars and activists have been historically occupied with the fight for the legalization of homosexual behaviour, the struggle to define the equality rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, intersexual, and asexual (LGBTQIA) community, and the survival of their traumatic immersion in the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Gillis & Diamond, 2006). LGBTQIA is the current acronym for the queer community and is considered a more inclusive and respectful term that embraces people with non-mainstream sexual orientation or gender identity.

Only recently have the energies of LGBTQIA been freed to address IPV in same-sex relationships (Ristock, 2001). Several factors have served to silence discussion and impede serious attention to the needs of survivors and abusers in the LGBTQIA community, such as

well-founded fears of further stigma from the public that would pathologize the LGBTQIA community and give ammunition to critics who promote the gender symmetry argument that women are as violent as men (Gillis & Diamond, 2006; Sinclair, 2003). Since the early 1980s, queer feminist scholars have challenged us to unpack the heterosexual normative assumptions that historically underlie the mainstream feminist analysis of IPV. Given the simple rubric of a hetero-normative context, heterosexual scholars, activists, and practitioners have struggled to make sense of the uncertainty encountered when a woman is violent towards her partner. Relying solely on a gender-based analysis does not work when both partners are women, nor does this monoanalysis work to include the experience of racialized bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirited people (Lehavot, Walters, & Simoni, 2010). Janice Ristock (2002), in her classic study, *No More Secrets: Violence in Lesbian Relationships*, investigates the similarities and differences between heterosexual and same-sex abusive relationships while simultaneously urging us not to explain IPV by assuming that heterosexuality is the norm and thus implying a common etiology.

Defining terms such as ‘transphobia’, ‘homophobia’, ‘internalized homophobia’, and ‘heterosexism’ assists us in understanding the unique experiences of lesbians so that we may identify the particular barriers they face. These terms also challenge us to rethink the policies and practices of mainstream domestic violence services so that they become more inclusive and culturally relevant (Helfrich & Simpson, 2006). Queer feminist scholars instruct us to rethink the use of heterosexist language that impedes disclosure (e.g., did your ‘husband’ abuse you?) (Hammond, 1989); to challenge the notion of the ‘universal woman’ (Richie, 1996; 2000); and to recognize the irrelevance of heterosexual patriarchal analysis which includes the institution of marriage, male ownership of women, economic reliance on men, and the notion of home as a private domain (Girshick, 2002).

Cindy Holmes (2009) builds on the work of earlier queer feminist scholars to articulate a spatial analysis of a private/public discourse as a means to challenge the “grand narrative of

violence against women” (p. 80). Holmes (2009) helped me understand theoretically what I had lived practically. Early White feminists of the *second wave*, myself included, attempted to contest ‘hetero-patriarchal ideologies’—that is, the invisibility of violence against women by their intimate partners in the private spaces of their life, namely their homes. As mentioned earlier in this study, the dominant discourse at the time, the ‘hegemonic narrative’, was constructed from the idea that the primary (most dangerous) site of VAW occurred in public space, perpetuating the myth that primarily strangers perpetrated violence. In contrast, the private or sacred space of home and family (i.e., the patriarchal European nuclear version of family) was seen as a safe space for women and children. Although our work was effective in disrupting this particular ‘hegemonic narrative’, there have been multiple, contradictory, and unanticipated consequences. Queer feminist scholars like Holmes (2009) suggest that this singular focus on violence in private space placed middle-class White women’s experience of private and/or domestic violence at the center of activist efforts (Bannerji, 1995; Davis, 2008; Jiwani, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Razack, 1998; Smith, 2003), creating one dominant discourse, “the agreed-upon framework of language and meaning” (Marecek, 1999, as cited in Holmes, 2009, p. 80). As a result, the public violence of colonialism and nation building, together with the dehumanizing exploitive nature of capitalism and globalization, were rendered invisible. Shareen Razack (2002) suggests that this invisibility perpetuates the White settler/invader mythology—that is, Canada’s history of “denial and disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery, and the exploitation of the labour of peoples of colour” (p.2).

The effects of these public forms of violence were devastating, and they continue to shape the everyday lives of the LGBTQIA community and others—that is, every woman who is considered the ‘Other’. In particular, queer feminist scholars urge us to avoid the same trap of a monoanalysis that focuses solely on the needs of White middle-class lesbians whose experiences of IPV may indeed be hidden from public scrutiny. Theory and practice must also address the needs of working-class and racialized queer women who may not be sheltered from the public

gaze or have the benefit of the privilege of privacy (Holmes, 2009).

Disability Feminist Theory

I know that many VAW organizations do fine work but do not have an understanding of those of us with disabilities. Literature is not in accessible format, staff has not received training, and shelters are not physically accessible. Shelters do not for the most part make provisions for attendants. [VAW services] are also hesitant to take women with developmental disabilities or mental health diagnosis requiring medications, or [there] is a lack of qualified ASL interpreters (Yoshida, Odette, Hardie, Willis, & Bunch, 2009, p. 1849).

This quote from a woman with a disability (WWD) who was a participant in a 2006 research study eloquently captures the state of affairs in VAW services in Ontario today (Yoshida et al., 2009). As members of a movement, disability feminist scholars and WWD activists have worked together on the margins of the field while trying to straddle the women's movement and the disability movement to highlight their specific needs (Israel & Odette, 2006). For the past 25 years, with minimal resources and even fewer allies, WWD have highlighted the needs of WWD, particularly within the VAW movement (Mays, 2006).

'Ableism' is defined as "accepting the non-disability experience as the dominant standard in society" (Yoshida, Odette, Hardie, Willis, and Bunch 2009, p.1843). Women's health is gravely impacted by VAW, as articulated throughout this dissertation; much less is known, however, about woman abuse as it relates to WWD. Although the VAW movement has made great advances for able-bodied women, the voices of WWD have frequently remained invisible and marginalized in many settings (Yoshida et al., 2009). Theoretically and practically, many WWD must contend with multiple forms of oppression related to sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia, in addition to ableism in their everyday lives (Mays, 2006).

There is a growing awareness that women who are disabled experience higher rates of VAW than able-bodied women (Powers et al., 2009). Prevalence studies have confirmed the higher risks associated with being female and being disabled. For example, WWD experience rates of partner abuse by as much as 40% higher than able-bodied women (Brownridge, 2006).

Sandra Martin and her colleagues (2006) established that WWD are sexually assaulted four times more than able-bodied women. As with other critical scholars, disability feminist scholars recognize that “generic services and supports for women experiencing domestic violence are inappropriate for all women” (Lightfoot & Williams, 2009, p. 133). Though WWD experience similarities in the forms and severity of DV, WWD also experience unique forms of DV such as controlled access to medications, refusal of physical care, removal of access to required support devices, threats to leave when the woman is dependent on a partner for life-sustaining support, and being moved without their permission (Curry, Hassouneh-Philips, & Johnston-Silverberg, 2001). Furthermore, many disability-specific types of abuse may not be considered assault under the Criminal Code yet may be life-threatening to women with disabilities. Such examples include the withholding of necessary food, water, and medications, the refusal of toilet access, and damage to supportive aids such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, scooters, and communication devices, etc. (Powers et al., 2009).

Disability feminist scholars challenge the VAW movement and the social work profession to expand our definition of VAW/IPV because the perpetrator might be an intimate partner, non-intimate personal care provider, health professional, family member, or stranger in the community. This is why some scholars suggest using the term “interpersonal violence” rather than IPV (Powers et al., 2009). Another unique contribution of disability feminist scholars is their enlargement of the concept of ‘space’ where violence occurs for WWD to include homes, healthcare settings, institutions, and public spaces. WWD are vulnerable to violence by their intimate partners as well as their personal attendants (Saxton, Curry, Powers, Maley, Eckels, & Gross, 2001).

In a recent study of 16 WWD participants that explored the lived experience of women with disabilities and their knowledge related to VAW, three needs were identified that would assist the VAW movement to mitigate barriers facing WWD including: 1) dedicated resources to access the necessary funding for services to provide culturally relevant accommodations; 2)

more access to information that is linguistically and culturally relevant to assist in the prevention of VAW; and 3) more training initiatives targeting both VAW services and disability organizations to assist staff in working with the multiple intersectionalities faced by WWD (Yoshida et al., 2009). Other studies support these findings and draw our attention to additional difficulties that WWD confront, including negative stereotypes of disability, fear of those who are different, isolation, lack of knowledge of services, and lack of understanding of individual rights. Disability feminist scholars contribute leading scholarship on the benefits of using intersectionality as a theoretical tool to understand the multiple identities and multiple needs of WWD (Banks, 2008; Cramer & Plummer, 2009; Hande & Kelly, 2015; Mingus, 2010).

Mia Mingus, (2010), a disability justice activist, lives her life within many different political identities as a queer, disabled, woman of colour and seeks to disrupt many of the binaries that constrict our social justice movements. She insists that as activists we must go far beyond issues of access and understand that disability is not a monolithic experience. The experience of disability is different for those who are Deaf, in wheelchairs, suffer mental disabilities. None of these experiences are mutually exclusive and all are complicated by gender, race, sexuality and age, class, geographic location and immigration status. She invites the VAW movement to embrace an intersectional feminist analysis that enables all women to bring their whole and connected selves to the VAW community in these words:

We cannot fight for liberation without a deep, clear understanding of disability, ableism and disability justice. The bodies of our communities are under siege by forces that leverage violence and ableism at every turn. Ableism is connected to all of our struggles because it undergirds notions of whose bodies are considered valuable, desirable and disposable. How do we build across our communities and movements so that we are able to fight for each other without leveraging ableism? I imagine a world where our organizing and activism is less segregated, where our movements and communities are accessible and don't participate in the isolation of disabled communities. I imagine places where we fight for whole and connected people, families and communities (p. 3).

Critical White Feminist Theory

Historically, much of the research literature on racism and other forms of oppression and

discrimination tended to focus on the penalties and disadvantages of being lower on the social hierarchies—scant attention was paid to the benefits and privileges that come with being higher on the social hierarchy (Varcoe, 2006). As a result, less attention was given to notions of White privilege (Pewewardy, 2004). More recently, however, critical White feminist scholars have developed a small but growing body of literature that focuses on White women and interrogates their complicity in maintaining systems of racialized hierarchies (DiAngelo, 2011; Frankenberg, 1993; Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & Defiore, 2002; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Hoagland, 2007; Hulko, 2009; McIntosh, 1988, 1989; Pewewardy, 2004; Varcoe, 2006).

Peggy McIntosh (1988), a critical White feminist scholar, is widely acknowledged for her early work in interrogating White privilege. She has been instrumental in explaining how individuals benefit from the unearned assets of White skin privilege yet remain oblivious to its presence. In her journey toward understanding male privilege—which she acknowledges is much easier to see from the viewpoint of the Other—she took to heart the criticisms from her women of colour colleagues and began to unpack White privilege. In her classic article, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, she compares White privilege to “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks” (p. 10). In a later paper, McIntosh (2015) extends her thinking to include the development of self-awareness exercises designed to make transparent, unearned advantages and disadvantages. These reflexivity exercises build on her earlier work that outlines a number of benefits White people take for granted as entitlements due to unacknowledged dominance on the racialized hierarchy of oppression—a system socially constructed by the White male elite as stated throughout this

study.⁷

Derald Wing Sue (2004) helped me further understand the concept of “whiteness and ethnocentric monoculturalism” (p. 761). Hiding behind a false notion of colour blindness and belief in the level playing field as a fair, just, and equalizing practice invites a “denial of difference” and a “whiting out the difference” (p. 763). This denial of difference then becomes a default position that assumes sameness and equality, which really means a denial of the world’s unfair power imbalances and ignorance of culturally relevant information. Taking Sue’s argument further, we come to understand that this denial of existing power imbalances in society is what permits White people to deny unearned privileges and advantages.

And by couching racial discrimination in the rhetoric of equal treatment and opportunity, White Americans [and Canadians] perpetuate the false illusion that equality exists and that they serve no role in the oppression of others (p. 763).

The Western individualist dominant discourse—a narrative of fairness, equality, and North America as the ‘land of opportunity’—perpetuates a social system that sanctions discrimination and unjust practices, which cements in place racialized and gendered hierarchies (i.e. structures that uphold the superiority of White-skinned people and place non-whites in the Other/inferior position). Hiding behind this rhetoric allows those in the dominant category to ‘blame the victim’ or the Other for their lack of success. If we do not see it, if we do not name it, then we do not have to fix it.

Because these are invisible processes, they operate outside our consciousness and make it difficult to notice our unearned privilege. Roman (1993) argues that this ideological blindness results in ‘White defensiveness’, similar to other critical concepts such as Bannerji’s (1987) ‘common sense racism’, Kumsa’s (2007, as cited in Baines, 2007) ‘hurt privilege’, Ng, Staton,

⁷ For example: “I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time”; “I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented”; “When I am told about our national heritage or about ‘civilization,’ I am shown that people of my color made it what it is”; “I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race”; “I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group”; “I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world’s majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 2).

and Scane's (1995) expanded idea of 'commonsense sexism and racism', Razack's (2002) 'race to innocence', Henry, Tator, Mattis, and Rees's (2000) 'liberal racism' and more recently, DiAngelo's concept of 'White fragility' (2016). These concepts refer to the reactions White people frequently express when confronted with their complicity in perpetuating systems of dominance and oppression that benefit them and place at a disadvantage non-White peoples (Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & Defiore, 2002). Varcoe (2006) reassures us that the problem is not the whiteness of our skin colour but rather the uncritical acceptance of the privilege that whiteness bestows upon us. These beliefs perpetuate systems of oppression that are harmful to those in less privileged positions—all people of colour, and in Canada, Indigenous people in particular.

Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) ground-breaking book, *The Social Construction of Whiteness: White Women, Race Matters*, was one of the first studies to examine White women's understanding of how their race, gender, and sexuality intersect with class in their everyday lives. Based on 30 in-depth interviews with White women conducted in the early 1980s, Frankenberg's findings are organized into three categories, each describing how her participants thought about race. All of the participants tended to use the 'power evasive' language described in the following standpoints: 1) 'essentialist racism', meaning the focus is on a 'difference' discourse whereby race is viewed as an essential difference which accounts for existing racial inequalities due to biological inferiority; 2) 'colour and power evasion', meaning the focus is on a 'sameness' discourse, a position taken similar to 'colour blindness', whereby all people are the same regardless of skin colour—everyone has an equal chance to succeed and if one doesn't, it is one's own fault; and 3) 'race cognizance', meaning a 'difference' discourse articulated by people of colour and focused on the social, political, and historical causes of structural violence perpetuated by a White superiority discourse. Very few women in the study had reached the third stage of critical race consciousness, and even those self-identified anti-racist feminists had only an abstract understanding due to the racial segregation that most White women experience in their everyday lives, preventing meaningful contact with non-White people.

Valerie Hill-Jackson (2007) builds on Frankenberg's work by developing a curriculum within a critical 'whiteness' pedagogical framework for young White teachers. She identifies the following three stages of consciousness among her students as they work through her course material: 1) the 'unconscious stage', referring to an unexamined worldview of White dominance and colour blindness; 2) the 'responsive stage', referring to an openness to learning about other cultures while maintaining a hidden worldview of White superiority; and 3) 'critical consciousness', referring to the development of a new worldview that questions the social, political, and historical causes of structural violence, perpetuated by a White superiority discourse similar to the 'race cognizant' standpoint in Frankenberg's work. The importance of developing critical equity pedagogy for White professionals is evident in that White teachers continue to be the dominant force in the education field (Hill-Jackson, 2007). This is a similar situation for the social work profession in the United States, though I was not able to confirm a parallel situation in Canada (Pewewardy, 2004).

Although some scholars have addressed the need for culturally competent services for the VAW sector (Richie, 1996; Williams, 2006), according to Donnelley and her colleagues (2005) the dynamics of White privilege and colour blindness that marginalize women who experience IPV remain largely unexamined and under-theorized. These authors further assert, "White privilege is a pervasive, but often unrecognized, social problem" (p. 7) which frequently shapes service development in the VAW field, to the disadvantage of non-White women. In a descriptive, exploratory study conducted in 1995, 44 executive directors (of whom 42 participants were White women) from battered women's shelters in the southern United States were interviewed about their shelter's usage, the types of women most likely to use their service, and their understanding of women who might be underserved in their communities. Three themes were identified that confirm earlier studies on White privilege: 1) 'colour blindness', meaning that all battered women were alike and thus treated in the same fashion); 2) the 'othering of women of colour', meaning there are some differences among women, with

embedded negative stereotypes that placed women of colour in danger based on their social location; and 3) the view of the White woman as the norm and the measurement of all their interventions against that standard (Donnelly, Cook, van Ausdale & Foley, 2005).

The tenets of critical White race scholarship include: 1) Whiteness is a race; 2) Whiteness is a racial category worthy of critical interrogation that examines the underlying power relations of those persons with White skin privilege; 3) the process of racialization is a process that occurs for Whites as well as non-whites, Whiteness involving a process whose invisibility is self-serving to those who possess it; 4) there is a lack of awareness of Whiteness because it has been socially constructed as a dominant category that remains unmarked and identified as empty space—'White' becomes the standard and is seen as natural, normal, and neutral, against which every Other is measured; 5) oppression and dominance are what is at issue—not the socially constructed category of 'race', which is a meaningless concept, except as it perpetuates an unjust hierarchy of power arrangements; and 6) applying a critical social justice lens simultaneously requires an examination of inequities and privileges (DiAngelo, 2016, 2018; Donnelly, Cook, van Ausdale, & Foley, 2005; Frankenberg, 1993; Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & Defiore, 2002; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Hoagland, 2007; McIntosh, 1988, 1989; Pewewardy, 2004; Sue, 2004; Varcoe, 2006).

Despite the appearance of progressive values such as fairness and equality for all persons living in Canada, in contemporary times, there is no such thing as a level playing field—as members of marginalized communities are expert in recognizing. Within the current ideological framework of multiculturalism, 'liberal racism' (Henry et al., 2000) thrives and is a contemporary manifestation of colonial thinking. Varcoe (2006) explains the belief system in which most Canadians, including myself, have been educated, namely that all groups, whatever their history or relationship to the state, should be treated equally, regardless of historic inequalities—thus abandoning any sense of responsibility to repair and reconcile wrongdoings. Those who hold privilege are expected to be aware of or 'sensitive' to cultural differences, yet

they are not taught any sense of responsibility to correct the historic and current inequities and negative stereotyping experienced by those in the ‘Other’ category (Varcoe, 2006). In fact, our current cultural framework suggests that nonconformity to the dominant culture (i.e., any ‘minority culture’) is seen as the problem—this obscures social, economic, and political dynamics that disregard embedded historical practices of colonization, racism, and immigration (Henry et al., 2000). Canada thus continues to operate on the premise of such colonial beliefs and practices that ignore a long history of legalized racism, affecting in turn Indigenous peoples, Black Canadians, Chinese Canadians, South Asian Canadians, Japanese Canadians, and Jewish refugees.⁸ There are many more recent examples of colonialism, racism, and sexism embedded in our current immigration laws and policy practices, particularly targeting immigrant and refugee women and their families (Backhouse, 1999; Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 2000; Walker, 2008; Wallis & Kwok, 2008).

Nocona Pewewardy (2004), a critical White feminist scholar, offers useful insight for the social work profession and the VAW movement. She outlines both the political and the personal journey required of White social service practitioners if they are to engage in a critical social justice project for oppressed populations. She urges White people to take a leadership role in interrogating White privilege and theorizing whiteness for two reasons: 1) White workers are the dominant majority in social service professions; and 2) racism and White privilege are perpetuated primarily by White people. Further, she challenges the faulty assumption held by many White professionals that it is possible to address the empowerment of oppressed populations within existing unjust hierarchical power relations. She asserts that the avoidance

⁸ Examples include the following: the assimilationist Indian Act of 1876; legalized slavery of Black Canadians until the nineteenth century, later turning into segregation policies and limitations on their property rights; and the implementation of the Chinese Head Tax in 1885. Chinese men suffered terrible working conditions and were exploited while building the Canadian Pacific Railroad, working at 25% of the wages of White men only to be deported when there was no longer a labour shortage. In 1914, South Asians were detained on a boat off the west coast of Canada for more than two months, in deplorable living conditions, and then denied entry. World War II saw the refusal to allow the steamship SS St. Louis, carrying Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi holocaust in Germany in 1939, to land in Canada, so that they were sent back to Germany; and the internment of Japanese Canadians in 1942 (Backhouse, 1999; Henry et al., 2000; Walker, 2008; Wallis & Kwok, 2008).

surrounding White privilege impedes our ability to effectively address social justice issues.

Paulo Freire (2002) reminds us that the journey of developing a critical consciousness is not an easy one and that discovering one as an oppressor (and that one's ancestors, by extension, were oppressors) creates anguish and suffering. Pewewardy (2004) builds a case for the benefits White people will gain when we redress historical wrongs. First, she identifies the price White people pay for incomplete White consciousness when such consciousness is built on a foundation of untruths that then compromises our historical and contemporary integrity. The emotional costs of incomplete White consciousness are manifested in White defensiveness, White fragility, denial, guilt, insecurity, uncertainty, shame, and what Pewewardy refers to as a 'perpetual malaise'. She states, "The only remedies known to relieve the discomfort of incomplete White consciousness are reparations for past crimes against humanity and contemporary injustices" (p. 60).

In Indigenous scholarship, there is much written about the impacts of intergenerational trauma and cultural genocide on Indigenous peoples, and the ways to address both past and current "soul wounds" by treating their ancestors as well as their current clients. By providing alternative explanations for healing seven generations back and seven generations forward, Indigenous scholars and healers challenge the western view of pathological individualist explanations for human suffering (Duran & Duran, 1995). In a similar way, Pewewardy (2004) recognizes that, as a White person, she too carries a "soul wound that results from the cultural benefits of colonialism" (p. 63). Acknowledging that current White privilege is rooted in a long history of crimes against humanity, including cultural genocide, exploitation, and slavery, is the first step in making genuine amends, supporting Freire's (2002) earlier claim that knowledge without action does not lead to solidarity with the oppressed. The pursuit of right relations with oppressed groups must be accompanied by right actions for historical reparations. According to Edgington (2000), such action is a powerful remedy for White guilt and shame.

Summary of Critical Feminist Standpoints

In his book, *Research is Ceremony*, Shawn Wilson (2008), eloquently describes the essence of a critical theory in the following words:

Critical theory offers an alternative to the positivist and postpositive view in that it holds that reality is more fluid or plastic than one fixed truth. Critical theorists contend that reality has been shaped into its present form by our culture, gender, social and other values. The epistemology behind their research is that the investigator influences the subject and the inquiry through interaction with them. The researcher helps to mould reality through their influence upon it. The methodology of research from this paradigm then is to use transactions between the researcher and the subjects to have a more informed consciousness, with the final goal of seeing how to change and improve this fluid reality. There are numerous perspectives to critical theory, including feminist, race and class theories. Promoting change to improve society is a key to the methodology followed, as well as to the axiology behind the research (p. 36-37).

This chapter has provided an in-depth examination of my epistemological perspective embedded in the seven critical feminist standpoints I chose to study: 1) Intersectionality theory; 2) Indigenous feminist theory; 3) Black feminist theory; 4) Post-colonial feminist theory; 5) Queer feminist theory; 6) Disability feminist theory; and 7) Critical White feminist theory.

In summary, critical feminist perspectives and standpoints share some important tenets. First, critical feminist theorists challenge the traditional social sciences approach, which suggests that research is completely objective. Rather, critical feminist researchers theorize that the production of knowledge is socially constructed and value laden. They argue that the positionality of the researcher is central to the research project, and thus the researcher's social location is influential in shaping the research process. Second, critical feminist theorists employ an intersectional analysis to examine how multiple social identities and locations influence economic, cultural, social, political, and historical factors. This, in turn, shapes the lives of marginalized women living with violence and challenges the models that focus on universal or common struggles among women. Third, critical feminist theorizing is political work done in the service of focusing on structural inequalities that explores how power may be distributed more equitably. Fourth, critical feminist theorizing challenges the narrow descriptions of civil

rights and social movements, including feminist movement history. It documents the diversity among and within groups of women and embraces the multidimensional aspects of each individual woman's life. Fifth, critical feminist theory builds on women's sense of personal agency, documents their strengths, and shines light on their resiliency. Sixth, it proposes pathways for activism and decolonization strategies. Lastly, it attends to the relationship between the production and reproduction of knowledge, truth, discourse, and power relations (Collins, 2000; Enns, 2010; hooks, 1981; Smith, 2003; Swigonski & Raheim, 2011). The influence of French scholar Michel Foucault (1980) is evident throughout critical feminist theories on the reappearance and articulation of subjugated knowledges and unearthing those voices that have not been part of dominant discourses.

Critical feminist theorists ask the age-old question: "What does it mean to be a woman under different historical circumstances" (Brah & Phoenix, 2004, p. 1)? They begin from the position that there is not one feminist truth; rather, contemporary feminisms are "multivocal and polyphonic" (Swigonski & Raheim, 2011, p. 20). While women may share some common human experiences under a set of historical and current circumstances, these conditions are fluid rather than fixed, ever-changing rather than stable, and contestable, including even the assertion of being female. Critical feminist theorizing teaches us that women's lives are important to contextualize and that women embrace a multitude of views on countless aspects of life, such as their personal values related to marriage, family, and community, their political aspirations, their ethical principles, and their everyday interests. Rallying cries from the early days of the *second wave* movement, such as *Sisterhood Is Powerful* and *Sisterhood Is Global*, though inspiring solidarity for mainstream women, no longer carry the same theoretical or practical weight for marginalized women. In the words of Chandra Mohanty (1988), a post-colonial feminist scholar, "beyond sisterhood, there is still racism, colonialism and imperialism" (p. 77). The implications for the VAW movement, as a social movement, are profound and lead us to integrate higher level thinking and doing in our everyday movement work to not only

acknowledge but also critically challenge those systems that continue to oppress all women and their communities and find constructive ways to address their multiplicity of needs. The theoretical framework I propose in my dissertation may bring the mainstream VAW movement one step closer to opening these possibilities.

Social Movement Literature

Historically within the academic world, social movement studies sit at the crossroads of political science and sociology disciplines and has been critiqued by feminist scholars for its overreliance on male dominant understandings of social movement protest, disruption, movement activities, and the invisibility of women in movement work (Andrew, 2019). There are two significant bodies of literature on social movement theory developed prior to the 1980s, originating in what is commonly referred to as the European model and the North American model, which, for the most part, advanced in isolation of one another. In the European model the emphasis was on new social movement (NSM) theories, and in the North American model the emphasis was on the development of collective behaviours theory, resource mobilization theory and political process theory (Staggenborg & Ramos, 2016).

Classical social movement theories were rooted in collective behaviour theory, among others, with an emphasis on the psychology of movement participants and shared ideology precipitated often by some external event of injustice; originally, they were perceived as disconnected individuals acting out of a sense of great outrage (Staggenborg & Ramos, 2016). By the 1970s, social movement scholars developed resource mobilization theory with an emphasis on the structural issues facing movement participants (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). This view of social movements challenged earlier interpretations of social movement actors as 'irrational' by stating clearly that social movement actors were indeed rational actors who held a shared political goal and were intent upon securing resources, facilitating mobilization among citizens, and establishing working relations with the state and other elites such as private

foundations and philanthropists who could lend support to their cause. Political process theory (PPT) extended the social movement literature by suggesting that social movements are influenced by both internal and external factors and that political ‘windows of opportunity’ are created by particular political, social and economic circumstances which can be exploited by social movements in moments of both opportunity and threat (Tarrow, 1998). Further analysis of social movement theory in general is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

For my dissertation research, I paid particular attention to the body of work developed by feminist social movement scholars such as Nancy Naples (2003), Suzanne Staggenborg (1998, 2007), Verta Taylor (2000) and Nancy Whittier (1995). One of the most significant contributions of feminist theorizing related to social movements, particularly relevant to my dissertation research, is the concept of ‘abeyance’ to describe “the organizational and cultural processes that facilitated social movement survival in a hostile environment” (Taylor & Rupp, 2008, p. xiii). Since the early 1970s, popular images in the media and in the scholarly literature have taken up both expressions of delight and despair in the idea that the feminist movement was dead or at least in decline. Feminist scholars have disrupted that notion by challenging the fact that the everyday work of movement actors frequently continues between the more intense public moments of activism we witness amid the waves of feminist activism. In their classic study of a small but active group of aging suffragists in the 1950s, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women’s Rights Movement: 1945 to the 1960s*, Rupp and Taylor (1987) describe the activist work that occurs in the ‘troughs’ between the *first* and *second waves* of feminist activism. They assure us that the concept of ‘abeyance’, even though activist work appears to be less public, is nonetheless important and that continuing activist work offers an optimistic view for movement actors even though their activism might appear to be ‘scaled down’ or even invisible. Their theory suggests that at any time, feminism can re-emerge in the public eye as a movement full of passion and purpose, capturing the public imagination much like the current *#Me Too* movement (Booth, 2018).

As stated in the introduction to Chapter 1, social movement theorists frequently point to the VAW movement as an “exemplar of a movement with a cultural change agenda” (Klandermans, 1995, as cited in Lehrner & Allen, 2008, p. 220). There are several definitions of social movements in the literature. Earlier pioneering social movement theorist and political scientist Sidney Tarrow (1998) defines a social movement thus: “Collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities” (p. 4). For the purpose of my study, I use Weldon’s (2011) definition of a social movement as “a network of activists who attempt to change society, employing a wide range of tactics in a sustained confrontation with powerful opponents” (p. 189).

Sociologists David Snow and Sarah Soule (2010) suggest that social movements can be conceptualized in the following five ways: 1) as a counter force to challenge or defend structures or systems of authority that represent a dominant discourse; 2) as a collective voice rather than as individual actors; 3) as ‘extra-institutional challengers’ acting outside of the authority structures, either because they do not have access or because they do not wish to be associated with the institutions, often as a matter of principle; 4) as representing organized activities that could include both specific protest events and development of well-established networks of ongoing relationships; and lastly, 5) as having well-defined periods of temporal continuity.

As stated earlier in Chapter 1, the concept of the ‘framing perspective’ has become a popular tool through which to understand the meaning-making powers of social movements in defining the problem, maintaining momentum and producing sustainable change. Social movement actors not only act as transmitters of existing ideas but also as change agents in generating and preserving meaning for their constituents, challengers, and the public at large. This framing concept was first used in sociology by Erving Goffman (1974) in his classic work, *Frame Analysis*. This concept derives from the tradition of symbolic interactionism and social constructionist principles which suggests that meaning is not naturally assigned to particular

experiences and events, but rather that we construct and interpret meaning as it is negotiated through our cultural, gendered, social and political lens (Snow & Soule, 2010). When we apply the framing perspective to social movements, particular meaning-making activities can then be performed, contested, negotiated and renegotiated throughout the life span of a social movement. Activists and/or leaders must address three core framing tasks in social movement theory in their work: 1) diagnostic framing: defining the problematic or social condition needing to be resolved and assigning responsibility for the resolution of the problematized social condition; 2) prognostic framing: defining the types of activities in which social movement actors should engage, so as to remedy the problem; and lastly, 3) motivational framing: defining the best ways to inspire prospective citizens to engage in social movement work so as to establish a critical mass of support to tip the balance of power needed to create a paradigm shift.

In a similar fashion, social problem theorists lay out a number of stages that ‘claims makers’ or ‘social movement activists’ go through so as to make their concerns heard: 1) articulating an issue as problematic and garnering public support to understand it as a social problem; 2) receiving ‘official’ recognition that their claim is legitimate from those in power, such as the state or another legitimate authority; 3) resisting or rejecting outright the ‘official’ response; and lastly, 4) offering an opposing view of the social problem and proposing alternative solutions (Spector & Kitsuse, 2009). More recently, Joel Best (2013), an American sociologist also working within a social problems perspective, extends this analysis to include a six-stage ‘natural history’ model of the social problem process: 1) claims making; 2) media coverage; 3) public reaction; 4) policymaking; 5) social problems work; and lastly, 6) policy outcomes. Best (2013) creates a framework through which to think about the construction of the contemporary social problems facing activists, experts, policy makers and the public at large. Lastly, in Weldon’s (2013) cross-national comparison of 70 countries from 1975-2005, she comes to the conclusion that those countries with the most autonomous feminist movements are most likely to be the most effective in influencing policy reform that is responsive to eliminating

VAW. She states it in this way:

Our analysis reveals that the most important and consistent factor driving policy change is feminist activism. This plays a more important role than left-wing parties, numbers of women legislators, or even national wealth. In addition, our work shows that strong, vibrant domestic feminist movements use international and regional conventions and agreements as levers to influence policy-making. Strong local movements bring home the value of global norms on women's rights (p. 231).

VAW Research Literature

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods have made positive contributions to our increased knowledge in the area of woman abuse. Quantitative studies such as Johnson's (1993) classic VAWS study have provided disquieting statistics and prevalence rates that give us a better understanding of the extent of gendered violence, while qualitative research studies have shed light on in-depth experiences of how abuse impacts the everyday life of abused women (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Landenburger, 1989; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Moe, 2007; Richie, 1996).

Incidence and Prevalence Studies

In most countries across the globe, there is a higher prevalence of VAW than mainstream research puts forward for a number of reasons including different methodological approaches, dissimilar sampling methods, conflicting ideological stances, anti-feminist biases on the part of the researchers, (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2003; Heise, 1994; Johnson, 2005, 2011; Johnson, 2008; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy & Lozano, 2002). Increasingly, through the efforts of feminist scholars and activists, we now know that as many as 70% of women experience some form of physical or sexual violence by men, though most VAW remains unreported (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise & Watts, 2006; Krug et al., 2002). Some of those men are strangers, but most are men they know: husbands, intimate partners, male family members, and acquaintances in their communities. Alhabib, Nur, and Jones (2010) conducted a comprehensive systematic review of 134 prevalence studies specific to IPV, across six continents. While their findings expose an extensive variation in lifetime rates ranging from 2% to 70%, likely due to divergent

methodological approaches, they confirm the frequency and severity of the problem.

In Canada, as stated in Chapter 1, the VAWS study (1993)—the most in-depth exploration of women’s experience of violence across their lifetime—was conducted by Dr. Holly Johnston and a team of well-trained interviewers. It was the first national-level, dedicated study in the world and reported more than 50% of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16, and 29% of Canadian women who are married or living in a common-law relationship disclosed that they had been physically or sexually assaulted by their intimate partners (Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Sacco, 1995; Rodgers, 1994). This study constituted the first effort to use a crime victim survey approach, a social science tool available since the 1970s, to focus specifically on women’s experience of violence.

Dr. Johnson and her colleagues sought expert advice from researchers, frontline workers, specialists in the area of domestic violence, and survivors themselves. Because of the sensitive nature of this work, interviewers were trained specifically to deal with the gathering of such intimate information and were well informed of local resources if women requested help or were upset by the process of disclosing. The design and development phase of the project was lengthy. The first group testing and consultation enhanced the quality of the interview questions and ensured that sensitive interviewing skills were utilized. Unlike the Conflict Tactics Survey (CTS), which asks questions in terms of how couples settle differences, this survey took a unique approach specific to learning about women’s experience of male violence in their lives (Morse, 1995). A typical sample question was:

We are particularly interested in learning more about women’s experience of violence in their homes. I would like you to tell me if your husband/partner has ever done any of the following to you. This includes incidents that may have occurred while you were dating:

- Threatened to hit you with his fist or anything else that could hurt you
- Threw something at you that could hurt you
- Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you

- Slapped you
- Kicked, bit, or hit you with his fist
- Hit you with something that could hurt you
- Beat you up
- Choked you
- Threatened to use a gun or knife on you
- Forced you into any sexual activity when you did not want to, by threatening you, holding you down, or hurting you in some way.

This type of question demonstrates that context is important, and that gender-neutral language hides reality. The in-depth data that was collected is still being analyzed so as to achieve a greater understanding of the reality of Canadian women's lives. This study has become a model of best practice research that is being emulated in a number of countries around the world (Johnson, Ollus, & Nevala, 2007). Despite the world-class status of the VAWS study, in Canada the high prevalence rates met with shock, disbelief and rage from some members of the mainstream and fueled father's rights groups, which had a stake in challenging the VAWS findings. The truth of women's lives being made public was unforgivable and it unleashed a backlash that our country and the VAW movement have yet to recover from. A significant body of literature and research developed to both defend and challenge the VAWS finding: it is known as the 'gender symmetry' debate. As a result of the backlash, Statistics Canada retreated from its gender-specific analysis of VAW and all subsequent studies have focused on both men's and women's experience of violence, without a gender-based analysis of the methodology or the findings. For example, Statistics Canada (2000, 2005) reported that an estimated 653,000 women and 546,000 men, representing 8% of all Canadian women and 7% of Canadian men, had experienced some form of spousal abuse in the previous five years. These statistics do not reflect the reality of the violence in women's lives nor do they make transparent the methods used in the surveys. They also do not provide for a more in-depth analysis of the findings. There is controversy over the methodology used in the surveys, with critics highlighting that the questions decontextualized acts of violence and failed to capture the

different meanings, motives and contexts for the violence assigned by men and women to their experiences of abuse in their intimate relationships.

For this reason, Johnson's VAWS 1993 study is still considered the international gold standard (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2003; Johnson & Dawson, 2011; Sinclair, 2003). However, even if we accept at face value the much lower rates of spousal violence and the apparent gender symmetry that Statistics Canada reported, women are still more at risk than men. Delving deeper into the data, feminist researchers revealed very critical differences in the seriousness of harm inflicted: twice as many women as men reported being physically beaten as well as having a gun or knife used against them; five times as many women as men reported being strangled; five times as many women required medical attention; and finally, more than six times as many women as men reported being sexually assaulted (Jiwani, 2000). Clearly, the current evidence suggests that by virtue of being female, a woman is substantially more at risk of significant harm and for this reason governments around the world have declared women a vulnerable population (UNDP, 1995; United Nations General Assembly, 2006).

Clarke and Dumont (2003), in a systematic review of 16 Canadian IPV prevalence studies, found a paucity of empirical data, and of those studies that did exist there was a wide range of statistics, between 0.4% and 23% of women experiencing IPV. Several factors contribute to the difficulties in ascertaining accurate prevalence data, including women's reluctance to disclose IPV to authorities, interviewer's skill level to facilitate a survivor's full disclosure, methodological variations in data collection methods, ideological distinctions in how to understand and analyse IPV, and different definitions of IPV. The economic costs of VAW for social services, health, criminal justice, and lost wages and productivity are conservatively estimated at 4.2 billion dollars per year in Canada (Johnson, 2006).

Impact of IPV Studies

Impact studies suggest the long-term effects of VAW on women's health are often

underestimated (Thomas, Joshi, Wittenberg & McCloskey, 2008). These studies indicate woman abuse has been linked to serious illness and poor health conditions, such as substance use, mental health concerns, gastrointestinal disorders, chronic pain syndromes, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, gynecological complications such as unwanted pregnancy, forced abortion, and premature labour and birth, as well as injuries to women's unborn children (Beydoun, Beydoun, Kaufman, Lo & Zonderman, 2012; Krug et al., 2002; Simmons, Knight & Menard, 2018; Wong & Mellor, 2014; MacIntosh, Wuest, Ford-Gilboe, & Varcoe, 2015).

Emerging research suggests that 64 to 94% of battered women may develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Campbell, 2002), and as many as 50% of women who escape to VAW shelters suffer from a major depression (Golding, 1999). In one longitudinal Canadian study, more than 50% of the women continued to experience disruptive stress symptoms a year and a half after having left the abusive relationship; these symptoms include feelings of anxiety, depression, and grief, along with sleeping difficulties. In the same study, one third of the women were taking anti-depressants, three times more than women in non-abusive relationships (Ford-Gilboe, Wuest, Varcoe, & Merritt-Gray, 2006). For women who struggle with addictions, the stigma and shame of their experience are even greater. Rates of IPV are substantially higher among women in substance abuse treatment programs. In an Ontario study of nine such treatment programs, 56% of the participants disclosed experiencing abuse in their intimate relationships (Cormier, Dell & Poole, 2004). Feminist research challenges dominant androcentric views in the addictions field by suggesting that substance use by women and girls results in greater harm to their health, and risk factors such as IPV place them in even more vulnerable situations (Bennett & O'Brian, 2007).

More specifically, an examination of the VAW service provision literature demonstrates the vast body of knowledge generated as a result of the pioneering work of the VAW movement, among them studies related to women's experience of violence (Landenburger, 1989); their process of change (Khaw & Hardesty, 2007); their help-seeking patterns (Moe,

2007); their reasons for staying in and leaving an abusive relationship (Anderson & Saunders, 2003); their experiences leaving an abusive relationship (Davies, 2013; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Ford-Gilboe, Wuest, Varcoe & Merritt-Gray, 2006) and the barriers that impede women's ability to live free of violence (Barnett, 2000, 2001; Dragiewicz, 2012; McMahon & Pence, 2003; Sinclair, 2014). As well, there are a number of effectiveness studies to determine whether VAW organizations, also known as social movement organizations (SMO's) are able to meet their goals of providing quality service to abused women and their families (Lutenbacher, Cohen, & Mitzel, 2003; Tutty, Weaver & Rothery, 1999; Zosky, 2011, to name but a few). Indeed, Weldon's research on social movements was particularly helpful in placing these achievements of the VAW movement within an empirically-based research framework.

Feminist-Informed Case Studies

According to Shulamit Reinharz (1992), "The women's movement itself, as an historical phenomenon and as a social movement, has been the subject of numerous sociological case studies by feminist scholars" (p.173). One of the very first case studies in Western feminist literature was conducted by social worker, then philosopher, Jessie Taft who completed her doctoral thesis, entitled, *The Woman Movement from the Point of View of Social Consciousness*, in 1913. Jo Freeman (1975), American political scientist and legal scholar, wrote one of the earliest case studies of the emerging *second wave* of the women's liberation movement in the United States, entitled *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and its Relation to the Policy Process*, paying particular attention to the movement's impact on the policy process. Since that time, feminist researchers have conducted groundbreaking case studies that capture the relationship between particular individual experiences (cases) and societal arrangements structured by hierarchical gender, race, class or other oppressive and discriminating relations. For example, Ann Jones (1980, 1996), American political science and legal scholar, exposed the first gender-based understanding of the different

contexts between women and men who kill, thus deepening our understanding about prevalence, motive and outcome, and the societal implications, in her ground-breaking case study, *Women Who Kill*.

Catherine McKinnon, (1979), American legal scholar, combined case study and case law to conduct the first in-depth analysis of the sexual harassment of women in their work settings, an essential foundational tome for feminist scholars and activists, in her book, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*. Erin Pizzey (1974), founding member of Chiswick House, the first shelter for battered women in the Western world, describes in detail, in her classic book *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours will Hear*, both the organizational challenges of developing a shelter and the life stories, struggles and successes of battered women who sought refuge. Instrumental in raising public awareness of the plight of abused women, this book inspired women around the world to create safe spaces for women who needed to escape violence in their intimate relationships.

From these early examples of feminist-informed case studies, we see the powerful impact of creating alternative discourses through the documentation of women's histories and life experiences. In the words of Shulamit Reinharz (1992), "case studies are essential for putting women on the map" (p. 174) and making visible the voices of women for future study and action on behalf of future generations. Bringing it back to my study, one of the goals is to put the voices of activists in the VAW movement in Ontario on the map as a means to expand on current knowledge which often exists within an historical vacuum of movement history.

VAW Social Movement Studies

In regard to the VAW social movement literature, there is a growing body of research that eloquently documents the history of the VAW movement, particularly in the US and Great Britain (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Miller, 2010; Schechter, 1982). In Canada, significant contributions to the history of the women's liberation movement are revealed through the

individual memoirs of ground-breaking activists, including Doris Anderson (1996), Dionne Brand (2009), Rosemary Brown, (1989), Marie Campbell, 1973), Michele Landsberg (2011) and Judy Rebick (2005). Although these authors were not solely focused on issues specific to the VAW movement, they provide an invaluable picture of women's activism in the Canadian landscape during these past five decades.

Gillian Walker's (1990) seminal text in institutional ethnography chronicles the tensions that developed in the 1970s and 1980s as feminists claimed their activist space for not only naming the critical issue of VAW, but also demanding a seat at the table so as to direct the state and associated professionals and sectors in how they should do their work to end violence against women. Walker clearly lays out the ways in which activists were marginalized and their language and intentions coopted by the state. The state placed emphasis on a gender-neutral, individualist, reductionist lens, much to the disillusionment of activists across the country. Walker interviewed major figures at the federal and provincial levels, attended and observed national and provincial conferences, as well as conducted an in-depth analysis of key texts that were pivotal at that time.

Nancy Janovicek's (2007) critical analysis of the battered women's shelter movement in Canada is an important contribution to feminist literature. She pays particular attention to rural and isolated areas in the country, with a noteworthy desire to understand and articulate the specific needs of Indigenous women and their families. Her study shines a light on four case studies of local histories of the battered women's shelter movement, two of which are located in Ontario, specifically Thunder Bay and Kenora, one in Moncton, New Brunswick, and another in Nelson, British Columbia. She articulates the unique challenges of activist organizing in non-urban spaces and their strategies for engaging with the public and the state.

Other research reveals particular aspects of the complex issues facing the battered women's movement in the United States, such as Donnelly, Cook, van Ausdale, and Foley's (2005) work examining the colour blindness of shelter services in the Deep South. Very few

studies, (Bonisteel & Green, 2005; Finley, 2010; Maier, 2008; Meyer, 2001; Morgaine, 2009; Riger, 1994; Rodgers & Knight, 2011; Stark, 2007), however, assess the state of the VAW movement in terms of its social change agenda. Those that do tend to offer a disheartening ‘declining or non-existent’ narrative frame of the VAW movement’s social change agenda by resting responsibility for its decline on three central problems: 1) the professionalization of women’s advocates and organizations; 2) the co-optation of VAW knowledge and language by the government and by the institutional sectors that were challenged, such as criminal justice, family law, child welfare and health care; and 3) the silencing of sociopolitical feminist analysis by activists in the movement (Bonisteel & Green, 2005; Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009).

Lehrner and Allen (2009) suggest that the meaning-making narratives of the domestic violence movement have been de-politicized, degendered, and individualized and that the radical social change roots of the early VAW movement have been largely unknown, forgotten, ignored, or dismissed. In their study of 21 advocates working in domestic violence agencies, – only 11 of the advocates held a ‘movement action’ frame, meaning they “believed in the necessity of fundamental sociocultural change to end domestic violence as well as a shift in social responses to individual victims and perpetrators” (p. 220). Those ‘first-generation’ activists pined for the early days of radical and passionate activism. They co-existed alongside advocates who held an “apolitical, degendered, individual-level analysis” frame - some having no awareness of a sociopolitical analysis while others were unaware of the existence of a VAW movement at all (Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009). Some of the advocates held narratives that were contradictory, using social movement language, i.e. power and control, as an organizing tool but with little understanding of the root causes of VAW at a structural level.

Arnold and Ake (2013) offer a refreshing reframing of the ‘declining or non-existent’ narrative frame by challenging Lehrner and Allen’s (2008, 2009) findings in two ways: 1) suggesting that these authors have ignored the ways that mainstream/first-generation activists have committed themselves to learn from their previous mistakes and provide ongoing,

innovative self-correction; and 2) stating that another ignored aspect in the research is the voices of ‘second-generation’ activists, often the voices of minority women who came of age in the 1990s and who direct their gaze to community-level engagement and grassroots volunteer coalitions shifting away from mainstream domestic violence agencies. These ‘second generation’ activists tend to wholeheartedly embrace an intersectionality-oriented perspective that addresses all aspects of violence against women, including sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls, prison and police brutality, racism, classism, poverty, immigrant and refugee rights, and LGBTQIA rights. These authors also highlight five issues in which ‘first generation’ activists have made significant contributions, leading to improvement in the following areas: feminist mental health interventions, shelter policies, burnout and vicarious trauma programs, economic empowerment programs and changes to the criminal justice system to honour the voices of the women they serve.

Understanding the complex issues facing marginalized women and their communities, Arnold and Ake’s participants see the benefit of collaborating with other social justice movements. Gender equality is no longer the single focus of their movement to the exclusion of other forms of oppression and discrimination that are equally and sometimes more harmful. Arnold and Ake (2013) suggest that the work of both generations of activists is critical in sustaining movement success, sharing knowledge, and learning new and innovative ways of engaging the community in cultural change work. Unfortunately, however, fewer theoretical and empirical studies on the VAW movement as a social change movement have been conducted, especially through the eyes of long-time activists like myself (for some exceptions see Fraser, 2014; Lehner, 2008, 2009; Miller, 2010; Timothy, 2007). Moreover, most of these studies focusing on social change were conducted in the United States; few have been done in Canada and even fewer in Ontario. This opening is the research space that my study addresses. I build on these studies by inserting the voices of activists who began their work during the first two decades of the VAW movement and continued their activist work until the time of their

interview thus spanning 20 to 50 years of collective activism in Ontario, representing more than 800 years of experience.

Chapter 3: Design and Methods

As a critical feminist scholar, I embrace feminist methodologies that challenge the historic queries regarding the siloing of theory and method, the male dominated bias embedded in positivism and most importantly, the socially constructed hierarchies that constrain who is considered acceptable producers of knowledge (Ramazanoglu, 2002; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). I chose to use a feminist approach for this case study because I wanted to understand the activists' standpoint from their lived experience as movement activists who helped shape the VAW movement in Ontario. A feminist analysis of the VAW movement begins from the standpoints of women. In particular, an intersectional feminist analysis begins from the standpoint of diverse women who embrace the tenets of critical feminist standpoint theory as outlined in Chapter 2. It is these activists' standpoint that I centre in this study. These are the voices of the participants in this study, the voices of a diverse group of Ontario feminists. Feminist methodology offers an infinite choice of research methods and strategies to study a broad range of topics. In Sandra Harding's classic work, *Feminism and Methodology* (1987), she defines method as the techniques we use to gather evidence, whereas methodology offers us both the theory and the analysis to understand our research process. In that way, the method we use is not necessarily a feminist method, but the methodology can be defined in feminist terms. Feminist research is then best characterized by its epistemological underpinnings rather than by its methods. In articulating my epistemic stance, I locate my work within a critical feminist paradigm which is understood as a set of assumptions and beliefs that guide our thinking, whether or not we are consciously aware of them (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 2005; Smith, 1987).

I define a theory in the following manner: as a set of interrelated ideas that offers a systematic way to organize our thinking and make sense of the perplexities of life, helps us understand how to think about complex topics, and guides our social work practice and

interventions (Ramazanoglu, 2002). In considering the role of theory in my methodological design, I had to ask: 1) What are the connections between theory and ontology? What is the nature of reality? What is the nature of knowing (epistemology) and what counts as legitimate knowledge/evidence? What are the ethics that guide our research and determine what is worthy of study (axiology)? (Wilson, 2008); 2) What counts as a feminist research project? 3) What is a feminist methodology? and 4) Is there a difference between methodology and method? (Ramazanoglu, 2002).

In the tradition of Nancy Naples (2003), I found that the process of naming my theoretical orientation meant unpacking epistemological assumptions I made about how knowledge is produced, and what counts as evidence as I engaged in this research project. This study was a qualitative case study, and recruitment was provincial in scope. My doctoral dissertation was carried out in accordance with the ethics protocol approved by the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (REB) on July 29, 2014. In this chapter, I describe my design, methodology and the methods, as well as the rationale. Feminist scholars have devoted much study to addressing the limitations of traditional positivist methodology (Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Reinharz, 1992). As a result of these considerations and with the research question (see Chapter 1, p.10) driving the theoretical assumptions and the methods, I conducted a qualitative study using an intrinsic case study approach drawing on three sources of evidence, including in-depth, semi-structured interviews, a member-checking group, and a review of key policy documents, often referred to as triangulation in the literature (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). An intrinsic single case study allows for in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of a social movement, which according to Stake (2005, p.450) is a sufficient reason to focus on a single case 'within its own world' so as to better understand a social phenomenon in all its richness. More specifically, I was drawn to a case study methodology because it permitted me to fully immerse myself in a social phenomenon such as a social movement to explore the experiences of early activists in the VAW movement who have lived this movement as a daily part of their

life's work. Specifically, the unit of analysis here was the VAW movement in Ontario from 1973 to 1993, which involved collectively raising up the voices of those social movement actors and their perspectives on the evolution of the movement. I located the beginning of this study as the 1973 opening of Interval House in Toronto, Ontario, the first shelter for women in Canada who were searching for freedom from violence in their intimate relationships. I chose 1993 as my end point because I wanted all the participants to have some knowledge of the period prior to the backlash that occurred in Ontario in 1995, with the election of the Conservative government led by Premier Mike Harris.

Case Study Methodology

A case is defined as “a unit of human activity embedded in the real world” that must be studied within a particular context, “bounded” within time and place, thus making the results of the research temporally and spatially dependent as a snapshot of history (Gillham, 2000, p. 1).

Other definitions of case studies include:

- 1) “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single phenomenon or social unit” (Merriam, 1988, p. 21);
- 2) a research process, meaning “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear” (Yin, 1994, p. 13);
- 3) the “study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances,” (Stake, 1995, p. xi), and
- 4) “an in-depth study of a bounded system” (Creswell, p. 77).

There are three types of categories of case studies as outlined by Robert Stake (1995), a case study scholar and methodologist, in his classic text, *The Art of Case Study* (1995). They are: 1) the intrinsic case study; 2) the instrumental case study; and 3) the collective case study. The category that best suits my research study is the intrinsic case study because it is exploratory in

nature and permits me, as the researcher, to develop a deeper and holistic understanding of the particularities and context of the social movement I am focused on. Stake (1994) suggests that intrinsic case studies “draw the researcher toward understanding of what is important about the case within its own world, not so much the world of researchers and theorists, but developing its issues, contexts, and interpretations” (p. 242). Using this case study method permits me to explore in depth the uniqueness and complexities of a social phenomenon that is bounded both in time and space using a social movement as my unit of analysis. This approach also aligns with my epistemic stance as a critical feminist researcher because it allows me to engage both the participants and the reader as integral associates in the study of reconstructing our experiences and perspectives of a social movement. A single intrinsic case study is best defined in the following manner:

An intrinsic case study is the study of a case (e.g., person, specific group, occupation, department, organization) where the case itself is of primary interest in the exploration. The exploration is driven by a desire to know more about the uniqueness of the case rather than to build theory or how the case represents other cases (Grandy, 2010, p. 500).

Additional decisions I had to make in choosing the type of case study I wanted to conduct included whether the analytic strategy was a ‘holistic’ analysis, meaning an exploration of the entire case or an ‘embedded’ analysis in the sense that a specific aspect of the case would be examined (Creswell, 2007). In my research, I chose a ‘holistic’ analysis and used the VAW movement in Ontario as my unit of analysis. This should not imply that I examined every aspect of the entire social movement as a case, which is not only beyond the scope of this dissertation but also not its purpose. It did mean, however, that my focus on a select number of ‘candidate’ (meaning the emerging but not final) themes presented to the participants in the member-checking group for their review and approval as articulated by my participants permitted me to better understand the complexity of this case study even though I am not able to generalize the findings beyond this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007).

I am, however, able to provide a richly layered, descriptive narrative or ‘thick’ description

of the participants' accounts of their experiences and perspectives in the VAW movement. In this study, I draw on Denzin's (1983) words to best describe the meaning of the word 'thick', a term unique to qualitative research which does the following:

presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships. Thick description invokes emotionality and self-feelings. It establishes the significance of an experience or sequence of events. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. It captures and records the voices of 'lived experience' (p.83).

Six specific characteristics of the case study method honoured in this study are:

- a focus on the interrelationships comprising the historical and/or current context of a specific entity;
- a process of telling a story holistically that is richly and 'thickly' filled with detail to describe a real event or phenomenon;
- an analysis of the contextual features and the phenomenon under examination;
- an effort to tackle 'how' and 'why' questions;
- a use of these answers to generate new theory or to expand on existing theory;
- an attempt to understand the specificities of a phenomenon within the wider sociopolitical and historical social relations (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010; Snow & Trom, 2002).

While other qualitative researchers may also use multiple sources of evidence, a unique feature of the case study methodology stresses the use of triangulation, meaning the convergence of multiple sources of evidence that strengthen the findings. It is the use of multiple sources of evidence in a case study approach that provides an in-depth, holistic and rich account of a social phenomenon—of a particular period that is bound in time and place (Snow & Trom, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

In relation to the role of theory in a case study, there is much debate in the literature. Key case study scholars and researchers offer us an array of choices (e.g. Stake, 1999; Yin,

2014). Whereas Creswell (2007) advises that theory can be developed at the end of the case study and then compared and contrasted to theories external to the case study, University of Waterloo case study researcher, Dr. L. Harling (2002), with whom my own view is most compatible, advises that existing literature can serve as a beginning point to our research study in that it provides us with direction and structure and assists us to zero in on an argument based on the literature. He suggests that the data gleaned in the research study permits the researcher to use the existing theory to ‘filter and organize’ the data emerging in the study and to compare the findings of the case study to the existing literature, cautioning us not to pre-determine or fit the findings into the existing theories but rather use the existing theory to open up the case study to see if the findings confirm, strengthen, challenge, or extend existing literature related to the case study. I am particularly taken with the notion that as researchers, we should not ignore previous scholarship as irrelevant but rather have a responsibility to account for inconsistencies or inadequacies that may exist in comparing and/or contrasting our study results with the existing literature. Stake (1995) supports the view that even if the results of a case study do not generate a new theory, the case study still holds the potential to expand our knowledge; as more case studies are conducted, the case study methodology literature is strengthened in its usefulness. Thus, in this kind of a case study, it was helpful to immerse myself in the existing literature so that I did not make the erroneous assumption of a novice researcher that because a theory is new to me, it is new to the field. In so doing, I could make the error of having nothing to add to existing theory in my chosen area of study.

While case study theory was clearly the principal methodology employed in this study design, it was also well-suited to a feminist methodology, located within a critical feminist theoretical framework, as outlined in Chapter 2. Several feminist scholars use a case study approach to examine in-depth phenomenon, particularly social movements (Ferree & Mueller, 2004; Freeman, 1975; Goodwin & Jasper, 2014; Mendez & Naples, 2014; Staggenborg & Taylor, 2005).

Research Question

I began this study with an interest in critically analyzing the past five decades of the VAW movement in Ontario. Given that the VAW movement has been home to me for much of my life, I was interested in recognizing the successes, identifying failures and unanticipated consequences, articulating lessons learned, understanding the impact of movement work on movement actors and on the movement as a whole, documenting wisdom and legacy contributions for generations of future activists, and lastly and most importantly for me, as a feminist activist social worker, discovering the implications this study would have for the social work profession.

I chose to focus on social movement activists because I see them as experts who had devoted their lives to listening, believing and supporting the legions of women they encountered over the lifetime of their work. These activists helped build the social movement necessary to support the individual and collective lives of women, and thus they are the focus of my dissertation research. With this perspective in mind, I arrived at the overarching research question for my study:

How have the experiences of early activists from 1973-1993 shaped the violence against women (VAW) movement, as a social movement in Ontario?

Within the framework of this overarching question, I explored several procedural sub-questions through in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007), including such topic areas as their early reflections on how they became activists, their initial theoretical understandings of VAW work, how those theoretical understandings evolved over the years, their experiences in the VAW movement, their insights into the evolution of the VAW movement, such as moments of resistance and transformation, their observations of how doing VAW activism impacts their lives and the life of the VAW movement, including what sustains them in their activism, and lastly, their wisdom about identifying gains and successes of the VAW movement, lessons learned, and future efforts to reenergize the VAW movement and move it forward. These

questions are contained in an interview guide (see Appendix G) and include the specific areas explored in each interview.

This chapter addresses: 1) the study design and the rationale for choosing a case study approach, more specifically, a feminist-informed case study approach; 2) the process of data collection, including the sample and inclusion criteria, the recruitment strategies, the multiple methods employed to achieve triangulation—a hallmark feature of case study methodology—including interviews, a member-checking group, document review, field notes, ethical considerations, reflexivity, and the social location of myself as the participant/researcher; and lastly, 3) the data analysis process where I draw on the scholarship of Braun and Clarke (2006) to guide me in developing the ‘candidate’ themes in the data, nested within a holistic intrinsic case study design.

Recruitment

I used the following recruitment strategies to engage the participants in this qualitative study. The participants are well-known public figures in the VAW movement in Ontario and their contact information was easily accessible through VAW websites. I had access to their contact information since I had worked with all of them at various points throughout my career. The participants were not anyone that I had supervised, had in my employ, or worked with as a client. This study was completely voluntary to the participant.

I first contacted participants by email and invited them to participate in the study (refer to Appendix H for the email invitation to participate in the study). Following each participant’s positive response, arrangements were made to have a telephone conversation addressing any questions the participant may have had about the study and their involvement. Once their interest in the study was established and I received their verbal consent to participate, I arranged a convenient time and place to meet and at that time, I had them review and sign the written consent form prior to our interview (Appendix E).

During the informed consent process, I sought their permission to video and/or digitally record the interview. The rationale to videotape as well as digitally record the interviews is that these participants are rarely interviewed; many of them were reaching retirement age and there likely would not have been another opportunity to have their voices formally documented in this way. Aspects of these interviews may be of great interest to various Canadian women's historical archives and future projects. However, none of the participant's data would ever be shared without the participant's full consent. The videotaping is for *future* archival purposes not for current study analytical purposes – only the *text* was proposed for analyses. The original REB submission was revised and approved by the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board on July 29, 2014 to include videotaping. Please note that Appendix E has been revised to reflect these changes.

Once consent was obtained, each participant filled out a brief demographic form (Appendix F). Participants were again assured that their participation was voluntary and if they wished to withdraw from the study, they would be permitted to do so at any time in the study. Of the 22 participants, none withdrew from the study. Twenty-one of the participants expressed a desire to maintain their public identity throughout the study and therefore not have their data delinked. The one participant who requested to be anonymous in the study will, at her request, receive her audiotaped interview and transcript at the end of the study for her own archival records. Participants were given the option to ask to turn off the recording at times when they may have wanted to speak off the record. When this request occurred, I turned off the recording, thus, confidentiality regarding sensitive issues was always ensured.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed because it is a useful non-probability sampling method that assisted me in the selection of suitable and particular participants for this study. Purposive sampling means that “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can

purposively inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p.125). Participants were intentionally selected to allow for multiple perspectives reflecting a variety of critical feminist standpoints from their experience working in a range of sectors, including: 1) the legal system, 2) the shelter system, 3) the health care system, 4) the education system, 5) advocacy and coalition groups, 6) direct service providers, and 7) policy advisors who are experts in both representing and shaping the face of the VAW movement in Ontario. My inclusion criteria for the sampling strategy comprised activists who: 1) began their work during the period between 1973 and 1993⁹; 2) had a minimum of 20 years of direct experience in the VAW movement; 3) had been active in the VAW movement until the present time of this study; 4) were currently living in various parts of the province of Ontario, including both urban and rural spaces; 5) represented the various sectors as stated above; and 6) had both a local and a provincial focus in their VAW work.

I chose a purposive sample of activists who began their work within the first two decades of this particular stage of the VAW movement known as the *second wave* and who had continued their activist work until the present time. I recruited 22 individuals to interview for my research study—21 participants and one key informant. This sample included my interview as a participant in the research; I was interviewed by a colleague, allowing me to pre-test the interview guide. The participants participated in semi-structured interviews in Ontario between December 2014 and June 2018. The majority of the interviews took place in Toronto and Ottawa, Ontario, either at my office or at a place of convenience for the participant. The participants worked in a variety of settings and represented several sectors over the course of their work lives. Five participants were working in rural communities, while 17 participants worked in urban communities; all participants had a provincial focus in their work and

⁹ I chose this period specifically because Interval House in Toronto, Ontario, first opened its doors on April 1, 1973, although two participants in my study actually began their feminist activism prior to 1973. I chose 1993 as my end point because I wanted all the participants to have some knowledge of the period prior to the backlash that occurred in Ontario in 1995, with the election of the Conservative government led by Premier Mike Harris.

frequently travelled across the province as an important aspect of their work, either as a consultant, trainer, speaker, and/or participant in local activities.

All 22 participants identified as cis women¹⁰ who began their activist work in the VAW movement in Ontario during the period from 1973 to 1993, frequently referred to as the onset of the *second wave* of the women's liberation movement. The activists in this research study were well-educated, both formally and informally. All had achieved a post-secondary education; five participants had college degrees from several disciplines, two in Child and Youth Services, one in Social Services, and two in an Assaulted Women's Counselling and Advocacy Program. Eleven women had Bachelor's degrees from various disciplines: Sociology, Criminology, Political Science, Women's Studies, Business, International Studies, Latin American Studies, and Social Work. Five women had graduate degrees, including two with a Master's degree in Social Work, one with a Master's degree in Political Science, one with a Master's degree in Business and Management, and one with a PhD in Criminology. One participant had a law degree in family law. All participants defined themselves as life-long learners and continually accessed educational pursuits. All of the study participants continue their feminist activism in various forms until the present day.

At the time of the interview, six participants were Executive Directors (ED) of VAW shelters, four participants were EDs of VAW-related agencies—a legal clinic, an educational resource centre, a community health centre and a provincial organization representing more than two hundred immigrant-serving agencies across Ontario. Five participants were employed in post-secondary educational settings—three were teaching full-time in a college program specifically focused on VAW issues, one was a university professor in Criminology and one was working in a university setting at one of Canada's Centers of Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children in London, Ontario; three participants were independent

¹⁰ A cis woman or a cisgender person is the term for people whose sex assignment at birth and subsequent socialization are the same as their gender identity. The majority of people are cisgender. (DiAngelo, 2016, p.333). A cis woman can be either lesbian or straight.

consultants specializing in several areas of VAW work, such as trauma-specific therapy, policy work, anti-racist, anti-oppression (ARAO) training and writing VAW-related articles, books, training curriculums, etc. One participant was a Legal Director of a family law clinic specifically devoted to assisting abused women in navigating the family law system, and another participant was a recently retired senior policy analyst/manager working directly on VAW issues for the province who chose, post-retirement, to work as a volunteer board member of a rural VAW shelter. All participants were immersed in some aspect of VAW activism at the time of the interviews and continue to work as activists to this day. None of the participants expressed an interest in retiring from feminist activism. As one participant conveyed, “You do not retire from something you love and from work that is your life purpose”. This sentiment was shared by many of the participants.

A number of participants had received several public honours and awards—such as the Order of Ontario, the Order of Canada, Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case, YWCA Women of Distinction Awards, the Rosemary Brown Award, and the Premier's Award—in recognition of their leadership and achievements as activists, and several participants had received honorary doctorates, in some cases more than one. All participants were life-long learners and engaged in continuing education programs throughout their lives and careers.

A participant's time in the field of activism ranged from a minimum of 20 years up to 48 years at the time of the interview. Eight participants began their activism in the 1970s, 12 in the 1980s, and two in the 1990s. Over the course of their careers, participants held a wide range of roles and positions in their work; the majority of the participants started their activism in the frontlines of rape crisis centres, women's shelters, child and youth shelters, and women's centres on university campuses.

At the time of their interview for this research, six of the participants were Executive Directors for women's shelters; six were teaching in college or university settings; three were

independent consultants engaged in policy development work, development and delivery of training and prevention programs and curriculums (ARAO, legal advocacy, trauma-informed practice, etc.), writing, expert witness work, and counselling and clinical consultation; one was the Legal Director of a family law clinic; one was an Executive Director of a community health centre; one was an Executive Director of a provincial association for immigrant-serving centres; and one had been a long-standing Manager and Senior Policy Advisor in the Ontario government who had recently retired from her position and engaged as a Board member and volunteer at a rural women's shelter. Collectively this group of participants had more than 800 years of experience specializing in feminist activism, with a specific focus on aspects of VAW work (see Tables 1 and 2 for details).

Table 1: Activist Characteristics of Participants

Activist Characteristics of Participants	
Age	
40–49	5
50–59	8
60–69	8
70–79	1
Race/Ethnicity (self-identified)	
Black (Black Woman; Caribbean Ancestry; African Caribbean)	4
Indigenous (Aboriginal; First Nation—Blackfoot Descent)	3
Bi-racial	1
White (White European—fifth generation; Canadian-Irish-Scottish; White European; Lebanese American-Canadian; Caucasian; Slavian/Croatian, Canadian—first generation immigrant; Ukrainian-Irish—third generation; Italian; Irish French (Anglo-Saxon); Jewish; German-Irish—fifth generation.	14
Education	
College degree	5
Bachelor's degree (included 1 BSW)	11
Graduate degree (included 2 MSWs)	5
Law degree	1
Honorary degree (included in Bachelor's degree)	1
Began and continued working as an activist/feminist	
1970s	8
1980s	12
1990s	2

Table 2: Current Work-setting Characteristics of Participants

Current Work-setting Characteristics of Participants	
Worksite	
Shelter residential services	6
Universities and colleges	6
VAW non-residential agencies	3
Independent consultants	3
Legal service	1
Community health centre	1
Provincial immigrant-serving association	1
Government	1
Geography	
Rural	5
Urban	17
Provincial location	
Southern Ontario (Toronto area)	11
Northern Ontario	2
Eastern Ontario	6
Western Ontario	3

Ethics

I followed the process of seeking consent set out by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Toronto. The participants were first contacted formally through a letter seeking their consent, accompanied with an explanation of the study. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they had the authority to withdraw from the study at any time. Anonymity was requested and honoured in the case of one participant. The remaining 21 participants wished to use their names in a public fashion.

As both a researcher and participant, I straddled an unusual role in this study, using myself as an instrument to further engage the participants in a deeper and richer conversation that embodied a lively and engaging style of conversation. Maintaining that dual role of

participant/researcher was a challenge. I followed in the footsteps of other scholars who used a similar approach in their dissertations (Badwall, 2013; Heron, 1999). At times, despite being aware that I was an equal participant in the conversation and had invited participants to enter a conversation with me—meaning they were also free to ask me to respond to any of the topics we were engaged in, which they did—it was a delicate balance to hold the space for their voices to rise up while also monitoring my own contributions in a reflective way so as not to dominate the conversation. Creswell (2007) suggests that in a case study approach, ideally the researcher should minimize personal sharing of information in the service of gathering the maximum amount of information possible from the participants. In my study, I experienced just the opposite. For example, when I was willing to express my emotional vulnerability, I noted this expression opened up my participants rather than closing them down. However, in some cases, mutual sharing extended the interview significantly. The recruitment process and inclusion criteria I employed in this dissertation research were approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Toronto.

Data Collection

The approach to data collection in a case study design involves a variety of measures that assist the researcher to build an in-depth portrayal of the participant's experience and perspective (Creswell, 2007). Yin (2003), author of the classic book, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, refers to six possible forms of data collection that are basic for case study research: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. The primary sources of evidence that I drew on included 22 in-depth interviews, a member-checking group, and a document review of selected government policy reports, influential texts, and selected media reports referred to by my participants in the interviews. A hallmark feature of the case study method is that it engages in data triangulation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). I achieved triangulation by embracing multiple methods of

investigation as outlined below.

Interview Guide

Stake (1995) reminds us that the process of creating the interview guide—a series of topic questions based on the issues the researcher wants to uncover accompanied by sensitive probes—is a special form of artistry. The focus of the interview guide was to stimulate narratives about the activists' standpoints on six topic areas comprising: 1) early reflections; 2) successes; 3) unanticipated consequences; 4) lessons learned; 5) impact of the work; and 6) wisdom for the future.

The open-ended questions and planned prompts are contained in an interview guide (Appendix G) and include the areas explored in each interview. The interview guide reflected a breakdown of the topic areas embedded in the research question and included concepts from the literature. The interview guide provided a sufficiently flexible approach, which permitted the participants to proceed in a non-linear way as they used this opportunity to reflect on their life's work and make sense of their activist journey in the VAW movement.

As a seasoned social worker with experience in interviewing, I had a unique advantage in provoking thoughtful and rich responses from my participants for a number of reasons: 1) I was an experienced interviewer with the skill to help participants feel at ease, comfortable in the space, and open to the process; 2) I had a pre-existing relationship with each participant that spanned many years and was respectful and peer-like in its quality, which minimized potential power imbalances; and lastly, 3) I gave the questions to the participants in advance of our meeting, which allowed them to reflect on the nature of the topics and collect their thoughts before we entered the conversation. This did not mean their responses were rehearsed in advance but rather that they had time to think about their role in the research and feel confident that they could provide meaningful insight into the topics at hand.

Interviews

Conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews is a common methodological tool (Ackerly & True, 2010; Gray, Agllias, Schubert, L., & Boddy, 2015) and is often accompanied by an interview guide with a specific set of questions developed in advance of the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This method of interviewing is a way of giving people a chance to honour, describe and explain their work. In this case, it gave a group of activists a chance to honour, describe and explain their lived experiences as activists in varied roles and to make sense of their activist journeys within a specific social movement as well as to consider the impact their work has had on the creation and sustainment of the VAW movement (Maddison & Shaw, 2012). Thus, it is a way of knowing. Telling stories, then, is one way of making meaning out of someone's 'self-given awareness' or reflexivity, of digging deep and capturing the essence of someone's lived experience and perspective (van Manen, 1997). Every story has a beginning, middle and ending, and as the researcher it is my role to facilitate the participant's capacity to shape her story in a way that makes sense to her (van Manen, 1997). Given that, it was more important to let the story unfold in each participant's own way, which sometimes meant using a back-and-forth flowing style between the topics rather than imposing a strict, linear notion of how a participant should shape her responses (Kvale, 1996).

Each interview was audio- and video-recorded and then transcribed by a professional transcriber with the consent of the participants. Five participants chose not to have their interview videotaped and one participant's video did not work due to a technical failure, resulting in a total of 16 videotaped interviews and 22 audio-recorded interviews. As a means of ensuring confidentiality, my transcribing assistant signed a confidentiality oath. The interviews were conducted at a mutually agreeable time and in a setting convenient for the participants (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Each interview ranged from one to 2.5 hours in length and I conducted all of the interviews myself in order to stay as close to the participants' experiences as possible. Prior to the beginning of each interview, the participants were provided

with the opportunity to review the purpose of the research study, to consider the implications of their consent to participate in the study, and to ask any questions related to the use of their identity in the release of the study. As stated earlier, all but one participant preferred to identify themselves publicly in the study. Every participant expressed a desire to receive a summary of the findings.

To maximize my ability to ‘bracket’ or minimize any assumptions and biases and to test the interview guide—in qualitative research, ‘bracketing’ oneself essentially means a conscious intent to suspend one’s own preconceived ideas of what the themes may be and keeping an open mind so the researcher can look at the data with fresh eyes, as if ‘anew’ (van Manen, 1997)—I was interviewed by a colleague prior to my interviews with the other participants. As with all interviews conducted, this interview was audio recorded, transcribed and coded as a part of the study sample. None of the questions changed following my interview. These strategies encouraged and strengthened my position to be able to offer a richer, thicker, and more holistic interpretation of the data while honouring the voices of the participants more fully.

Document Review

As part of my effort to triangulate my findings, I began my document review by locating and appraising the relevant government policy documents that served as directives by the Ontario government in their efforts to address violence against women (Appendix B). I then reviewed several of the significant texts that participants identified as most influential in their learning process in VAW movement work and created a descriptive matrix, building on the doctoral work of American scholar Elizabeth Miller (2010), whose thesis topic covered the early years of the battered women’s movement in the United States. I examined selected media articles that supported the participants’ perspectives of important events and activities. In collaboration with the participants, I expanded on the timeline of significant events in the VAW movement advanced by three Ontario feminist scholars in their doctoral dissertations: Coleen

Collier (2008), Casey Ready (2012) and Jennifer Fraser (2014). For the purpose of my dissertation research, I limited the scope of this review to identifying significant events that occurred primarily in the Ontario landscape (Appendix C).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a methodological process frequently used in qualitative research to determine the reliability of the findings. In other words, as a researcher, am I able to convince readers that the findings are worthy of their time and attention? To enhance this possibility, I have drawn on the trustworthiness framework developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) based on the following four criteria: credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability. With this framework, I detail the analytic methods I used to ensure that the findings are indeed trustworthy, including: a field notes journal, an audit trail, verbatim transcription, continuous in-depth readings of the transcripts, member-checking, multiple sources of evidence to verify participants' experiences, etc. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, Van Manan, 1997).

Credibility was established in several ways throughout this study, including prolonged engagement with the data (Drisko, 1997), regular meetings with my supervisor and committee members, and debriefing sessions with my supervisor throughout my study, including her review of a number of the transcripts and subsequent feedback on my coding and analytic strategies to ensure I was on track (Charmaz, 2000). I also had the advantage of prolonged engagement in the VAW movement as a feminist social work activist and clinician (Drisko, 1997).

Member-checking is another commonly employed trustworthiness technique that increases the credibility of the findings. In this study, I facilitated a member-checking group at the final interpretive stage of the study. As stated earlier, once the analysis of the main data collection measures—interviews and key documents review—had been conducted and a preliminary cluster of themes had emerged in the data, I invited the participants to attend a

member-checking group so as to seek their views and critical feminist perspectives and to deepen the data analysis. The consent form is outlined in Appendix E. I was able to have one third of the sample attend the member-checking group. My thesis supervisor was present to observe the process, be a resource to the participants in case any questions or concerns arose about the research process and assist me by note-taking. A doctoral colleague was also present to assist with the technical set-up of the presentation, observe the process, and take notes. Their presence, note-taking and observations were helpful in strengthening the credibility and dependability of the data in the research process. As I did with the one-on-one interviews, I digitally recorded, transcribed and coded the responses. I presented the participants with an overall update of the study findings in PowerPoint format and then presented the candidate themes for both their review and input (Braun & Clark, 2006; 2013).

Given my ongoing working relationship with each of the participants, an informal awareness of my doctoral journey already existed among some of them, accompanied by their enthusiastic support and their expressed desire to participate in the study. The member-checking group provided an additional form of data verification of key themes and issues emerging in the data as well as offered another important aspect of ensuring trustworthiness. This phase is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as the final 'interpretative' phase, when the researcher reports on the meaning of the case study findings, or as stated earlier in my research questions, identifies the successes, challenges, limits, and future directions (i.e. 'lessons learned').

A detailed audit trail was maintained for transparency at each stage of the recruitment, data collection, transcription, coding, and analysis processes. In my field notes journal, I maintained an updated list of all the names of the participants, their contact information, their organizations, dates of their interviews, length of their interviews, and length of each transcript. Journaling was used as a way to keep track of my reflections and evolving thoughts throughout the entire study. I created field notes after each interview to immediately document my earliest

impressions of the conversations while they were still fresh in my mind. The notes I took during the interviews were entered into my field journal. I noted any surprises, my own personal reactions, and any follow-up items to pursue; during the interviews there were mutual requests to follow-up with the sharing of materials such as reports, documents, media articles and so on. I also used my field journal to note any emerging themes as I checked each transcript against the audio recording to ensure accuracy. When I engaged in the use of data analysis software (NVIVO 11 for Macs), I was able to create extensive memos within the software program. I was able to address confirmability by grounding my emergent themes in the voices of the participants through the use of direct quotes which enriched the study in the final write-up, making the data come alive and strengthening the findings. Dependability was achieved by audio- and video-taped recordings and verbatim 'orthographic' transcripts of each interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially, it was my intention to manually code the transcripts by hand. After many rounds of in-depth reading of the transcripts and coding by hand, I realized that several hundreds of pages of transcripts were too cumbersome to manage in this way, and in consultation with my supervisor, I agreed to participate in a series of workshops to learn the software NVIVO 11 for Macs. Once I became proficient with the software, I was able to create and maintain extensive memos within NVIVO, which strengthened the memos I had maintained in my field journal (Drisko, 1997).

Transferability of the findings occurs when the narratives of the participants are sufficiently rich and thick in contextual description to permit the reader to make relevant inferences to similar populations. In a qualitative case study, although broad claims cannot be generalized to other studies, the reader may find it useful to think about the framework provided as it applies to their own experience as an activist in a similar social movement, so as to make relevant connections to their own experience (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Reflexivity simply means to make transparent the power relations and the exercise of

power embedded in the research relationship and process. It attempts “to unpack what knowledge is contingent upon, how the researcher is socially situated, and how the research agenda/process have been constituted” (Ramazanoglu, 2002, p.118). In their invitation to feminist researchers, Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007) describe ‘strong reflexivity’ as something that “requires the researcher to be cognizant and critically reflective about the different ways her positionality can serve as both a hindrance and a resource toward achieving knowledge throughout the research process” (p.150).

Deep reflexivity is the idea that each of us has the power to use our social location to critically examine the frameworks, the conceptual schemes, and underlying political ideologies such as neoliberalism which too frequently remain under the surface, invisible to us unless we have assistance to uncover the connections. As someone who grew up learning the history of the patriarchal colonizer, this academic journey at this late stage in my life has been an effort to unlearn or decolonize myself, by sifting through the literature with a critical eye and unearthing the truths that have been masked from my view. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument and thus critical self-reflexivity is an essential aspect of the research process. It creates a certain tension for the researcher, who must maintain a ‘double awareness’—a disposition of being keenly mindful of what is going on with the participant as well as observing one’s internal response to what is being shared. Returning to my field notes journal after each interview to note any reflections, biases and experiences was essential in unpacking my responses. I continued to refer to these thought-provoking entries throughout the analytic phases of this research process. In addition to regular journaling, I periodically debriefed with my supervisor and members of my PhD committee along with my peers in the VAW movement who are engaged in similar work.

Data Analysis

Johnson (1995) recommends a ‘frame analysis’ approach when working with a case study of a social movement, meaning thinking about interviews thematically as holistic text rather than abstracting text to capture micro meanings of particular fragments or remarks. As stated earlier, my interest is in understanding the meaning of the whole text and how it fits into movement experiences and perspectives articulated by each participant. In the service of this goal, similar to the data analysis method employed by Lehrner and Allen (2008), I used the analytic techniques as outlined by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006), leading scholars in the development of thematic analysis, as a well-established method frequently utilized in qualitative research studies. Their approach to thematic analysis involves a systematic, six-phase process for capturing themes as they emerge from the data and is an inductive, ‘bottoms-up’ approach to data analysis; as such, it facilitates an analytic method that captures patterned responses and/or meaning within the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) define their analytic approach as “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic” (p.79).

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guide to the six phases of conducting thematic analysis includes:

1. Becoming familiar with the data: To ensure accuracy, I listened closely to each interview several times so as to immerse myself in the participants’ voices and to become knowledgeable with my data set. As an initial first step, after each interview was transcribed, I entered a process sometimes referred to as ‘cleaning the data’. In other words, by listening closely to each audio interview, I was able to edit each interview by correcting any mistakes, spellings, names, etc., and to fill in the blanks

when muffled sounds may have confused the transcriber. Though time-consuming, it proved to be beneficial for a number of reasons: I was able to hear the tone of the participants, the hesitations, the emotions, and my insertions, so that the interviews became much more alive than is remotely possible from merely reading a printed transcript. At different points of the analytic process, whenever I began to feel disconnected from my participants' voices and felt the transcripts were not grounding me sufficiently in the data, I would return to the audio interviews, finding inspiration and encouragement for the research process.

2. **Generating initial codes:** This is the second phase of the analytic process and after reading each transcript in its entirety several times to develop an overall sense of the text as a whole I was able to take the printed text and begin the preliminary coding process, searching for significant statements, quotations or whole paragraphs that I highlighted to provide an understanding of each participant's perspective.
3. **Searching for themes:** I reached upwards of 200 open codes through the use of NVIVO - open coding is the initial step of breaking down the data to look for patterns - the next step is collapsing into categories which helps to refine themes. I then tried to make sense of the refined themes by finding patterns, looking for relationships, similarities, and differences within and between the interviews. I paid close attention to the language used to define violence against women and the shifting theoretical frameworks used to explain violence against women; I kept extensive field notes for each interview that were maintained throughout the research process; key themes and issues were highlighted in my field journal after each completed interview.
4. **Reviewing themes:** In this stage, I continued to immerse myself in the data by continually merging related codes and collapsing them into thematic categories. I used the software NVIVO as a method of holding large quantities of data. I also began to locate important quotations that I began to use as my anchors for the emerging themes

and I made every effort to safeguard that the quotations I used in the emerging categories be inclusive of all 22 interviews.

5. Defining and naming themes: I continued to investigate and collapse the categories and refine the themes. Initially, emergent themes fell into 10 to 12 categories which I then collapsed into eight 'candidate' themes. I presented these 'candidate' themes to the member-checking group for their review, feedback and critical reflection. That process permitted me to ultimately settle on the five main themes, which I explore in detail in the next chapter on the findings from my research study.
6. Producing the report: For example, during the course of the VAW movement and the time period I am examining there were emergent issues or critical incidents that became sites of divergent and convergent points of view which I captured in my analysis (e.g., working with men and boys, mandatory charging policies, professionalization of the sector/movement; etc.).

In this chapter I started by connecting the research question to my rationale for choosing a case study methodology as the study design for this dissertation project. I then outlined the various stages of this qualitative research process, including the recruitment strategies, the sample description, the inclusion criteria, the ethics, and a detailed review of the data collection process. I outlined the six stages of the thematic analysis method I used to analyse the data, as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the next chapter, I address the findings and analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter describes the findings of this dissertation research, and the ways in which the participants locate themselves in the violence against women (VAW) movement. This investigation offers a snapshot into the lives of 22 of these activist voices, in response to the research question, “How have the experiences of early activists shaped the VAW movement in Ontario from 1973-1993?” Using case study methodology and through the analytic procedures that I described in Chapter 3 and employed throughout (with the assistance of NVivo), five themes and related subthemes were identified (as seen in Figure 1) and are described in detail below. These five themes are: 1) The first theme, pathways to activism, with three subthemes, elaborates on how the participants became activists and identifies the most significant influences that assisted them in this process of beginning an activist life. The three subthemes are a) developing a ‘felt’ sense of injustice; b) finding their voice and language; and c) finding their home and finding their movement. 2) The second theme is building a movement and focuses on how the participants began their activist work. The four subthemes are: a) challenging the dominant narrative; b) creating safe space for women and children fleeing violence in their intimate relationships; c) engaging the state as a partner in their efforts to end VAW; and d) gaining public support for their work. 3) The third theme is surviving as a movement and elaborates on the following three subthemes: a) how activists responded to the growing backlash in the 1990s that decimated the VAW movement in Ontario; b) the impact that the backlash had on the movement as a whole; c) moments of resistance and victory despite the backlash. 4) Opening up a movement is the fourth subtheme and depicts how participants in the VAW movement: a) challenged hierarchical structures in the movement; b) challenged racism and colonialism; c) integrated an ARAO framework into the VAW movement; and d) learned what it means to be an ally. Finally, 5) the fifth theme is holding hope for a movement and elaborates on how participants in the VAW movement: a) held the tensions they faced daily in their activist

work; b) reflected on the importance of self-care for participants in the movement; c) named their successes; d) expressed their hopes for the future and where they need to focus their objectives from here onward and lastly, e) detailed the legacy that participants want to leave for future activists, including wisdom gleaned and lessons learned.

To assist the reader, I refer to each participant by their first name (one requested to remain anonymous and I refer to her as Jane) and a list of the participants along with corresponding brief biographies appear in Appendix A and J. Note that there are seven participants with similar names but separate voices: Lynn Z., Lynne C.; Debbie D, Deb C., Deborah S.; Barb K. and Barb M. In addition to 21 participants, I also included one key informant interview. The key informant was Holly Johnson, a prominent figure as a researcher, activist, and ‘femocrat’ in the VAW movement and who aided me in the development of my thesis question and design focus.¹¹

In terms of my positionality, it was a personal challenge to determine how I could represent my own experience and yet not dominate the findings in the study. From the outset, I recognized the challenges of being both a researcher and a participant as I realized the inherent power differential: while I interviewed all my participants, none of them had the option to interview me. After discussion with my thesis supervisor and committee, it was decided I would be interviewed by a fellow doctoral student, using the same guided questions as used with the study participants, as a way to document my own experience in the VAW movement. Since I was the first one to be interviewed, it was also a way to test out the relevance and flow of the topic questions (see Appendix G). Given my extensive involvement in the VAW movement, from the 1970s until the present time, I was able to draw on my knowledge to formulate the topic areas and craft the questions. None of the questions changed after my interview.

¹¹ The term ‘femocrat’ originated within the concept of ‘state feminism’ during the 1980s. Feminist researchers explored the notion that feminists working inside mainstream institutions, typically the state but not always, could indeed, be social movement actors if their intention was to further gender equality goals and uphold the guiding principles of feminist work (Bereni & Revillard, 2018).

Although my voice (through quotations) will at times be represented in this study, the main focus is on the larger sample. I was also able to draw on my extensive personal library of materials, which included media clippings, rare project reports, conference proceedings, pictures, and video footage of key events in the life of the VAW movement in Ontario. These materials provided an additional method of triangulation. Each theme is described in detail and anchored in the voices of the participants through quotations as a way to enhance confirmability. These themes are outlined for ease of reading in Figure 2 below.

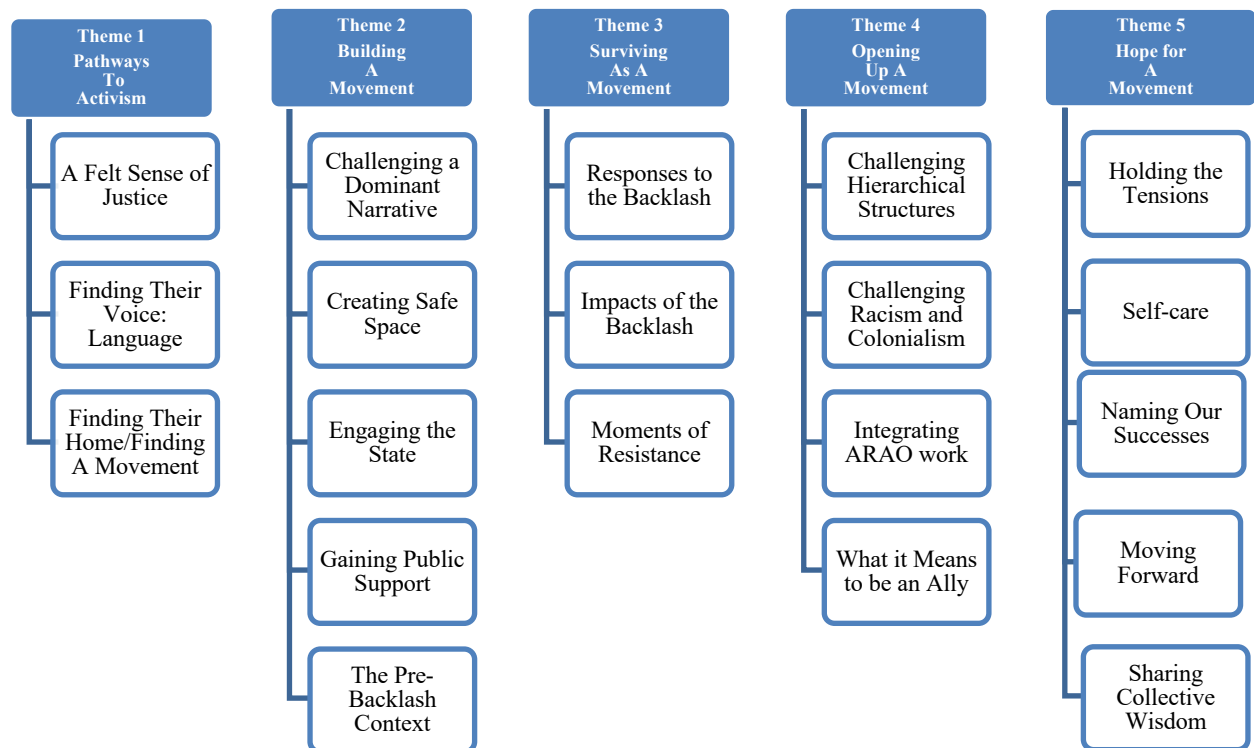


Figure 1: Representation of the themes and subthemes from findings.

Theme 1: Pathways to Activism

“I have found my people.” Erin Lee (participant interview—2015)

There are many pathways to activism. The participants in my study described going through a series of three stages beginning with a ‘felt sense’ of injustice initially—a sense of what is fair and not fair, a strong sense of right and wrong, and a solid inner moral compass.

This stage was followed by the ‘learning of a language’ stage that resonated with their hearts, words that helped them find their voice. The activists in my dissertation research reported finding their voices in a myriad of ways: through parents, friends, mentors, teachers, books, personal experiences of oppression, and so on. Once participants found the right language to explain their world, then they entered the stage where they ‘looked for a home’ for the movement, when they sought allies who shared their views, who shared a basis of unity, and who helped them find political solidarity with other like-minded people. They were looking for allies who shared their values, their beliefs, and their struggles. All participants reflected on how empowering it was to first find the language to describe their ‘felt’ feelings of justice and injustice, and then to find their ‘people’.

In this dissertation research, the participants located themselves in the VAW movement—as one social justice movement of many often interrelated, necessarily connected, always moving and changing movements. The first theme of five elaborates on their pathways to activism in the following ways:

*A ‘Felt’ Sense of Injustice*¹²

Several participants described an initial ‘felt’ sense of fairness/unfairness. From a young age these activists possessed a keen awareness of the world around them and they noticed power relations; they had sufficient self-awareness to observe what was ‘broken’ in their young worlds. Participants ‘lived’ oppression from birth on. Beth describes the experience of many of the participants: “I mean as a racialized person, you wake up to oppression because you live it, right?” Some participants depicted situations where they brought home stray animals, stood up for children and animals who were bullied or threatened, participated in charitable events, and challenged various forms of oppression (e.g. colonialism, homophobia, sexism, racism, and ableism). In every case, participants identified with victims of injustice and oppression.

¹² This experience of a ‘felt’ sense of knowing is a form of knowledge, according to Indigenous scholar, Dian Million (2009).

Developing a secure base within themselves first seemed essential to weathering the storm of change that a social movement would demand of them. That meant reflecting back to their beginning and that ‘felt’ sense of knowing what was right and wrong, what was fair and unfair. This process for several of the study participants in this research project began with their relationships with their parents and siblings.

Several participants initially learned about oppression in the world in relation to their parents and what they observed in their families. Many participants had parents who influenced them from a young age by embodying justice and instilling values of fairness. Marsha described her family’s expectation of generosity and sharing whatever resources they had, no matter how little.

I grew up in a working-class immigrant family, a lot of my parents’ friends were factory workers and they would go through long periods of being unemployed or on strike. So as kids, we always would see our family friends having a hard time and so we were always required to share whatever we had with them.

Other participants came to their awareness not so much through their families but in relation to their observations of the world around them. Barb M. grew up in a working-class family in a small rural town in Ontario, a ‘railroad’ town, and remembers as a teenager:

I was talking about not being heard as a female, not being paid attention to, not being taken as seriously, and so obviously I was tuned into what was happening around me socially, culturally, and aware that women weren’t getting the same air time.

By the age of 17, Anna tested her activist wings in high school at a school event, where she observed firsthand an invited guest speaker who came under attack for speaking out against homophobia. This participant stood up and spoke out in defence of the guest speaker, quieting the hecklers in the gathering, and defending the right to speak out publicly against homophobia. This was her first experience of organizing, and while she did not have the words to describe homophobia, she knew it was wrong:

It was instinctive [my speaking out]. That came from my sense of what was fair and what wasn’t fair. My family was marginalized in ways within the town but again, I was not consciously feeling like we were oppressed or anything like that.

Finding Their Voice: Language

Teachers, mentors and books played a critical role in helping participants find a language for their ‘felt’ sense of injustice. Once the private silence in their heads found the language to describe their observations of the world, then meanings begin to take hold. It was very evident in the participants’ voices that they could not have made these discoveries alone. They needed to be in relationship, to be in connection with another human being and with someone who could teach them what they did not know, to enlighten them, giving voice; then the words came.

Study participants were looking for their group, their allies, their ‘people’ from an early age. Some participants found their kindred spirits initially in a book. Feminist writers were awakened in the 1970s and 1980s. Several participants described their initial introduction to feminist literature during this period of the *second wave* of feminism. They explained it was like finding a friend. Suddenly things started falling into place and they realized they were not alone in how they saw the world. I observed as I conducted the interviews that several participants’ eyes lit up as they described their first textual introductions to a feminist life. This moment of recognition did not appear to be dependent on age, race, class, time or place, but rather it was that moment when each participant recognized themselves in the words of a feminist writer. The oldest participant in this study, for example, Michele, described her first experience with finding feminist language to explain her feelings. She realized, in 1952, that she was not alone in the world—that there were other people who thought like she did.

The first feminist text I got my hands on was *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir [1952]. I was 13. It took me months to wrangle it from the adult library and it transformed my life. It was the first I knew that anyone else in the world saw the same things I saw, even if there was much I didn’t understand at the time. It was passionately and radically affirming—even when relatives and schoolmates thought I was crazy to rebel against standard femininity and the female fate, I never wavered in my beliefs because Simone was on my side and she was a philosopher!

On the other hand, the youngest participant, Beth, remembered her euphoria when she discovered the Toronto Women’s Bookstore in 1990:

This Bridge Called My Back [Anzaldúa & Moraga, 1983]) —that was the first piece

where I thought, “Who are these women?” And then I went searching for bell hooks and Audre Lorde and reading *Zami* and *Women, Race and Class* [Angela Davis, 1981], so again, you know, theoretical musings, lived experience, coalescing in this beautiful way that validated my own lived experience.

A number of participants who attended all-girls schools were introduced to feminist language by their female teachers and described the benefits of being educated in all-female environments. Among them was Barb K:

But I guess I have always been a feminist. How did that happen for me? Well, I grew up in the 60s and 70s when all of that was happening around me. I was influenced by older women. I went to an all-girls Catholic school in Windsor [Ontario]; that was an interesting experience in terms of empowerment and not being concerned about boys. So, I think that influenced me too. Some interesting women [some were nuns but not all] who were, I would say that they were, feminists.

Wendy described what it was like for her growing up in a poor working-class family in Barbados. She won a scholarship to an all-White, all-girls Anglican school. Ultimately, it was an empowering experience for her and was her first foray into critical thinking. Her teachers were courageous and not afraid to address issues around Barbados’s colonial history. As a young teenager, she learned to unpack issues around race, gender, and class and how they connected with her country’s colonial history. She shed tears as she remembered this experience:

So, I also went to an all-girls school and I think that all-girls or all-female spaces tend to allow a different way of thinking. It allows you freer thinking. It was empowering and taught me to become a critical thinker and us to become leaders. Well, I mean in the end we identified that there was racism in our society in Barbados. We were able to even deconstruct the history of Barbados in terms of slavery and the legacy of that and [colonialism]. It left communities divided. This was the structure that we came out of and so we were looking at those things from early on. It was really an empowering high school environment for me.

Feminist literature, feminist talk, and feminist role models provided an opening to several participants who gained confidence in their budding feminist voices to boldly design and fight for their own feminist studies, and they were successful. Holly explained waking up her consciousness while completing a student placement at a rape crisis centre:

I was doing my Master’s degree at the University of Ottawa, in the same department

I am teaching in now, and we had field placements to do, sort of like internships, and I was doing my thesis on sexual assault. And I can't remember how I got into that topic...I just started reading, you know, some of the old classics of Clark and Lewis [Rape: *The Price of Coercive Sexuality*], Brownmiller [*Against Our Will*] and Susan Griffin [*Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*] and really got quite excited about it. I think it maybe was a course I was taking at first year and I wanted to do a placement and there was nothing on women's issues or violence against women at all, and so I kind of fought for having a placement at the rape crisis center, so I became a crisis counsellor and just my consciousness was raised through the roof...it would have been around 1981.

Barb M. recalls as a first-year student at McMaster university, searching to find the right program that fit with her budding feminist consciousness:

The first year, I got involved with some leftist students...it was the late 70s...that was my awakening for all kinds of social justice issues and I decided that the world needed a revolution and so I should study political science instead of social work because social work doesn't do it fast enough. It's a very youthful, very kind of naïve perspective but it's the truth and it did, I think, shape my life, from there on.

Finding a Home, Finding a Movement

The process of finding a sense of belonging in a social movement represents one central phenomenon emerging from this dissertation research. Participants expressed a host of emotions as they spoke of the experience of what they referred to as the idea of finding their place or finding a home in a social movement. Sentiments expressed as 'delight', 'joy', 'relief', 'reassurance', 'affirmation', and 'life purpose' permeate the data. Learning that their lived experience as oppressed and subjugated women could be validated and affirmed by others, in a social movement as a shared experience, was a transformative moment in their lives, and for the all of the participants in this study, it provided a purpose for their life's work. Debbie D. reflects on the powerful impact feminist teachers had on her and her peers:

I think I lucked out, there was just a dynamic group of us as young women who went through Grade 13 at the same time and all identified as feminists and as it turned out many of us came out as lesbians, not too long after... [our teacher] was a dynamic feminist who was determined that she was going to turn us all into the feminists by the time we left high school...and so it was a real introduction to me, having the language around feminism and being a feminist and what it really meant and the commitment to women's rights and to women's empowerment.

Angela found her political home while attending high school as well. After graduation, in

1985, she continued her activist journey in a Black Women's Collective where she shared the same language and view of revolutionary change as her comrades.¹³ She described how she did her research:

So, that was kind of my start. And I think why I attached myself to that kind of organizing, in terms of feminist organizing, in that it was articulating something that was explicitly political and that used language of resistance, used language of revolution and transformation, and used explicit language of patriarchy and oppression, whereas I felt other spaces that were talking about women's rights were less explicit about that kind of transformational change and were more talking about creating spaces for women within the existing structure rather than saying the existing structure was problematic and needed radical change. And in fact, a new structure was needed, not even needed radical change, but a new structure was needed.

Fran remembered the struggle to understand her experience with violence and her experience as a woman with a disability. While doing her Master's in Social Work at the University of Ottawa in 1988, it was her classmates who encouraged her to talk about her experience. It was there, in the presence of kind, compassionate, and interested peers, that she began to understand the intersections of her lived experience. For the first time in her life, she realized:

I am not to blame for this, this isn't about me; this is about something bigger [finding a home with the Disabled Assaulted Women's Network (DAWN)]. Then I became more involved with DAWN because DAWN was the first organization, I think in Canada that took on violence against women with disabilities.

Erin found political solidarity with her peers in the following way:

I went to my first OAITH [Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses] meeting in Toronto and I thought, 'I have found my people.' I felt like I am home. I have found my people and these women are smart and they're smarter than me and they're going to help me and we're going to learn and then I realized quite quickly, you know, we all had something to offer and it was okay to be where you were at and the notion of listening to women [was important].

Jane expressed the excitement, passion, and sense of discovery that several participants felt when they found 'their people' in the VAW movement:

¹³ Angela referred to the first newspaper in Canada whose sole purpose was to document and lift up the voices of Black women's lived experience. It was by and for Black women and produced by the Toronto-based Black Women's Collective, in which Angela was a central figure. *Our Lives* was one of the first texts to provide an intersectional analysis claiming the links between poverty, racism, education and much more.

I was raised in a social justice family and those were positive days—the mid and late 70s. Those were positive days; those were days where we had a strong belief that change could happen.

Silvia voiced the empowerment she felt when she discovered her ‘people’ in the VAW shelter movement:

I felt like I was *coming home* and it all sort of makes sense for me [discovering the language of oppression]. So, I realize that my whole sort of analysis of my life and who I was with friends—I just became intolerant of intolerance. I just didn’t have it in me anymore. I just didn’t have it in me for people to be racist, or sexist, or homophobic. I was done with that...never the same again.

Barb M. found her ‘home’ when she joined a women’s center on campus:

We read books together, we had discussion groups together, we did a few marches together...the idea of having a safe place on campus for women was really big.

Participants described the process of their blossoming feminist consciousness as finding their people, their home, and ultimately their movement.

Theme 2: Building a Movement

“And in fact, a new structure was needed, not even needed radical change but a new structure was needed.” Angela Robertson (participant interview—2016)

Building a movement, the second theme with four related subthemes, focuses on how the participants began their activist work: 1) by challenging the dominant narrative; 2) by creating safe space for women and children fleeing violence in their intimate relationships; 3) by engaging the state as a partner in their efforts to end VAW; and 4) by gaining public support for their work.

Challenging a Dominant Narrative

In the early days of VAW theorizing, several of the participants in the study recall what it was like in the 1970s and before. Narratives of participants reflected on the dominant narrative that they were challenging in those beginning days of the *second wave* movement. There were no places for women to go so as to escape violence; there were no laws to protect a woman from her husband or to hold him accountable; there was no one for a woman to talk to, except perhaps

her neighbour or a family member (Richie, 2012). Deborah recollected what it was like as a young girl in the early 1960s, exposed to her best friend's father's violence, shocked and not knowing what to do:

It was 1963. My best friend's father had a lot of power...that was my first experience [of witnessing a man's violence against his wife—my friend's mother] and you know, we never talked about it. We talk about it now; we're still very good friends. But we never talked about it then, not at that young age—12. I remember coming home to my parents' home and being scared but not telling them and I think now: Why didn't I say anything? Why didn't I speak up? You always hear this. Why don't women talk? Well, I certainly remember at that young age why I never talked about it. They [my parents] would never let me go there again, which means I might have had to break up with my best friend. I didn't know that they would be able to step in and help. There wasn't even a shelter that existed in the country then.

How participants theorized VAW was critical in those early days. They were challenging the dominant view that denied, minimized and pathologized women's experience of abuse. If women were believed—if it was acknowledged that abuse did exist—they were frequently blamed for breaking the silence and for shaming the family. Deb C. recalled those initial days of feminist research and the all-too-common social response of blaming and shaming women for crimes committed against them by men:

Yeah, and so much was happening then. The Stone Center for Research on Women in the States. There was Carol Gilligan's (1982) work then, [*In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*]. Around that time, she had just published her book, and I got interested in the issue of violence against women. I got interested in the response, the social response, which was: Well, if it's so bad, she can just simply leave. Why doesn't she leave? And then blaming the women, right? The next step is to blame the women if they don't leave.

She went further to describe a research study she had worked on involving 400 to 500 young girls in those initial days of the VAW movement. Over the course of the research project, a young Indigenous girl was brutally raped, 'treated like a garbage can,' and then murdered. The other girls' responses in the study reflected society's dominant view of women and girls, especially Indigenous girls, which was widely endorsed and openly expressed in those days. The following quotation provides an excellent example of misogyny and sexism. The response to the Indigenous girl's death consisted of blaming her. In Deb C.'s words:

Oh well, you know, she wore too much make up, she kind of looked like a slut anyways, and that was when you realize the enormity [of the problem of VAW]. There are some events that are so pivotal; they really shine the most brutal bright light on people...They shine that light on your society and tell you exactly where things are, just like the Cindy Gladue case.

In the European model of patriarchy, where the ‘man’ was deemed head of the home, it was considered heterodoxy to challenge the role of husband. To many young feminists, this norm was their cry to arms. They had been schooled in a ‘gender first’ analysis that linked women’s subordinate status to patriarchy as the overarching system of rule, reflecting broader power relations that required dismantling; beginning activist efforts focused on both personal and political strategies, and for White activists, in particular, gender was at the centre of their analysis. As stated earlier in Theme 1, much of the participants’ initial theorizing depended on two significant descriptors: their social location and their lived experience.

For Theme 2, I placed these theoretical choices within that historical context. For those participants who identified their primary social location within the dominant class of White, able-bodied, middle-class, English-speaking, heterosexual women, the early analysis was narrowly defined in terms of the ‘single identity/worldview’ of ‘gender only’ and ‘gender first’. There was a misguided expectation of a primary bond to be formed solely based on being female. For example, Holly remembered it this way:

And part of the women’s [mainstream] movement [theorizing] was that violence can affect us all and it was the sisterhood, right [Robin Morgan’s (1970), *Sisterhood is Powerful*]. And so, we’re all women, all equally oppressed and so it wasn’t until very recently that I have become aware [of intersectional theorizing], since I have shifted into the university.

Anna’s early focus was challenging the ways men and women relate to power, with the ultimate goal of ‘undoing patriarchy’. Later she began to embrace class, race, sexuality, and ability, but initially patriarchy was the overriding system for White feminists to tackle:

We knew that you had to change the world, that we had to up-end the relationship between men and women, that we had to undo patriarchy. These were our goals, right? And what we got is about a quarter, [a] fifth of the way there.

For racialized activists, a different starting point that integrated race was evident in the findings.

Like many VAW activists, Debbie was acutely aware of the absence of a race analysis in the initial days of the shelter movement. She thought about VAW work in this way:

[By the 1980s] I felt that it was a powerful movement and that the violence against women's movement was driving or organizing around women's issues here in Ontario. So, for me, it was all connected to the rape crisis centres and the work that the rape crisis centres were doing. I saw us all as part of one movement and that the conversations around issues of race and class were beginning to happen in the rape crisis centres, the sexual assault sector, you know, but that it wasn't necessarily happening in the violence against women sector, right [not until much later in the 1990s].

Creating Safe Space

In Toronto, Ontario, a small cadre of women were volunteering on a distress line at an old house in downtown Toronto. Many of them were young activists and they were angry—angry at the injustice they were witnessing and hearing from the women who were calling the distress line. One participant, Lynn, a founding member of the original collective of Interval House, described it this way:

I was a volunteer at Women's Place. I was answering the phones. Women were literally calling and thinking it was a place to stay. So, they would tell their story. My husband is an alcoholic and I have got three kids, and I don't have a job and you know, I can't get welfare unless I have a place to live but I can't get a place to live until I get welfare and they get caught in this horrible cycle and trap; and so we checked out where we could refer them and discovered there was virtually nowhere.

Lynn recollected that prior to 1973, there were no shelters for women anywhere in Canada. Women's Place was a gathering place for women—a women-only space. One day, Lynn did not want to answer phones and have no answer for the women calling in, all of them in great distress. It was unbearable to hear the women's cries and have nothing to offer them. "I did not want to just be angry," she said. She wanted to do something practical to make a difference. Her solution was to put up a sign on the Women's Place bulletin board asking anyone interested in organizing a women's shelter to come to a meeting. Ten women showed up at that first meeting and the rest is herstory, as Lynn indicated: "Grassroots women just picked up and made it happen. They found a house. They opened the door and told women to come. It was really great to see that happen".

They did their research; they spoke with city officials; they applied for a Local Initiatives Program (LIP) grant and eventually found a house to rent. They gathered their resources wherever they could find them—beds, furnishings, paint, lumber—and they hired themselves as the first staff and were paid \$100/week from the LIP seed money. On April 1, 1973, they opened their doors to women.

In 1975, Michele wanted to write her story as an ally of Interval House but unwittingly had fallen prey to many of the common myths of her era. She had come to the right place. She did her first interview with Trudy Don, an early activist in the VAW shelter movement and the first coordinator of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH). Trudy was a tough-talking, knowledgeable and outspoken activist for the movement—the face of the shelter movement in Ontario especially. Michele remembered how she felt on her way to meet her first ‘battered woman’:

I was assuming that women who were routinely battered by their husbands were poor; they were poor, or they were living with an alcoholic or she was an alcoholic. I just assumed they were a different category of being from me. This wouldn't happen to anyone like me. That was my underlying assumption. Well, within 10 minutes of being there, Trudy Don had dismantled my preconceptions completely [laughing]... She was tough and straightforward, and I learned so much that day and I was really astonished. I had no idea of the scope of the problem.

Charlene worked in the very first emergency shelter for Indigenous women in the country, Anduhyaun House, which means ‘our home’ in Ojibwa.¹⁴ It was set up as a training space for Indigenous women in northern reserves to come to southern Ontario for training, employment, and educational opportunities. As it turned out, many women who came south were battered women and they stayed. It was a unique opportunity for them to flee violence in their intimate relationships. Anduhyaun House opened its doors in 1968, funded by the Ministry of Indian Affairs and the YWCA, and continues to this day to be led and staffed by Indigenous women; it offers holistic traditional healing opportunities for Indigenous women and their children.

¹⁴ Determining the first shelter for women fleeing violence from their intimate partners in Canada is a contested notion. In a personal communication (June 6, 2018) with Catherine Brooks, former Executive Director of Anduhyaun House, she noted that Anduhyaun House opened their doors to Indigenous women in 1968.

Charlene recalled:

Yes, there was a group of four women who opened it and the intention of Anduhyaun was to be a residence for women who were coming from the north for training...And the more women that came, there was more disclosures and they didn't want to return, and so this was their 'out' to get off the reserve. It was like a safe residence for Aboriginal women to come down south under the guise of training and then they got here, and the truth came out and they didn't want to go back. This was their escape.

In addition to fighting the dominant discourse in society in those beginning days, the shelter movement struggled with the role of shelter workers vis-à-vis children. These were internal shelter challenges from the beginning. For example, Wendy, one of the first VAW activists in Ontario to champion the rights of children, began asking questions such as how to empower the children. How do we give children a voice and a space of their own in the shelter? How do we treat children as separate from their mother's needs? As the child advocates in the shelters note, it was not all about the women. Wendy captured this sentiment in these wise words:

One of the things that children's advocate workers couldn't stand was just the way that kids were disempowered in shelters and that was what we were always fighting for. They didn't have a voice and they just weren't recognized as human beings—these kids especially, when you think about the uprootedness for them...They have to move from their schools and all of the trauma that that involved and missing their fathers.

In 1985, the Minister of Community and Social Services (MCSS), Frank Drea, announced the funding of several Family Resource Centres (FRCs) for Northern Ontario. That decision created enormous tensions between those community groups who were given the money and those on the ground who had been doing VAW work for a long time, some of whom received the funding and some who did not. The staff at the FRCs were better funded and typically not a part of the grassroots feminist model; they did not necessarily embrace a feminist framework with a movement lens. Lynne recalled it in this way:

I mean a lot of us were FRCs throughout the North. There are 15 programs, 13 shelters in the North East [from Moosonee to Bracebridge]. So, I think that we had [tensions] for the breaking in phase. I feel like there was a group of veteran [shelter] directors who at the beginning with the FRCs. Yes, [it was tense]. I think they were

still part of that grassroots movement when the funding came about, and so there was huge reasons to distrust the funder at the time. But I think we broke through when we started talking a lot about policy and [working together].

By bypassing feminist organizers in several communities and giving the contracts to local groups who may not have embraced a feminist philosophy, the state alienated many feminist activists.

For a few northern communities along the north shore of Lake Superior, however, the outcome was positive—at least from the perspective of local feminist activists who had been actively researching the needs of local women fleeing violence since 1982. They had called their project ‘*Project Mayday*’. As part of their needs survey, they had conducted a survey of women in their local communities and confirmed that alarming numbers of women in the north were facing similar situations as their sisters across Canada. The national figure of one in ten women battered in their intimate relationships resonated with their local survey findings (MacLeod, 1980). Because of their strong organizing skills, they were able to negotiate successfully with MCSS and use a feminist model similarly embraced by other feminist transition houses to build a shelter for women. They opened their doors in Marathon, Ontario on May 30, 1986 under the name Marjorie House. Gloria remembered it in this way:

[The local feminist organizers] didn’t just cover one community; they covered many communities. So they had good insight into the rural district, the Thunder Bay district especially. So, they ended up talking with MCSS, came up with an agreement to fund a family resource centre. The government offered the family resource centre. Local feminist activists were pushing for a transition home. To them, there was a big difference between the two. The government parachuted all these family resource centres into the North. Our first name was North Shore Family Resource Center, but we operated more like a transition home. They made sure that was inserted. That was very much a part of our understanding and I don’t think it was an outright government rebuke of the family resource centre model, but they wanted it to be the feminist model. The offer was there and either they took it or it [the funding] would have been given to others. I think they succeeded.

Engaging the State

The issues related to the VAW movement were being picked up at the national level with increasing pressure coming from activists and lobby groups, both inside and outside of

government. These efforts resulted in the first federal document, *Toward Equality for Women*, released by the Office of the Status of Women Canada in March of 1979, which outlined a general plan of action to improve women's lives and most particularly to address the issue of violence against women. Jane recalled the pride she felt when the Canadian government signed on as one of the first signatories to the United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):

Because if the federal government actually decided to pay attention to that [VAW] by signing CEDAW, that was huge. The fact that there was a convention and we were one of the first signatories [Canada signed on July 17, 1980] was an important thing for Canada to do, and for our federal government to be paying attention in those days, to only domestic violence then, but they asked the questions and we started to know that this was true.

Feminist researcher Linda McLeod was commissioned by Status of Women Canada to do the first Canadian study, called *Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Cycle* (1980). In it, she released the shocking number—shocking to the status quo and the ‘unknowing’ public but not at all shocking to grassroots activists—that one in ten Canadian women are victims of wife battering. The patronizing responses of some of our political leaders of the day were not occurring in a vacuum. In May 1982, when the first report on wife battering was tabled in the House of Commons, some of Canada's political leaders responded to it with laughter. People across the country were outraged, and together with frontline feminist activists and scholars, they pressured the state to take action. The same activist, Jane, remembered this period in this way:

[Feminists] were writing because we wanted the world to know that this secret was now uncovered, children are being abused, women are being beaten, the stories that we were telling each other in our communities in collectives were true stories and we wanted our governments to pay attention. But then when the government did start publishing numbers, one in ten, it seemed like a big part of our job was done and then what started to happen was we realized they didn't care. Knowing about it was not enough! Telling the truth about it and having it be public was not enough. It was this whole other layer of convincing people that it was important. So, when Charlotte Bunch made the comment that if any, if this amount of violence happened to any particular group of people, a government would declare a civil emergency; so why wasn't that happening?

After the release of the first federal report on wife battering, the Ontario government set up a

nonpartisan committee, the Standing Committee on Social Development of the Ontario legislature. In the spring and summer of 1982, it held public hearings on the issue of ‘*Family Violence: Wife Battering*’. Activists from across the province presented their knowledge and experiences to date, as situated in that pivotal document, *Family Violence: Wife Battering. Ontario Government Initiatives* (Legislature of Ontario, 1982).

Since 1983, prevention efforts to end ‘wife assault’ in Ontario have been organized around the criminalization of woman abuse. ‘Wife assault is a crime’ became the mantra. Through the adoption of that view, certain beliefs wove their way into social and public policy. Violence in the home was considered life-threatening to all family members and was no longer to be treated as a private family matter. The state was now heavily involved, and feminists had mixed reactions: while the criminalization of wife battering was intentionally selected as one unifying feminist strategy, it was only one strategy of many in the feminist-organizing world. As it turns out, it was the one strategy that the state picked up and ran with, but it was not the solution in the eyes of many participants in this study. Deborah remembered it this way:

But did we only focus on criminal justice? No! I think some of our energies went there because we had actually had no working laws at all to protect women. So, for instance, I think our first [joint state/community] campaign was called *Wife Assault is a Crime*. It was 1983. It was a pretty successful campaign but that was never our primary focus. No! You hear that critique now. When you look at the literature. They only focused on criminal justice but no, lots of us didn’t see that as the priority. But that’s where the funds were and that’s unfortunately what got funded rather than a lot of the other programs that we were running.

Had it been picked up in another way, the collective efforts of feminists, inside and outside the government, might have resulted in a very different ‘non-legal’ approach to the issue. Wendy recalled the tensions in relation to the state’s ‘law and order’ agenda and the separatist stance taken within the shelter movement:

That’s right, in terms of the analysis and sort of the early beginnings and the question of the movement. It obviously didn’t upset me or persuade me to leave the movement because I am still in the movement, but it certainly left a curiosity around what could have been, and to this day, what could have been if we had tried a different experiment at the time, a more holistic framework?

Angela strongly stated that VAW activists must place their initial organizing efforts in the context of the times they were working in; they must be proud of their efforts to engage the state and to be at the right tables to make the policy changes, create the programs, and do the organizing work that they needed to do:

It was 1985 and I think, in terms of the project and some of the places you are anchoring, we see the successes of the VAW movement. I will add my voice as an echo. It really started out of feminist activism. It didn't start out of a government program; it didn't start out of a bureaucrat's office; it didn't start out of a mainstream organizing strategic planning process where folks decided that VAW would be a priority and they would then seek to attach activities to it and make change happen.

Jane recalled the sense of pride and satisfaction she felt when she was instrumental in setting up the first Joint Government Steering Committee (JGCSC):

We [feminist activists] actually listed the voices that needed to be at the table; and granted, not one single person could really speak for that group, but it was the first time that got organized and we were supposed to be advising OWD, and so that was really great. There's no other structure that I know of, including countries since CEDAW, that I have been in, that were able to create an arm's length roundtable of inter-ministerial representations from all arms of government and a community group to be there. It was great and that structure in Ontario...now in all different shapes and forms...with the Domestic Violence Action Plan [the DVAP, 2004] and now the Sexual Violence Action Plan [SVAP Round Table 2016–2018]. I realize we criticize our sisters that are at the table and we always wonder if we are going to be co-opted by being at that table, but I am sure they have never seen that [organizing success] anywhere else.

Gaining Public Support

While shelters became the public face of the VAW movement and frequently the hub of all VAW services in a particular community, there was activist work happening in other venues.

Angela spoke to the importance of attitudinal change and public support:

So, I think that attitudinal change, that VAW work needs to be supported with public funds is a result of the VAW movement and feminist organizing efforts. We have pushed for the recognition that VAW work needs to be supported with public funds, so you have various funding streams, be it in a foundation, like public funding bodies—United Way, Trillium—that says that there are public resources and/or private resources that should be dedicated to funding and resourcing VAW support services.

In 1983, the Family Violence Unit was established within the Ontario government in

response to pressure from the grassroots feminist movement to not only fund shelters but also to educate publicly funded service providers and agencies in social work, health care, social assistance, etc. I was contracted to do the first province-wide training for all MCSS-funded agencies. From February to May 1984, I travelled across Ontario to 43 communities, with 1100 workers attending the training days representing all social service sectors. The workshops were three to six hours in length, depending on the needs of the community and the availability of the trainer. Frontline workers were hungry for accurate information and tools to help them do the difficult work in their respective settings. The workshops were enormously popular and in great demand. People wanted to learn how to think differently about the myths of battered women and abusive men to which they had been subjected.

In 1985, following the success of the training project, I was commissioned by MCSS to write up my “training notes”. These training notes became a training manual, *Understanding Wife Assault: A Training Manual for Counsellors and Advocates*. It was the first teaching manual in Ontario written on this topic and from a feminist perspective. It was designed as a hands-on, practical guide for how to do direct service work with women, their partners, and their children. It was based on the experiences of my team on the Domestic Violence Project (DVP) at the Family Service Association (FSA), our feminist allies in the shelter movement, the workers’ stories from the Ontario training project, and most prominently the lived experience of the hundreds of women who sought our assistance during the period from 1978 to 1984; many of the women were referred from the shelters and wanting help for themselves and their family.

Several participants in this study called the training manual ‘the Bible’ and it informed their initial understanding of how to do the practical frontline VAW work, limited as it was to a ‘gender-only’ frame and lacking a race or class analysis. It was considered mandatory reading for many of the participants as they started out in VAW work, regardless of their setting. The training manual was a MCSS government-funded initiative and Ontario’s first foray into cross-sectoral training—a holistic feminist social work model of doing the work that promoted

holding a social movement lens while also doing individual and group work at a micro level.

Participants, such as Wendy and Deb C., echoed the views of several other interviewees when they described their access to the training manual:

Well, my first knowledge of you actually goes back to your first book which was kind of like the Bible of shelter workers because...I started working in the movement, working at North York Women's Shelter, and I remember that's really where I got my first analysis. Beyond all of the academic pieces, because at university we were being taught more theories than feminist stuff. I started as a children's advocate counsellor and you were one of the few people who actually spoke about children's issues (Wendy).

Because that was one of the things that's really shaped my thinking, you know, [your book], there was a VAW movement, then your book was the Bible for it (Deb C).

The Pre-Backlash Context

Before I describe the nature of the backlash that had such profound effects on the VAW movement in Ontario beginning in the fall of 1994, I describe, from participants' perspectives, particular events that further confirmed and entrenched their commitment to a lifetime of anti-violence activism. I provide the reader with context, identifying the key turning points for participants.

In 1989, an unimaginable act of misogyny and male violence against women occurred in Montreal, Quebec on December 6, 1989: a lone White 29-year-old man armed with a semi-automatic rifle walked into Polytechnique de Montreal and in a pre-planned, methodical, cold-blooded manner, separated the female students from the male students, ordered the male students and two male professors to leave the classroom, which they did, targeted the women, and then proceeded to shoot each of them—14 young, White Francophone fourth-year engineering students (Rosenberg, 1998). It was the largest mass murder in Canada's 'modern'

history¹⁵ and the impact echoed across the Canadian consciousness, especially for women, and especially for anti-violence activists. The participants in this study were no exception; the event affected them profoundly. Pam recollected being a minority voice as a feminist in law school when the killings occurred:

I was in law school when the Montreal Massacre happened. So, it was that era, there was fairly open warfare between the feminists and the boys at the back of the room. So, the guys who were just determined to silence our questions, to be quite aggressive, abusive, some would say, violent towards us in the classroom, in terms of denying any reality that we would be talking about. I don't think Queen's [University] was particularly different from other universities at that time. We had some fantastic feminist professors on faculty but that was the political culture, this is law school, that other stuff is irrelevant and if you want to keep bringing it up, we're going to shout and interrupt because we are here to learn black letter law and we don't care about the social experience of women.

Pam's experience in law school was not dissimilar from another participant. Lynn's experience in the earlier era of the 1970s, as a young feminist in law school, involved heckling, denial, harassment and attempts to silence her in a similar way when discussing sexual assault cases in class, which caused her to drop out after her first year: "It hurt my feminist heart," she says. Not much had changed in law school for these two participants: whether it was in the early 1970s or the late 1980s, both women had to suffer the ridicule of the "boys at the back of the room" or the "White, male professor at the front of the class" mocking women's experience of violence. This underlying misogyny was everywhere.

Several participants in this study struggled with the idea of what makes a turning point. In 1989, many of them were convinced that the horror of the Montreal Massacre—the mass murders of young women in Montreal, the physical and psychological injuries to the surviving student body, their families, their community, the university world, and ultimately, to the whole country—would be the definitive turning point in ending VAW in Canada. As activists, we

¹⁵ Historically, there have been several mass murders of whole populations of peoples, such as the Original Peoples of Turtle Island, which is now known as Canada. When the early colonizers/settlers arrived from Europe, there were approximately 40 to 60 million Indigenous people living on Turtle Island. By 1700, millions had died of smallpox, infected blankets, and diseases brought over by the 'White man'. It was the largest massacre in this country and it continues to this day—a cultural genocide of Indigenous brothers and sisters through the ongoing legacy of the residential school system, the Sixties Scoop and the modern industrial prison system (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015).

collectively thought: What greater evidence would be needed to convince the country that this indeed was a serious issue? Surely, it had punctured the consciousness of the Canadian public about the seriousness and depth of the hatred of women as manifested through the mass murders. For Lynne, it was certainly a turning point. She recalled being a young university student, already engaged in a campus program to combat sexual assault and rape, with the aim of reducing women's fear by increasing their sense of safety and security. In her words, "I had exposure through media to the Montreal Massacre." It turned her life upside down. While other people turned away from the horror, Lynne, like several participants in this study, leaned in—and thus the horror served to spur her and her fellow participants to commit to a lifetime of anti-violence activism. The feminist refrain echoed across the nation: "first mourn, then work for change" (Rosenberg, 1998, p. 203).

By the time the Montreal Massacre had occurred, feminists had been building their expertise, their research skills and their political shrewdness for more than two decades. When the movement was in the initial stages of being built, activists were concerned that there was no evidence to substantiate their concerns. That was no longer the case by 1989. Angela gave credit to feminists for building a body of credible evidence to support the importance of funding their work.

I think the success of the VAW movement is the research, the evidence and the documentation that has been produced that speaks to the presence of violence in women's lives. I think the success is that it's been made visible.

Slowly a picture of the incidence and prevalence of VAW was beginning to emerge. The London community was one of the first communities in Ontario to partner with the local police, women's service activists and professionals to collaborate and offer service to families in crisis and to release official police statistics from a local research study (Jaffe & Burris, 1984). Feminists had infiltrated every sector of mainstream society. For the participants in this study, it was a moment when some were perfectly poised to leap at the opportunities to influence government, as both insiders and outsiders. When they called on them, they were ready and

armed with a feminist interpretation of the Montreal Massacre and what it meant for women across the country. More importantly, they were ready to guide the state on how it should respond to the national tragedy. The Montreal Massacre symbolized the experience of all violence against women.

The State wanted to act, and it called on feminists for guidance. There had been two earlier studies done on women's experience of violence in Toronto (Randall, & Haskell, 1995; Smith, 1987) but none of the studies to date had captured a snapshot of women's experience of violence at a national level. A number of state-funded initiatives occurred as a direct result of the Montreal Massacre, including the establishment of the first five Centres of Excellence on Research into Violence Against Women in Canada the establishment of the National Panel on VAW and the creation of the gun registry (Lundy, 2011). It was also a time when the federal government was willing to dedicate significant funding to invest in research into the seriousness of women's experience of violence in Canada. Holly, as stated earlier, had gained her early experience in feminist activism at her first placement in a rape crisis centre in the early 1980s. From such an activist stance, and with her feminist lens to guide her, when the opportunity arose to advise the federal government on how to proceed, Holly was there. I asked whether there were other feminists inside government supporting her or was she a lone voice?

At that time, it was much more accepted to be a feminist, to talk about gender and equality/inequality...There was policy machinery around it. Status of Women Canada had this in the rape law reform. Allan Rock [Liberal Justice Minister, 1993–1997] held consultations with feminist groups [across Canada]...Feminists were seen to have knowledge and legitimacy (i.e. NAWL, LEAF, NAC). DS: And Lee Lakeman did her study under Allan Rock then, right? Yes, it was 1993. [99 *Federal Steps Toward an End to Violence Against Women Report* commissioned by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women].

Along with other feminists, Holly had honed a well-developed critique of how the government had historically collected statistics on crime and victimization, and as a result, how it developed policy to respond to the identified issues. Holly believed the research was inadequate. It was missing key elements of women's experience of fear and the reasons for

their lack of reporting. Feminists believed that mainstream researchers were wrong when they interpreted the low rate of rape statistics to mean that VAW was not a common experience for women in Canada. Their statistics revealed that women had high levels of fear but with disproportionate levels of actual rape and crime reported to the police. Feminists knew this not to be true. Women did not report rape or IPV for many reasons. First of all, most women feared they would not be believed; they feared retaliation if they disclosed; they had no faith that police would respond well to them and they had no confidence that the police could help them. Women blamed themselves. When asked if she felt alone in this struggle, Holly responded with a generous nod to her mentor and boss at Statistics Canada, her colleagues, and her feminist allies on the inside and outside of government who opened up the pathways for success. In her words:

Doug Norris was a Director General at the time. He took all the risks up the chain but when we had to present to the Chief Statistician when this thing was really getting rolling, people were getting nervous. He put me in front of the Chief Statistician. He was such a generous man...generous, supportive, and took all the risks. So, I can count three really important mentors in my life and he was one of them.

Holly reiterated the idea articulated by several participants throughout this study—namely that none of us could do this work alone; movement-building requires a collective response. Grassroots feminist activists across the country became advisors to the study, with their contributions ranging from suggesting questions to include, recommending how to collect evidence from a survivor's perspective, and advising how to conduct trauma-informed interviews. Two thousand women were included in the pilot phase of the study. All the initial preparation steps were essential to the success and power of the Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS) study, which has become the gold standard worldwide for measuring the seriousness, depth and prevalence of VAW and has since been replicated in several other countries (Johnson, Ollus, & Nevala, 2007). Holly proudly recalled the success of the VAWS study:

So, we did it right. We costed it out at 1.9 million dollars and we took two years. We started with me doing the research and bringing it forward and saying, “This is what we can build on this work.” Liz Kelly’s conceptualization of a continuum...that’s the only survey that Stats Can has done that links sexual harassment and other forms of physical and sexual violence against women.

The VAWS study was well-received by the media and the public and established a globally renowned track record. It was the first gender-specific study of its kind in Canada and in the world. This success was short-lived. It was followed by a huge discrediting of Holly’s work at Statistics Canada. The attack on the VAWS study would launch the beginning of the backlash, which is the focus of Theme 3: Surviving the Backlash as a Movement.

Theme 3: Surviving as a Movement

“But despite everything, we’ve managed to accomplish huge things. So, we’re not dead and you can’t kill us.” Holly Johnson (interview participant—2015)

In this third theme with three connected subthemes, I identify: 1) how activists responded to the growing backlash in the 1990s that devastated the VAW movement in Ontario; 2) the impact that the backlash had on the movement as a whole; and 3) moments of resistance and victory despite the backlash.

Responses to the Backlash

The first public attack on the VAWS survey occurred in 1994. A number of participants remembered the precise moment when the backlash started. Holly had a clear and visceral memory of the attack on her research study. It began with a book written by John Fekete (1994), a Trent University professor and cultural theorist, who wrote an anti-feminist critique of the VAWS study in his book, *Moral Panic: Biopolitics Rising*. Around the same time, Globe and Mail columnist Margaret Wente, long-time nemesis of the VAW movement, added her voice to the attack on the credibility of the VAWS study. In Holly’s words:

Fekete talked about the Stats Can survey [VAWS_1993] and how it was led by a faction...He took things out of context and said that Stats Can had been captured by a faction...Then the tide turned and then it was ‘we’re not going to do that again, I

am never going to do a single gender survey again'...That was part of the backlash. Michele was disheartened when she shared her thoughts on the beginning of the backlash in much the same way as Holly:

I date a lot of stuff to 1994 when Holly Johnson... Statistics Canada...spoke about her findings. Yes, they stopped Holly in her tracks. All that gender mainstreaming crap which was just a disguise for washing this away. That was a big watershed to me. Yes, a terrible time.

The second attack on women and children in Ontario struck full force in 1995. Several participants described the shock, disbelief, fear and rage at the financial cuts that happened when Conservative Premier Mike Harris took office on June 26, 1995. His leadership lasted until April 14, 2002 under the political banner of the Common-Sense Revolution. The cuts were directed to the most vulnerable communities in the province, affecting activists in all sectors. The VAW movement was no exception. It was deeply harmed, as noted by several of the participants in this study; the VAW movement as a feminist social movement was targeted, attacked, overwhelmed and disorganized in the face of relentless trauma. Many activists felt powerless to defend themselves and the women and communities they served. Angela noted the movement's allies inside government at the time leading up to the attack of the Harris government.

Inside the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) at that time [pre-1995], you had women who were feminists and they were doing feminist work...now, we didn't always agree but the fact is that there were some core things that we could say alright. So, we have some feminist sisters who were doing some work; we don't have to agree with all of the strategy about how they want us to achieve equality but okay, it's a place that we could argue around some shared principles...that changed radically with Harris coming.

It was a heartbreaking and emotional moment in several interviews in my study when participants recalled the visceral wounding by the Harris government. Michele recollected what it felt like to be an activist in this hostile climate:

And every day it was like being stabbed in the heart by another moronic, brutal action of Harris. Every day he did some harm to the school system, the children, the women, the women's movement, and the welfare cuts.

Debbie recalled her distress when reflecting on the VAW movement's reaction to the Harris cuts:

It has always stayed with me that when all the cuts happened with Mike Harris and I thought 'What is that, what happened to the movement?' I felt as if we ducked and there was just no push back in the same way. We ducked, and we cannot afford to duck this time. We must work the alliances and coalitions to survive.

Angela associated the Harris cuts—a violent blow to the movement as a whole—with the way that individual abusive men inflict violent blows on women in their intimate relationships. Her repetition of the words “it felt like no choice” emphasizes the trauma that activists in the movement experienced. This experience of harsh violation and resulting chaos echoed throughout several interviews. Angela wept at this point in the interview; remembering the suffering was painful: “So, women need a safe space to come, and if this is what we need to do, then we have to do it. So, it felt like no choice that we had to stay in what was now an abusive relationship.” Angela went on to reflect the view of several participants that our movement had entered an abusive relationship with the enemy—and in this case, the enemy was the state. It was a horrifying thought but nonetheless true. She went on to conclude the following:

So, I think, as a movement, we ended up in an abusive relationship with our funder. And the man who had the money said that if you needed a place to stay, you needed to put up with this condition. And that's kind of where we are; we're still there. I think we're trying to come out of it...I think later there were definitely folks on the inside from a funding perspective who used the funding to silence us...because the activist voice was making governments uncomfortable. I am thinking the Harris years. The funding was definitely used to say, “Shut up, shut up. You want this money, shut up.”

The third attack on the VAW movement occurred in 2006. I recall learning about the term, ‘whacking the complainant’, a popular defense counsel strategy, in my role as an expert witness in domestic violence cases. The purpose of the strategy is to first discredit the victim of IPV and then to discredit the expert witness who was called to explain the victim's experience to the courts, including the judge and jury. Marsha described similar strategies used by hostile governments towards feminist concerns—governments whose intent was to create fear in the hearts of VAW activists so as to disrupt the power of the VAW movement:

I think the current climate for that we're working in is one that I would describe as fear and scapegoating. How do we not have a politics of fear? Because all that does is divide and conquer and we can't build movements on fear.

The politics of fear was used under the Harris government in Ontario during the 1995–2002 period and then, in similar fashion, by the federal government under the leadership of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper from 2006 to 2015. This method of right-wing neoliberal governments was used to promote a climate of fear and competition, a divide-and-conquer mentality. It was a way to not only weaken the influence of social movements but also to demoralize the movement's activists. Echoing several participants, Holly reflected on the Harper years in this way:

I think all of this discourse around equality, the inability and reluctance and refusal to identify and accept sexism. That's what we're living in now. So, shut up, you're equal now and then all of this misogynist hatred at the same time.

For Erin, the most powerful turning point in the downward spiral of the VAW movement was when the Harper government announced its intention to close 12 of the 16 offices run by Status of Women Canada (SOWC). Such a move was made under the guise that SOWC was not doing direct service work for women but rather engaging in lobbying and advocacy work for women. These activities were deemed unacceptable to the Harper government. As Erin said,

Well, I think when the Status of Women stuff happened, I think that shelters and anti-violence agencies really started to shut down politically and as soon as we started to shut down politically and we weren't willing to put ourselves out there and do the work...to continue to push politically...we started to become fragments of groups in our sector and I think we stopped being a movement where we were all united. For me, it was when Status of Women Canada took away the funding from the equity-seeking groups under Harper's reign in 2006.

Erin went on to say that the Harper government attacked the oversight that equality-seeking bodies in Canada were providing and with these attacks was clearly stating its belief that women did not deserve or require further attention. Its message was that Canadian women had enough equality:

The National Association of Women and the Law, anybody who were the larger overarching groups no longer received funding...it was Bev Oda who was the Minister [Women of Status] and she's the one...saying we had reached equality.

This view was shared by several participants in the study. Their frustration, outrage and disbelief were palpable throughout the interviews. In Lynne's words:

The word 'advocacy' has been taken out of a lot of the work that we do, but it's still completely relevant. Even in our statistical reporting they want to know the number of counselling hours, for example, but the advocacy, the research, the connections... it's all uncounted work.

Holly went further:

The [defunding] is particularly bad under this federal government [the Harper government in 2006]. They have defunded activism, lobbying, research, and if they can't defund you, they will go after you as a terrible organization.

Impacts of the Backlash

For a number of participants, the impact of the backlash was dispiriting, and they lost the sense of building community, fostering collaboration, and sharing a collective vision.

Organizations were pitted against each other, executive directors were hired for their business skills rather than their feminist sensibilities, boards were pushed to embrace a corporate efficiency model—a hallmark feature of a neoliberal agenda—and new staff hires were required to have professional credentials rather than lived experience. A feminist interpretation of VAW movement work was no longer the most important quality to consider when bringing people into the work. Survival pushed us to embrace business principles rather than build a movement for revolutionary change. Charlene stated it this way: "I think what happened to a lot of us is we became so business-like and corporate that we forgot to look after each other." Fran's language evoked the felt sense of loss in a similar way:

When I think about the VAW movement, is that it felt like a community. Collective efforts to think about doing the work that we're doing, to make a difference. It didn't feel like a business [then]; now it feels like a business.

Another impact of the backlash was the profound fear that participants expressed about losing all our historic gains in the VAW movement since the early 1970s. Angela recalled it in this way:

Women in the shelter movement were concerned about the potential loss of work, loss of employment for their sisters—so basic needs for the workers became an

issue, but there was also the alarm that if we don't pull back from our movement, our social justice perspective, then we run the risk of losing the presence of shelters and therefore the supports for women who are needing to flee and leave abusive relationships. So, it became an unholy kind of mess.

Beth offered up the reminder that social movement organizations such as shelters, and other anti-violence organizations are the face of the VAW movement and that they exist so as to disrupt gender-based violence against women. In her words:

When I say 'we', I mean organizations, because often the movement came from organizations. To maintain our funding, we've been frightened right, those Harris years were pretty scary. And people made choices. I think there's a way that we've slipped into delivering services and we've lost that piece of our services that are political by nature. The reason they exist was directly to interrupt gender-based violence against women.

Michele went on to suggest that we would all benefit from further study of older social movements to see how they have managed the tensions between women's need and right to public funding—without losing the political agenda of structural, revolutionary change:

What are the implications of the government funding...in terms of really building the kind of community and movement that you need to bring about real social change, and then what happens when you get the backlash? So then you have the Harris's and the Harpers and so the funding goes, people lose their jobs and what happens then to the work?...So I think we have to look at how one builds and how people around the world have built social movements in different historical periods and what impeded the building of those movements and what enhances it because I don't think we've learned enough [yet] from looking at social movements.

Several participants felt conflicted about the path the VAW movement had taken; on the one hand, many considered it a major victory that activists have achieved state funding and public support to build and provide services to battered women and their families. To build a movement from nothing, from the ground up, was seen as a tremendous feminist victory. On the other hand, it was inevitable that the funding would come with a price. Angela addressed the price the VAW movement paid for achieving public support and funding, and in her view, how it moved from a grassroots activist movement to a VAW sector:

So, the other piece that has happened and it's linked to some of that transition from a movement to a service in a sector, is we have also professionalized the VAW work... There was a point in the VAW movement where those women who came to VAW work through feminist activism couldn't get jobs in VAW work because they didn't

have the ‘credentials’ for the work. I think those early feminist activists who were the pool of workers have now fallen off, so over time there is even a further shrinkage of that group of women who were waiting to come into employment with their feminist activist experience in VAW work. I think now what you have is [a situation] where those women are no longer present and now you have a new group of potential workers who come out of social work practice, human services, certificate programs, and there is even a hierarchy in that. So, you have the social work kind of academic certificate and you will get more points than a human service certificate out of a VAW program, say at George Brown.

Anna spoke for many participants when she eloquently articulated the difference between a VAW movement and a VAW sector:

It is two very different things because a movement for me—it’s reactive, it’s emotion, it’s resistance, it’s ever changing, it’s built from the root, the grassroots up, it’s inclusive. It speaks to a lot of different things, whereas a sector for me is an employment sector. It’s not a movement about social change. For me a sector doesn’t speak to that so much...a sector is regulated, a sector is professionalized, a sector is boundaried. A movement feels wide, like if I envision it, it’s a wave, right?

Barb M. echoed Anna’s view:

I do see it [the VAW movement] as a movement, I also see it as a sector and I see that we have a tension there. I think I sit right in the middle of that tension. So, sector to me means more formalized, more professionalized, more restricted in both what we can do and how we can do it, but with more access to the corridors of power and as a movement, I see us more on the outside of those corridors of power.

And several participants struggled with how they could have done this work differently.

Could they have built services without state funding, without pouring their energies into building quality services, without the state and the public as key partners in ending violence against women? Deborah recalled the writings of feminist scholars, such as US social work activist Susan Schechter (1982), author of one of the earliest books on the emergence of the US shelter movement, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women’s Movement*.

There was this notion of these dual goals and it wasn’t around intersectionality at all. This was a gendered analysis, the two goals: 1) the building of service because there was no service in the 1970s and 2) a social change movement lens. That second piece got dropped; a lot of our energies got used up by activists to build service and then it became about [developing] best practice principles and running an organization, so the funding piece became the ultimate driving force. We moved into standards, into professionalizing and credentializing and all that comes with a price. I question how we could have done it differently.

All participants concurred that funding is a political issue. In Lynne's words, even when some funding was received, it was 'bare necessity' funds. Not so little as to kill the movement, but not so much that VAW activists could create the revolutionary change that they wanted.

Pilot projects are a good start to study an issue, but they have no power if they just get pulled back. We had no funding to come together as regional, provincial, and national groups to gain collective wisdom and power to further our movement goals—to meet and connect.

Angela reminds us of the changing political climate that emerged under the hostile environment of the Harris government:

You say patriarchy now and people look at you. It's like a really revolutionary statement to be in a VAW meeting and talk about patriarchy with your funders. It's like, that's not the project we're funding you for. And I am saying you can't fund me to do VAW work and not fund me to fight patriarchy—you can't, right? So I think we have lost that and I think part of it is because what I see as the work of doing VAW work and resisting patriarchy is now seen as advocacy and advocacy is seen as—we don't fund you to do advocacy. Because that's political work. I would say we have succumbed to that [long pause]. Some of us would say it was an anticipated consequence but it's a consequence nonetheless.

Charlene agreed:

Well, I think that's probably where the movement piece started to dwindle, and the sector started to rise up, right? And that gets translated as social justice isn't as important anymore, and so with the Harris cutbacks, we have never gone back to the same level of funding. It's 20 years later!

Moments of Resistance

Despite the dark days of the Harris and Harper 'slash and burn' agenda, there were some bright spots of collective action, described below, that inspired and sustained the participants and helped them to maintain their commitment.

Queen's Park Demonstration: In 1996, activists strongly resisted the Harris attack on the most vulnerable members of society and funding cuts to shelters and second stage housing. They gathered for a strategic demonstration at Queen's Park [the provincial legislature], in downtown Toronto, and encircled the parliament buildings expressing their outrage and despair. The shock of the 21.6 percent cuts to social assistance recipients, the most vulnerable members of our community, was devastating and the cuts continued to attack all progressive, equality-

seeking groups. We were devastated, and in my view, many of us “entered the valley of despair, that experience of grief without hope. Our hope was decimated” (Deborah). It was a heartbreaking moment in the interviews as many of the participants remembered those painful times. Michele recalled taking some comfort in rallying with other activists to protest their outrage:

I felt like my society was being dismantled and my movement was being crushed under foot, and I remember we had a demonstration at Queen’s Park where we circled all of Queen’s Park to protest about second stage housing and all the shelter cuts. That was the last gasp; we were all there holding hands and circling Queen’s Park.

The McGuire Report Rebellion: Several participants remembered the steps the Harris government took to undermine the VAW movement. None was more threatening than the shameful McGuire report that the Harris government refused to release, despite numerous ‘polite’ requests. Anna remembered this period in this way:

For example, one stop shopping. I know we didn’t trust it through McGuire because that was coming from the government and we knew their agenda was not about better services for women, that it was cloaked in that, but they use our language all the time to justify efficiencies.

Jane recalled:

The time of the McGuire report was a terrible time for us. I think it was 1996. Yeah, Mike Harris came in, Dianne Cunningham came in, she hired [Martha] McGuire. And the attempt to download all the funding for shelters to the municipality. That was part of the McGuire report.

In December 1996, at George Brown College, activists requested the report be released to them one last time. McGuire refused and activists on the panel quietly walked across the stage, physically took the report from McGuire, tossed it into the audience, into the hands of Michele Landsberg, and the rest is herstory. Activists took the report to the printers and distributed it widely to other activists across the province, and the province yielded in the face of such resistance. As one participant, Jane, joyfully remembered, “That fight kept the VAW shelter’s funding at the provincial level, which was huge. I mean that activism in Ontario—that was a really big success.” Michele relished in the delight of catching the ‘confidential’ report:

And then they started saying to her, “Let us see the report.” “No, no, no, it’s confidential,” and Andre [Cote] got up and grabbed it out of her hands...And she rolled it up and threw it into the audience and I was sitting fairly near the back and I caught it [laughter], so it’s the first time I ever caught anything in my life [more laughter] and the audience was all on their feet; we were all yelling and here I am holding it—the prize—and one of the teachers I think in the [AWCCP] came running up to me: “Give it to me and we will copy it,” and away she sped and by the time I got back to the [Toronto] Star there was a copy on my desk. It was the best; it was activism [laughter]... But we were so fucking enraged that these terrible women sell-outs were dictating to us and the women in the movement were giving their all to save women’s lives. They were beyond indignant. It was so satisfying. I loved it.

The *Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy*: The power of collective action was highlighted as participants recalled the satisfaction they felt when in the Fall of 2000 in Ontario, a group of feminist activists joined together in anger at the rising number of women murdered by their intimate partners.¹⁶ Activists from across the province used their political knowledge to demand effective social and policy reform and action from provincial leaders, forming the *Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy* (CSVAWS). They challenged the government’s refusal to take proactive steps to end VAW and they successfully captured the attention of the media and the public. Beth recalled it in this way:

I remember when the *Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy* (CSVAWS) group was formed. I was a cofounder along with some other great kick-ass women: Punam Khosla, Eileen Morrow, Pam Cross, Cindy Cowan. That campaign was successful. We were told that money would be flowing in terms of the helpline and translation services in the north and so on. We actually saw a shifting of the discourse and the moving away from that old refrain of the law and order [agenda] and to talking about women’s equality rights. For me personally and professionally it was monumental in terms of the provincial work that we were trying to do together, and it was also amazing strategically how we were able to come together across sectors because that was a cross-sectoral approach led by women’s anti-violence activism.

Erin remembered the importance of coalitions and collective actions with the birth of the *Step It Up* campaign—a campaign she personally named and was one of the greatest highlights of her activist career:

¹⁶ The first background document for the CSVAWS, the *Emergency Measures for Women and Children* in the Fall 2000 Legislative Session, written by Pam Cross, Punam Khosla, and Beth Jordan and founding members of CSVAWS. This document served as the foundational piece that guided subsequent social and policy reform actions taken by the continuing work of the CSVAWS (see www.oaith.ca for further details).

I think one of the most effective campaigns in my career in the anti-violence movement would be the *Step It Up* Ontario campaign. I thought that it was hugely successful coming from the birth of the CSVAWS group and moving forward from there. I think we actually were making headway and we were hearing from Minister's offices that they're directed to us to check it right to see what we're doing, and to see what we're thinking, and I think those things have been immensely powerful and I am proud.

Step It Up was an effective campaign established by a coalition of several feminist groups across Ontario including women's shelters and transition houses, sexual assault and rape crisis centers, provincial women's networks, second stage housing programs, women's centres, the labour movement, equity-seeking groups, community groups and individuals. The goal of the campaign was to engage political parties and elected representatives, especially during election cycles, to make pledges on action to stop violence against all women in the province. From approximately 2003 to the 2014 election, the *Step It Up* campaign strategies brought significant attention to the interventions deemed essential to end VAW in the province of Ontario¹⁷.

In the fourth theme with four subthemes, I describe how participants in the VAW movement: 1) challenged hierarchical structures in the movement; 2) challenged racism and colonialism; 3) integrated an anti-racist, anti-oppression (ARAO) framework into the VAW movement; and 4) learned what it means to be an ally.

Theme 4: Opening Up a Movement

“The movement was reflecting society—it was inadequate in all the ways that our culture was inadequate.” Michele Landsberg (participant interview—2018)

Challenging Hierarchical Structures

In the service of building a different world, several participants in this study viewed

¹⁷ The ten steps identified as the centerpiece of the *Step It Up* campaign in ending VAW are listed below:

1. Understand that violence against women is an equality rights issue.
2. Recognize that male power is upheld by rape and sexual harassment.
3. Stop racism/oppression; make Ontario accessible.
4. End poverty NOW.
5. Create and maintain housing, non-profit childcare, training NOW.
6. Provide fair access to justice for women.
7. Hold violent men accountable for their actions.
8. Stop criminalizing and psychiatrizing women.
9. Demand secure funding for women's organizations.
10. Listen to survivors and women's advocates—they are the experts! (see www.oaith.ca for further information)

hierarchies as oppressive top-down structures. This then led to the idea of creating alternative structures, learning to share power, and collaborating with each other. However, power sharing and collaboration also meant they first had to sort out their own relationships to power, privilege and oppression. Angela recalled it in this way:

A lot of the shelters started out as collectives because it was grounded in feminist organizing whereby from a revolutionary standpoint, we're challenging hierarchy, so we need to live our values. And I think what we saw and what some of us experienced was that we had the principles of collectivism but the application of it and how it was being lived inside the organization is that hierarchies were present and that part of the critique about the hierarchies that was present is that the folks who were at the top of that hierarchy were White women and so you had a beginning leadership that was emerging in VAW movement building that looked White and that the folks who were the workers in the movement were larger numbers of racialized women and lesbians.

Several participants remembered the initial days of feminist organizing as frequently led by lesbians who strategically chose not to be open about their identity. Shelter staff feared the level of homophobia within the shelter movement—with the funders, with the residents and with the public at large. It was somewhat easier for some participants who worked within collectives to be open about being a lesbian, especially within the rape crisis centres (RCCs) as a strand of the VAW movement, because they did not have to contend with the complicated issues that arise when living in communal spaces such as in a women's shelter. In general, though, they did not want their sexual identity to get in the way of their efforts to make shelters safe spaces where women could come to find allies, feminist intervention and community. It was too dangerous and there was too much to lose. Angela reflected in these words:

I would also say that the early feminist organizing and feminist leadership around the creation of VAW services were largely led by lesbians who did not disclose. [For fear of] the backlash and then the fear and the homophobia. If it got out, they feared they wouldn't get funding.

Marsha recollected a similar lesbian leadership in the US, where she started her activism in the early days of the 1960s and 1970s:

In my experience, the feminists were White, middle class, English-speaking, lesbian [women]. In the early days I don't think I knew anyone that came from an immigrant family.

Then she witnessed the internal struggles become more overt when Black women began to voice their dissatisfaction with the mainstream women's movement, including the VAW movement:

The movement was being constantly challenged by Black women, that it was too narrowly focused on sexism. Where was their commitment to dealing with racism? When I first got into the women's movement, we had a really good class analysis and a really good gender analysis, and it came through the challenges of the Black women in the US that more and more of our analysis began to encompass racism.

Angela witnessed a similar phenomenon in the VAW movement in Ontario:

I think another thing that happened, that had some folks, in terms of women in the movement, kind of wash their hands out of exasperation and exhaustion was the intra-challenges inside the VAW movement. In the early 80s, up into the early 90s, is an intra-challenge whereby racialized women and lesbians began bringing that intersectional analysis inside the work.

The term 'intersectionality' has different meanings in the minds of the participants. All participants agreed with the notion that we should be building a social movement where people can bring their 'whole selves' to the movement. Some participants, such as Angela, recognized the challenges that the word may convey:

So, I haven't found another word for intersectionality. So as much as myself and some other folks, they banter with me about intersectionality having been co-opted. I think I am not willing to give it away. I am not willing to give it away because I think many things that we have, that were really progressive and revolutionary in its analysis, got co-opted and now became no longer ours so we are always forced to find new things after we worked hard to create language. It gets co-opted, gets taken away and we then say okay, let's let that go and find something new and so I am not willing yet [to give it away].

A number of participants recognized that an intersectional lens is a challenging reality to put into practice, as explained by Fran:

Well, I think there are limitations such as this intersectional lens, because I think we think we know what we're talking about, but I am not sure that it always gets actualized.

On the other hand, Deb C., an Indigenous participant challenges the term 'intersectionality' because in her view, it is a reflection of a colonial legacy. Deb C. invited the VAW movement to think about it in a different way:

Because intersectionality means a bunch of sections that have connections, right? Well, Native people don't think in those sections. Never have. It's a theory that

fits perfectly with colonialism, but it doesn't fit at all with an Indigenous worldview.

Challenging Racism and Colonialism

Repeatedly, White women were challenged from diverse voices within the VAW movement to be more inclusive and share their power. Deb C. described her perspective on the racial make-up of the VAW movement in the early 1990s. It was her belief that things fell apart in the women's liberation movement, and the VAW movement in particular, around the refusal of White women to deal with racism and colonialism. As an Indigenous feminist, she, along with several participants in this study, critiqued White women's complicity in maintaining a dominant role in the VAW movement. She did not believe that White women had the training, support, or interest to critically challenge their own power and unearned privilege, and their relationship to the racist, colonialist history we all share in Canada.

What I saw was this indifference. I saw women congratulating each other and celebrating their great successes and giving each other awards when violence against Native women was nuts. It was not even touchable. There wasn't even a sense that we should be doing this in a respectful way and we need to get beyond that intercultural anger and rage, and the fact that there's still colonial oppression, and patriarchal colonialism. White women were talking about patriarchy, but they were not talking about colonialism. And so, it finally got to the point where I just couldn't identify with it anymore, even though it had shaped so much of my thinking and it had been where I had derived so much of my identity and my feeling of strength and solidarity, but it just got harder and harder.

As an example of the racism and colonialism existing in the VAW movement, Deb C. recalled the ten-year struggle for Indigenous women to get their own shelter in the urban area of Ottawa, Ontario. They had received a donation to buy a building, but the city would only fund them under the homelessness budget, not the standard VAW spending budget that other VAW shelters were receiving. That meant they would only receive funding for per diem beds. In other words, if a bed was occupied by a woman, they would fund a minimum daily cost per filled bed. There was not, however, any funding provided for all the necessary services that VAW shelter activists fought so hard to get—for example, the support services women would require to deal with mental health issues, addictions, as well as the impacts of abuse and trauma.

Deb C. emphasized that in her experience working with Indigenous women, they need so much more in the way of support because of what their communities have been subjected to: the legacy of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, etc. Yet, Indigenous women were receiving the least funded services, a far inferior funding package compared to the mainstream VAW services. Indigenous women and girls are the most vulnerable women in the country, yet they have the least access to funding support and resources. As stated above, they do not get access to the VAW-specified funding stream that all the mainstream VAW shelters receive. Deb C. asked: Why is that? Is that fair?

The only way we got Oshki Kizis Lodge was a donation; a woman donated the money to buy the shelter. Then they had 60,000 a year to run it. The city said: We will give you homelessness funding. We will give you per diem beds. So, they had to do homelessness, with all of the mental health and addiction [issues as well as] abused women. That's the kind of hurdles that we had to jump through. It was insane and were any of the White women doing that? No! [laughter]. They didn't have to do that. They were getting VAW-specified money. And they had state-of-the-art shelters; this place was the old Elizabeth Fry House falling apart [laughter]. And no, nothing like physically accessible access for people with disabilities.

Like many shelter workers, Debbie, as a young activist scholar, gained experience as a relief worker in a number of downtown Toronto women's shelters while simultaneously working on her university degree. Shelter 'relief shift sharing' was a common political practice during the 1970s and 1980s. It was a brilliant way for workers to circulate practices and knowledge between the growing numbers of shelters and help each other learn how to do the day-to-day work on the ground. It also allowed Debbie, as a Black woman, to keenly observe the lack of diverse leadership in the several Toronto shelters where she worked. She became acutely aware of the absence of a race analysis in the early days of the shelter movement. She expressed her views on the initial VAW theorizing in this way:

[By the 1980s] I really felt that it was a powerful movement and that the violence against women's movement was really driving or organizing around women's issues here in Ontario. So, for me, it was all connected to the rape crisis centres and the work that the rape crisis centres were doing. I saw us all as part of one movement and that the conversation around issues of race and class were beginning to happen in the rape crisis centres, the sexual assault sector, you know, but that it wasn't necessarily happening in the violence against women sector [not until much later in

the 1990s].

In later years, Debbie was instrumental in building and running the Shirley Samaroo House, named in honour of an immigrant woman, a mother of two children, who had been brutally murdered in downtown Toronto by her estranged husband.¹⁸ It was the first immigrant women's shelter in the country, "set up by immigrant women for immigrant women," and the organizers ran into additional barriers similar to the ones that the Native women faced in Ottawa. They had to argue with the state to achieve their rightful place as a specifically VAW-funded shelter.

One of the fights we kept having with the provincial government was whether or not Samaroo House was an immigrant women's shelter and what does that mean, and how is it treated differently and those kinds of things, and for years there was no acknowledgement that this was set up by immigrant women for immigrant women.

What was incredibly unfair was the lack of recognition of all the additional and unique barriers facing immigrant women: language, status, fear of deportation, racism, lack of access to employment, housing, day care, and so on.

Participants like Beth portrayed the pain of challenging oppression in its many faces and the frustration that so many women have been left out of shaping the VAW movement in Ontario "because of racism, because of classism, because of ageism, ableism, internalized sexism" —a feeling expressed by many of the participants:

I am saddened by the way in which sometimes ego takes over and gets in the way of really good transformative work that could be done. I am personally and professionally reflective of the times that I could have done better; I could have done more to insure other women's voices were heard, to step aside from time to time because there were lots of other women that could have said exactly what I said. I continue to be frustrated when the needs of women and children at times appear to come second to building an organization, maintaining funding or the status quo.

That struggle was felt poignantly as the Shirley Samaroo House wrestled to find its wings. In the words of Debbie, a former Executive Director of Samaroo, VAW activists were "creating a

¹⁸ On November 29, 1984, an immigrant woman, Shirley Samaroo, had fled to the Emily Stowe Shelter, in Toronto, Ontario with her two children. She had fled there to escape the violence in her marriage. She was murdered by her estranged husband after returning to her apartment to pick up some of her belongings. Her two children were in the shelter's child witness group I was co-leading with child advocate, Leslie Chud. The shelter had just opened a year earlier, and Shirley would be the first woman to have been murdered. The staff and residents were devastated.

mess”:

But at the beginning of Samaroo, there’s a real tension between non-English-speaking immigrant women and English-speaking women and what tended to happen was that the English-speaking immigrant women tended to be Black women from the Caribbean. And so race became one of the tensions between the Latin American community and the Asian and South Asian communities and the Caribbean community and all of that within a collective. People coming from very different political spaces, not necessarily all identifying as feminists, not necessarily having the language, not necessarily having come out of the feminist tradition of working together within a collective and having conversations about power and power relationships. So, you can imagine that whole muddle, and not knowing how to administer an organization that’s publicly funded and that’s all of those kinds of things we were doing...creating a mess [laughter].

Several participants talked about the divisions they had to challenge in the movement.

Angela referred to the many ways that discrimination and marginalization played out in some of the myths that were circulating internally in the movement:

So, you begin to have the kind of hierarchies of oppression playing themselves out intra-movement, so one of the early critiques was the perception that all of the workers who were racialized were straight and homophobic, all of the leaders who were White and dykes and experiencing homophobia from racialized workers [were racist]. So, that was an early myth and not to say that there might not have been some real experience of that, but that became the dominant narrative.

There is a myth that feminists know better and get it right. However, that was not the case for most participants. Participants spoke to the pain of trying to do ARAO work within their own spaces. It was hard work that has left deep scars for some. Beth spoke for several participants with these words:

I also think about the ways that some of the stuff we talked about earlier has played out within this movement—the way racism and classism and ageism and ableism and heterosexism have played out to be divisive factors and to silo and to marginalize. So, I see the movement as something that’s given me so much in terms of grounding and a place for my soul to land, but it’s also been a source of great pain and struggle as well, so it’s conflicting for me.

The memories around the beginning days of identity politics were insufferable. Several participants described those internal struggles when they were trying to work out the power relations in the movement through the development of caucus. Angela recalled the irrationality of some of the reactions of VAW activists:

And then the split [occurred] and it was also the point at which the feminist movement was also looking at some of the same questions around identity and notions of identity politics emerged. So rather than talking intersectionality, people began talking identity politics. People became afraid of the women of colour caucus [laughter].

Deb C. also expressed the absurdity of some of the initial conversations:

I remember so many conferences and there would be a ‘lesbian-only’ space or ‘safe space for lesbians’ and then there were also women who were straight but they really felt that in another life or when their husband died...they would be a lesbian, so they felt they should be there too and then the lesbians would want to throw them out, and then you'd have a fight about, well, could the straight women be in a lesbian only group? Why did we do that? [laughter]

Even though many participants thought in holistic ways—trying to bring their whole selves to the movement—parts of their identity that were most oppressed still led their analysis. For instance, in Fran’s case, she spoke about being an older, queer, White woman with a disability who also tries to make the connections to other experiences of oppression:

What led my analysis was always about disability...I think for me foremost as a disabled woman, I mean that’s kind of quite obvious but then the other layers that I think about are being someone who is queer, not coming out until quite late in my life, an older woman...but what has always led my analysis has been around the disability. But I have always wanted to think about parallels around other oppressions—making connections around the ways that racism parallels with sexism and heterosexism, all of those pieces come together, and I feel like we’re in a much better position in this movement to think about these pieces.

Those participants who had grown up in the consciousness-raising phase of feminist collectives in the 1970s and 1980s felt they were better prepared to have their views on power and privilege challenged in constructive ways. Those with strong foundational training in unpacking their identities and assumptions in safe ways were able to develop a critical consciousness around the meaning of political solidarity across differences. Several participants believed that the development of critical consciousness was a lifetime journey of learning, and that activists should expect to always be open to challenge. Such practice is best done, in their view, in compassionate learning environments as part of a daily reflexive practice. One participant, Jane, experienced in building political solidarity across difference, expressed her belief in the importance of learning how to think critically:

We needed to keep in our organizations this ongoing combo of healing and training and awareness building and it has to be done with personal support... you can't just go into a classroom and get taught something in a didactic manner and not unfold yourself in that.

An example of this kind of knowledge base was shared by, Anna, who gained activist experience in the initial days of the Toronto RCC collective—one of the oldest collectives in the country—and had this wisdom to share:

It was a way of speaking to power and it meant that you had to ground your feelings in an analysis so that you weren't just going off... This is the impact you're having on me, I am not worried about your feelings and kind of just saying with [critical self-reflexivity], "What's going on?" "What are the power differences going on?" It doesn't matter what your intention is. This is the impact it's having. This is what I need to change, and this is why, for the bigger political purpose, this needs to change, and I just found [that training] really valuable and very helpful.

In the beginning days of the movement there were interminable fights to be heard, and to express themselves, first in caucus and then in the larger arena. The development of critical thinking skills was considered a priority for these collectives and an essential part of their political toolkit. Jane talked about the responsibility of collective caucus members:

Having groups in caucus meant that you would always notice if there was only one of somebody, so if you have a lesbian caucus or a women of colour caucus, but if there was a lesbian woman of colour in your collective it would be noticeable and we would need to pay attention to that and note that somebody was alone in that social location and that they didn't have other caucus members to work with.

She went on to explain that the role of the collective members was to first understand the experience of each other's oppression and then to critically examine how each member might be complicit in maintaining that oppression. Subsequently they carved out the necessary skills to examine the underlying systems at play:

And the process was not one of blame, although it sometimes got interpreted that way later on, but it was one of helping somebody who didn't see, because of their particular privilege in their location, the reality of somebody else's life.

For other participants, that emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills was lost or had never existed in their later training. Erin recalled it in this way:

We had to have growing pains, and we had to fight; we had to have some difficult conversations, but we've lost that capacity to feel safe enough and to take the risks

to say, “I think what you are saying is shitty [laughter] and I actually don’t buy it.” We’ve lost the capacity because we personalize everything, right? So, we personalize it; it hurts, it’s sharp, it feels violent.

Shifting Relations with the State

Several participants made reference to the shift in government priorities that took place in the early 1990s. Demands for diversity on staff and boards—in some cases directed from government-funding bodies—accompanied increased funding for feminist organizations. For example, under the newly elected New Democratic Party (NDP) leadership of Bob Rae, there was a greater awareness of feminist issues, such as VAW and the need for corresponding publicly funded services. A number of experienced feminist allies were in leadership positions inside the Ontario Women’s Directorate, along with overtly feminist political leaders such as Minister Marion Boyd, the first feminist Attorney General in the province and a former activist in the VAW movement; she was instrumental as Executive Director in the development of the Battered Women’s Advocacy Clinic (BWAC) in London, Ontario.

Anna recalled how the shift happened. She remembered how, under the NDP leadership [1990–1995], their funding quadrupled, and they then experienced more demand on how they ran the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (TRCC). There was greater pressure to become a hierarchy and there was pressure to become a more diverse organization to reflect the women they were serving, particularly in terms of racial diversity. Social movement organizations (SMOs) were expected to make the necessary changes to reflect a more diverse VAW movement on their boards and staff. Participants in this study took up the challenge.

We were White, overwhelmingly White, North American...and so there was absolutely a need for rape crisis centres, and I think everywhere within the VAW movement, to address racism and the lack of leadership or the blocking of leadership of women of colour and immigrant women. There were increasing calls for your board to be accountable. This gelled so nicely with feminist advocacy...[First, we] advocated against the government and then you’re doing a contract for the government because they are giving you the money, so then it all shifts.

Integrating ARAO Work

Many participants were disheartened at the level of liberal ‘White racism’ in the

movement, and they questioned if the VAW movement believed they should be proactive in training their workers in ARAO work in an ongoing and sustainable way. Some participants believed that the theory of ARAO thinking was catching on but not necessarily the practice of ARAO work. Marsha captured their concern in these words: “I think the practice hasn’t quite caught up to the theory yet and the number of people who embrace the theory is greater than the number of us who are actually able to implement it”.

In fact, some participants wondered if ARAO work was now even considered an essential knowledge foundation for VAW work and movement-building work within then mainstream VAW sector. While some participants questioned the commitment to ARAO work, all the study participants agreed it was essential work that needed to be at the heart of the VAW movement in Ontario. As well, participants agreed that ongoing, effective ARAO training programs needed to be accessible, affordable and fully supported with adequate funding to be able to keep the VAW movement moving forward. These concerns are reflected in the words of several of the participants:

I think it’s essential that we speak truth to each other. I think that has been one of the most difficult challenges we’ve had. If we just look at the VAW movement, when women of colour challenge White leadership or say where’s your commitment to be more inclusive of women with disabilities, say “Wait a minute. You say you have an accessibility policy, but how am I included in what you’re doing? Are we able to challenge each other and be heard and make changes? Can we speak truth to one another, because if there’s any hope for people to listen it’s within the context of our shared commitment. (Marsha)

We had to have growing pains, and we had to fight really, we had to have some really difficult conversations, but we’ve lost that capacity to feel safe enough and I know we all have issues around using the word creating safer space but we have lost that capacity to take the risks. (Erin)

The assumptions that we make in this work as directors, as frontline workers, as funders, are dangerous to women—unchecked assumptions and bias...So, if we haven’t and don’t vigilantly do our work around those assumptions we make, those decisions we make, the power that we yield becomes dangerous and women fall through those cracks. (Beth)

Charlene insisted on the importance of sustaining an ARAO work as the centerpiece of the VAW movement. In her opinion, it required that all staff, board members and the public be

frequently informed about what an ARAO framework is and why it had to be front and centre as a guiding principle for the movement:

So, I will share a little of a struggle that I have had with a Board that's very good, with a Board that's very strong but now wants to remove some of those key pieces, which I consider to be key foundational pieces of who we are as a movement... feminism, oppression, racism...and why do we need to say this in every document that we have? Why do we need to say this in every policy? And I am like, "Because it needs to be there, these are the reasons why." "Well can't we have one document that talks about it all and it goes in the front?" No, it has to be front and centre. We are the ones who have to make sure that happens. It can't be watered down and that's a fear I have. It is very similar to issues around disability. And it's whatever is the new thing that's bubbling up is what takes precedent and all of these other pieces get off to the side.

We need to continue it [ARAO training]. I think for a lot of organizations provincially it's really been watered down. It's not as present anymore. But that's got to start at the top. It's got to start with the Board. That's got to be set and carved in stone. So, we talk about how we respond to our communities, the women and children that we're serving, and if we're not talking about and operating from that ARAO type of perspective then I don't think we're doing a full service.

Erin agreed with the centering of an ARAO framework in VAW movement work and recalled her frustration when she would witness workers skipping the ARAO training. She stated:

I came into the movement and then all of a sudden I watched people tell me... "Oh, don't bother going to the ARAO training. This is when everybody goes shopping." And I am thinking to myself: as a bi-racial woman, that's not going to work for me—and going to the meeting and saying: Why is it that people would sooner go shopping than talk about the anti-racism, anti-oppression framework that we all need to be working from?

OAITH Takes the Lead in ARAO Training for Shelters

Introducing an ARAO framework was a challenging initiative for the VAW movement. OAITH took the lead to train the VAW shelter movement in Ontario. It took courage and it was not without pain and struggle. Participants expressed uncomfortable memories of those early ARAO trainings. The first round of training that occurred in the early 1990s was very complicated learning—painful for the facilitators and painful for the participants. Racism, colonialism, and White fragility were ever-present in the training sessions and there was fear that the movement would be permanently divided and harmed by doing the ARAO work.

Several participants raised the issues of the surrounding anger and seeming lack of compassion that the ARAO work seemed to surface and that activists were not trained to deal with. Erin, one of the well-received and most effective ARAO trainers, expressed a view shared by several participants:

That was in the early to mid 90s when you would hear women stand up in rooms and say as a White woman—or I don't want to be offensive but, and then they would say something—because there was all this fear around. What if I say it wrong? What if I say it and it offends somebody? Then all of a sudden, I am reflecting all of this historical stuff that I haven't addressed it as a White woman or as an Aboriginal woman and all of the anger and retaliation, right, all of these things that we conceived as notions. And I remember thinking: that's why I have to do the anti-racism work as a bi-racial woman. I know the oppressed are not to be educating the oppressors, but at some point we have got to figure out where to find common ground because this is just going to destroy us—and in the end destroy the work that we're trying to do because we lose focus on those folks who are the most important people and all we want to do is focus on the nattering and the fighting and the taking sides and that kind of ugly kind of stuff.

Jane was one of several participants who believed strongly that to be successful, the practice of the ARAO guiding principles had to be viewed as central to the mission of the VAW work. Staff needed to be supported, taught, guided and held accountable in compassionate ways on how to be self-reflexive and non-defensive in their decolonizing process. Jane had every faith that all activists in the field are capable of unpacking their identities and assumptions given the proper support and guidance. After all, in her view, anyone who is doing the VAW work has already sorted out that gender-based violence is a tool of a sexist social structure, so the same critical thinking tools can be applied to every other form of oppression that we as activists try (or should be trying) to dismantle:

So, if we started this movement by developing awareness of how we were divided by gender and how gender-based violence was a tool of our social structure, we [also] needed to be able to understand how racism is a tool of the social structure and how classism and poverty is... And it does mean you have to look at yourself...and if you don't have an organization in which that's built in, then of course you are going to get upset when you go to a conference and somebody challenges you.

Pam believed that, as participants in a movement, VAW activists needed to learn to be more compassionate with one another, “to be kinder and gentler with each other.” Jane recalled that

in the ARAO training “we focused on the political part of understanding ARAO work—trained to unpack and personalize, OAITH tried to train the shelter sector.” Fran supported what many participants raised: that movement building work is difficult work and activists need to both support and challenge each other to make mistakes, and to learn from their mistakes.

It’s such a delicate balance that I think I am somebody who in my work am really mindful; I want to be really cognizant of the fact that people are coming to this conversation not with a whole lot of knowledge, prior knowledge, and I feel like there are conversations that have been had for a much longer time you know, but still, we still need to have some room for people to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes and I don’t know how you do that in a way where people don’t feel guilty for their mistakes.

Erin joined the ARAO committee around 1996, when the committee was struggling. It was after OAITH’s first attempt to train the shelter movement. However, in her words, “the anti-racism training and work across the province was really not well managed.” Erin recalled how afraid activists were to explore the real realities of embracing an ARAO language and what it would mean in daily practice. They feared that by using the ARAO language they would somehow be saying that they were responsible for the historic problems of oppression. They had little foundation or necessary skills in developing a critical thinking lens as it related to racism, colonialism, ableism, and so on. OAITH, however, did not give up, and after some painful lessons learned from the first round of ARAO training, members facilitated a different approach in the second round and it was well received.

So, I joined the ARAO committee and we had a panel of experts and they were survivors from all over the province from various ethno-racial cultural backgrounds...from various lived experience and from various nations and places in our communities. They did a panel and I think that created a shift because workers across the province and advocates actually had to hear it from the women, and we didn’t sugar coat it. We set it up the best that we could to have the women feel as safe as possible and we were honest and said, “This is the way it could go; this is a risk. And we’re asking you to engage in this risk with us.” And it was after that that we started to do the trainings provincially. It was at that time when we started to [develop] the *Creating Inclusive Spaces* manual (Erin).

On a positive and proud note, Sly, a study participant who had experienced attending several ARAO training workshops over the course of her movement work, stated her thoughts about the

training in this way:

Most of the training, in terms of anti-racism and anti-oppression, really happened in the VAW sector—the sophistication of it—and...was like no other we were getting anywhere else. So then we started to bring it to the mainstream; and when I think about it, that's one of the gifts and one of the successes [of the VAW movement]...we didn't always get it right but the analysis was rock solid. I just don't think we always knew how to do it in practice or deliver it and then it created expectations of change that we weren't able to always do fast enough...Some of the best trainings that happened in this province and even in the country, I think, were born out of that VAW skill set... It's like all the people that were from this group of people went on to do trainings that informed the rest of the province.

The Northern Tour

A key theme raised by several participants, particularly those working in rural and isolated parts of the province, was the importance of budgeting for funding to attend conferences and professional development workshops as well as to bring in outside. A typical knowledge translation strategy used within the VAW movement was to send one staff member to a conference and then bring the knowledge back to the local staff and wider community. When there was a sufficient rationale, using what little funding they could scrape together, participants would host a guest speaker to come into their region for the event and get as many activists and community members together as funding and travel costs would allow. That is how the ARAO training program, *Introduction to Native Culture*, evolved. The North Western Women's Decade Council supported Gloria's efforts to bring Native knowledge to all the northern shelters and it was considered a great success. Gloria reflected on the success of the ARAO training she brought to northern Ontario. She recalled returning from a mental health conference in Banff, Alberta where she had met a remarkable Indigenous educator, Lorraine Sinclair. Gloria wanted to bring her wisdom and talent to Ontario:

It was around the early 1990s. The Secretary of State gave us enough money for travel, hotels, meals, and then articles or supplies. I said I would like to get dream catchers, star blankets, and books to leave with each shelter as a starting point and they all got it...But the whole idea was if an Aboriginal woman comes in and she sees a star blanket, wrap her in it. It's something she might know from home—a quilted blanket. Same with the dream catcher and the medicine wheel—visual things they might recognize.

Initially, cultural issues had often been dealt with minimally by making translations of pamphlets and flyers. Increasingly, however, as ARAO cultural interpreters were supported to transfer their rich cultural knowledge more broadly, graphics, visuals, crafts and sacred objects also came to provide powerful symbols and connections and create an inclusive space for all women.

A number of participants recognized the additional barriers facing rural and isolated women. Erin recalled growing up as a city kid and the insight she gained from moving to a rural community and leading a shelter staff dealing primarily with rural women. She articulated her new understanding in the following way:

Rural communities where you [the women] now have to drive an hour and a half right, or the worker has to do an hour and a half of driving or the family won't get access to what they need, right...I was always a city kid so working in a rural community for the past 8 years has been really interesting because you see transportation and isolation and all the things you understood and you see that play out.

However, Erin was not to be daunted by these barriers. As with all the participants in this study, when faced with challenges, she looked for ways of resolving them, and in a feminist way, making it work better for the women:

I see various opportunities and I always talked to the staff about the fact that you know, when we talk about feminist counselling and we talk about reframing, we sometimes have to actually act on that in our lives and in our communities. So we can take the notion of reframing and look at it [differently]. We're isolated [but] we see the mayor in the grocery store, so we can say to the mayor "so did you hear about this today"...or you have a forum with the county council and look at politicians much differently right? Because we are re-framing it and we're saying this is what we have to work with, let's make this work better for the women right?

Gloria also spoke of the challenges rural shelters dealt with and one major concern was the constant threat of being closed because shelter staff were not always able to fill their beds which is how the State funds shelters on a per diem funding model based on occupancy. Rural shelter staff, more than urban shelter staff, do a substantial amount of their advocacy and counselling with women, by phone. This phone advocacy is an essential aspect of their work, yet it is not recognized by the State and thus is not adequately funded.

Being the rural shelter, we didn't get a steady influx of women coming in. We had breaks, we had gaps, and we had threats to close because we weren't busy enough {Laughing}.

What It Means to Be an Ally

Participants in this study collectively agreed that they cannot do this work alone. Wendy spoke for many participants when she referred to the necessary preparation that is required to train oneself to be a true ally. While several participants agreed that they had a natural affinity for justice from a young age, as described in Theme 1, that did not automatically translate into knowing how to do VAW and ARAO work. They had to prepare themselves and learn how to do it. They had to learn to sit with discomfort as they went through the process of unpacking identity, or as some participants would say, embracing the process of decolonization. In Wendy's words:

I would say to people who wanted to be allies that when you make a conscious decision that you are going to recognize the privilege that you have, speak out against oppression, it's going to be hopefully empowering for you but it's also going to put you in very uncomfortable places where you will be treated just like those that you are trying to be an ally to support. So, whether you're heterosexual and you're speaking out against homophobia or you are White and speaking out about racism, you have to be able to expect you will experience that treatment and it will not be 100% the same because you will still be able to walk away with that White privilege and fit right into the [dominant] world.

Participants like Fran realized that not everyone could sit at the policy table at the same time. She noted that she needs to count on her allies to bring forward the issues that affect the women whose stories she hears. Moving beyond her own lived experience, she has educated herself on other women's experiences, beginning with women's disability anthologies.

To really be inclusive and think about inclusion...that also embraces disability not as a place or a problem but as someone's identity and impacts one's lens in the way that they look at their situation.

Fran instructed her allies to do the same. She insists that as allies, we have to know the stories deeply in order to share them. If allies demonstrated their ability to do that, Fran could relax and not be burdened with the constant fear of what happens if she is not at the table.

I mean I would love to be at a table where there are other people that are bringing

those issues up, to raise those issues, because if I am not there, I don't know and that's not to say that it doesn't happen, but it always feels a bit risky...And I don't like to be the only one. I don't like to be the only holder of that knowledge.

Deb C. describes what an authentic ally looks like in her world of Indigenous activism, where she believes Indigenous women need so much more of everything than non-Indigenous women because of the cultural genocide that has happened to her people. One day she received an unexpected call from a colleague working at the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre (RCC):

She called us up and she said, "We've got a donor who wants to donate some money for healing, no questions asked—20,000 bucks, no question. Do with it what you want. I want you to have it for the Native women. Well, of course you talk to the Elders, right. And what do the Elders want? Well, the Elders want residential school trauma recovery.

This one-time modest donation from an anonymous donor via the Ottawa RCC was like compound interest—it just kept giving back. It resulted in the development and delivery of the first trauma recovery and healing program for Elders and caregivers who had suffered the experience of generations of residential schools. This experience led to Deb C.'s development of the first training manual for survivors of residential schools, *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People: A Resource Manual* (Chansonneuve, 2002, 2005), one of the first of its kind in Canada and later to become a bestseller for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

So, we designed a retreat. We took that 20,000 bucks and we had a retreat for residential school survivors—the first trauma recovery retreat—and it was amazing. It was a lot of the wisdom keepers who went to that; they did their healing and they started talking, going back and taking their teaching and then all of those women who had been removed [from their families] and so damaged in residential schools, they started their healing journey and they all became Elders and grandmothers and really respected people in their community just because somebody [was a real ally].

Some participants were generous in their praise of their allies. For example, Gloria's strategy to support her allies was to publicly name them in all of her ARAO trainings:

I praise them in every workshop I do with ARAO. I always talk about the White women allies and you can't do the work without them. Yes, you can have your Aboriginal caucus, you can have your Aboriginal women's group and circles and all that, but if you're going to really move forward there's red, yellow, black and White, not just the red race, and I have had more opportunities with all nations since I have

been in Toronto. I cannot believe it: we're sitting here, and four colours are actually around the table, not just White, not just White and one red. I love that.

Another participant activist, Lynn Z., described how her shelter dealt with a complaint of racism from a volunteer. They had already created an Aboriginal Advisory Committee (ACC) and so sought its advice as to the best way to handle the complaint. The ACC advised them to have a healing circle with all the staff, students, and volunteers present. They met in a very large circle.

So the one woman told her story and this other woman talked and then the Elders spoke and they did their teachings about it and one of the things they said [their words] were a comfort to me: that no one person should have to absorb and be responsible for the rage that comes from generations of hurt. So, then we talked—where everybody spoke around the circle and when it ended, it was quite a beautiful [healing time].

Lynn Z's shelter and community went on to engage an ARAO trainer and continued to seek guidance and lessons from the ACC. They continue this unpacking/decolonizing process as a regular part of their ongoing critical reflection of their activist work. That is what it means to be an ally.

One participant, Lynne C., remembered realizing that she and her staff were not properly trained to effectively address all the needs of the women they were serving in their rural community: 15 percent Aboriginal women, 15 percent Francophone women, and 70 percent English women. A program supervisor had received a complaint from the community. Lynne's initial response was defensive but that quickly faded: "I got over myself and went to work; we have to change this—and we did." This 'can do' spirit was a constant theme: participants' curiosity, their desire to learn, to search out opportunities to teach, or to find or develop tools to help move themselves, their staff and their communities further down the road to compassionate critical consciousness. After doing substantial training on the needs of their Francophone and Aboriginal sisters, and with the guidance of their local Aboriginal Elders and Francophone leaders, Lynne and her staff transformed their shelter space and programs to reflect the needs of *all* the women they served, not only the ones who looked like them. The following quotation is

one example of the transformation that took place within the shelter after effective ARAO training regarding language needs:

Make sure that she has the right to access her emotional language. Because the abuse has happened in that language; everything has happened in that language. She needs to access that emotional centre and it only comes out when she is speaking her language.

The transformation continues as survivors, staff and volunteers get behind a fundraising project to rebuild the physical space to be more welcoming and inclusive for all the women they serve, making every space in the shelter reflect cultural inclusiveness.

Angela described the critical importance of a final type of ally—people on the inside of government, the ones who understand the importance of maintaining a social justice movement lens and who ‘get it’—who comprehend that VAW is not only about creating and delivering shelter and support services but doing so in the service of revolutionary social change by building a movement. This belief is similar to what other participants spoke to in their work as insiders in government when they referred to themselves as FIGS [Feminists inside Government] and Femocrats.

There are folks who were allies in terms of women and men...who were allies who felt that, yes, the work of violence against women needed to be funded. They were in governments and they said, “Okay, we are on the inside; we will be allies to make this happen.” So, there were people who were allies, whose intention was not to have the movement—the social justice part of the movement—be done away with or be diminished (Angela).

Barb K., a FIG, an inside ally to many of us in the VAW movement, spoke about her work as a feminist inside government, in this way:

Well, I think that the advice that I have always given to younger women that I have worked with in government has been to be real, be honest, be open. You can gain a lot by being connected to community people who tell you the truth and tell you what’s really happening and can help you to present a more complete case and a more complete analysis of an issue. If you listen to them. So, I say...listen, be honest, be as transparent as you can be. And to women in the community, I say...find allies in government, find people who are open to guiding you through government bureaucracy, who believe in the issues that you believe in. You, don’t charge in like a bull with accusations and recriminations and hope to be influential right? I mean you turn people off in the community, you turn people off in government when you do that, so it’s about learning how to be influential.

Theme 5: Hope for a Movement

“So, that’s why I will be doing this work until I die, because if you stop hoping, you stop living.” Marsha Sfeir (participant interview—2015)

In the fifth theme with five connected subthemes, I describe how participants in the VAW movement: 1) learned how to hold the tensions that inevitably arise when doing movement work; 2) reflected on the importance of self-care for themselves and the movement; 3) named their successes; 4) expressed their hopes for the future and where they need to focus their objectives from here onward and lastly, 5) offered their gift to the movement – they collectively provide a detailed list of the legacy that they want to leave for future activists, through their lessons learned and wisdom gleaned from a lifetime of more than eight hundred years collectively of feminist activism.

Holding the Tensions

Several participants struggled to hold the myriad of tensions that existed in the evolution of the VAW movement in Ontario. For example, struggling to hold a movement lens while also trying to run an ever more complex set of services for women and their families, working with men as allies and as service providers while also sorting out the best way men can be allies without taking over women’s leadership, holding the tension of fighting for public funding while simultaneously challenging the state, and so on.

One of the major inherent tensions shared by several participants related to the initial days of the VAW movement and how they began their activist work as members of a social movement with the political agenda of ending VAW. Throughout the interviews, participants kept returning to this question: Are we a movement or have we become a sector? Their responses to this concern have been woven throughout the findings. The evolution from VAW movement work to VAW sector work is beautifully expressed in the words of Anna:

These are two very different things because a movement for me comes out of ...It’s reactive. It’s emotion. It’s resistance. It’s ever-changing. It’s built from the root,

the grassroots up. It's inclusive. It speaks to a lot of different things, whereas a sector for me is an employment sector. It's not so much a movement. A movement is about social change. For me, a sector doesn't speak to that. A sector is regulated, a sector is professionalized, a sector is kind of just boundaried. A movement feels wide, like if I have a vision [of a social movement] it's a wave.

This distinction is arguably critical. Public funds and funding accountability are critical to building the shelters, the rape crisis centres, and the counselling services; to writing the training curriculums for all the sectors dealing with women who are abused; and then to providing the training while also learning how to run a shelter, a rape crisis centre, or a woman's counselling service. Shelters and RCCs are often referred to as social movement organizations (SMOs) and form the foundation of a VAW movement, as much feminist work is conducted through feminist organizations (Arnold, 2011). The participants interviewed fought hard for that funding, but there was a price to pay—the politics of funding was not without major stresses. The trade-off was the challenge of being able to maintain a movement lens while also creating and running services. Michele recalled it in this way:

And I remember writing columns. They must be provincially funded; there has to be adequate funding and so we finally got it. I mean thousands of women worked for that and that was the beginning of the end of the shelters as part of the movement. They're necessary, but the passion to change society, to change our culture, that just disappeared once it became merely service. And I think the lesson is we had to create those services. They were needed. They were vital.

Several participants were vocal about the ultimate impossibility of using state funding to finance a revolution while also working on the frontlines and running a service. In Beth's words:

I think there's a way that we've slipped into delivering services and we've lost that piece of our services that are political by nature. The reason they exist was directly to interrupt gender-based violence against women.

Marsha drew on her unpaid activist experience in the United States to recommend the following idea. She observed that we have spent the last 40 years successfully creating services for women and their families and building the VAW movement in Ontario from the ground up. She said it is now time for us to step back and re-examine how we do political work and advocacy

work going forward. She asked that activists challenge themselves to think about how they could creatively come together as activists to fund the political aspect of their work themselves.

The problem with [public funding] is where is that money going to come from and what strings are going to be attached to it? We need a body that simply advocates, that we support because it's an important part of our sector and our movement and if we all have charitable status then we can't do the kinds of advocating that needs to be done, especially in an environment like this one, where if you say the wrong thing you lose your funding. So, I really think we have to look at the impact that funding has had on our inability to build a stronger and larger movement in the VAW sector. I think that's been one of the [major] stumbling blocks.

All participants spoke about the tensions of being part of a social movement with a social change agenda at its centre while also needing funding to build a VAW movement from the ground up. Deb C. reminded us that there is “always going to be tension but I also think that it's through those tensions that we transform. That we're at our best.” Another participant, Sly, spoke of the invaluable lesson of learning to be present with the tensions as she sorted out her conflicting views of working with men, for example. She explained how she personally resolved the dilemma because her historic experience of raising issues related to working with men always seemed to “split the room immediately.” As a result of such divisions, she believed that many VAW activists avoided the difficult conversations about dealing with men who abuse women and children. She proudly arrived at this place of peace when she realized she could “just hold the tensions. I don't have to resolve either of them. I can hold them—to be present—because they both exist.”

Self-Care for a Movement

In this subtheme, participants highlighted the importance of paying attention to their own personal needs as well as to the needs of the movement. As difficult as VAW activist work is, most participants articulated it as primarily positive in nature, noting how it had strengthened them and given them a sense of life purpose. They used expressions such as “sense of purpose,” “inspiration,” “fueled by the women,” “strengthened by such brave stories” and “an honour to be in the company of such courageous and strong women.” Charlene described what many

participants referred to as the “sacredness of the work”: “There is a beauty for me that is indescribable when I see a transformation occur with that woman.” This experience highlights the positive impact of the work, as shared by many. In my own words,

My own personal experience in a teen dating relationship helped me develop what I would call a ‘compassionate curiosity’ with women and I fell in love with them. I loved running the groups; I loved speaking with them. I did not find it to be depressing work. I found the work to be empowering and invigorating, and I believed that for a woman to sit with me and with another group of women telling her truth was just to be the greatest privilege in the world, a sacred moment really.

All the participants agreed with the critically important role that managers of SMOs can play in modeling good self-care. They spoke of the impacts of vicarious trauma (VT) and compassion fatigue (CF) on the individual, the staff, and the VAW movement as a whole. Specifically, if VT is ignored, it can destroy an organization and undo a movement. For example, Wendy, as Executive Director of a SMO, described how she paid attention to the needs of her staff in a holistic manner. The staff have a health and wellness committee with rotating leadership. They have meals together, do beadwork together, take time to walk and talk together, and engage in fun activities that will nourish their spirits. Self-care is considered an organizational strategy to maintain a vibrant atmosphere. Not only is there no stigma attached to self-care, there is a widespread organizational recognition that VAW work is very difficult work, necessitating leaders to facilitate healthy ways of doing the work for themselves, the staff, and the movement as a whole.

On the other hand, Angela witnessed the costs of ignoring health and wellness. As a long-time activist in a variety of settings, she has observed the intense suffering of individuals who become unwell and how that can lead to destructive behaviour in how we do the work, which “then fueled some of the fragmentation and the dismantling of not only movements, but of organizations as well.” She went on to postulate:

You cannot do this work of movement building and be transformative and not do self-care work because at the end of the day, when you don’t do that and you become undone, the movement becomes undone. The things that you’re in fact trying to resist end up winning. So that for me became an unanticipated

consequence but in hindsight something that we didn't have on our radar [in the early years].

In summary, most participants experienced the horrors of doing VAW work, yet they were not deterred. They may have had moments of despair, but as a group they were surprisingly resilient and hopeful about moving forward. Their persistence in the face of a harsh and often hostile environment made them even more committed to activist work. This leads me to the next subtheme, "Naming our Successes."

Naming Our Successes

Several activists shared stories of success, transformation and hope. They spoke of sacred moments in their work, moments that made them aware of how privileged they are to be doing this work. For example, one Indigenous participant spoke about the respect she felt from people when they formally acknowledged her territory. Gloria perceived the recognition of her people as a success of the work of the VAW movement. She said she was pleased when powerful leaders acknowledge "the original inhabitants of the land," which is a powerful teaching moment in her mind and a success of the VAW movement.

Some government representatives are speaking the language more and more and using it, and if I mention that in front of people, they say: "Oh, they are doing that just to win votes." I said, "But they are still being said; the words are being said." [Former] Premier Kathleen Wynne will say that "I like to recognize that we're on the territory of the Mississauga, the New Credit First Nation every time," and when I started hearing government people saying that it just makes me sit up and say: "Did you hear what she just said, giving recognition to the original inhabitants of this country?"

Several participants were enthusiastic in their review of the many successes that they attributed to feminist organizing. In fact, as Angela stated, "VAW is a success of feminist organizing." Participants listed out in quick succession many of their accomplishments since this phase of the VAW movement began in Ontario in the early 1970s. They have made huge strides in shifting public opinion toward the view that violence against women is unacceptable. Angela went further in naming the impact feminist activism has had on creating attitudinal

change in classrooms across the province and country.

The fact that there are young women who can tell you that “No, it’s not okay for you to be in a relationship where somebody is hitting you” is a feminist success. And if you go in the school system and ask junior kindergarten girls and boys, “Is it okay for John to hit you Sue?” I would dare say you would have a majority who would say no, it’s not okay.

Moving from ground zero to the establishment of a network of women’s shelters—including shelters for Indigenous women as well as a vast network of rape crisis centres and sexual violence centres in Ontario in less than five decades—is an enormous accomplishment. Participants described having fought for and achieved the support from the public to fund VAW services. Feminists are now sought-after and command attention when sitting at policy tables at both local and provincial policy tables. Participants have provided leadership across all sectors in Ontario to develop and deliver feminist-informed curriculums to the police, the Crown, judges, and practitioners in the health care system, the child welfare system, the education system, and the housing sector, among others.

Participants credited the VAW movement, and feminist scholars and activists in particular, with establishing a credible body of research and evidence that documents the presence of violence in women’s lives and makes it more visible. Despite the challenges, participants were proud to claim ownership of the ARAO work done to date in Ontario. That work, as Fran noted, includes expanding the proverbial table to include the voices of women from marginalized groups and communities:

I would say one of the areas of success is the recognition of doing this work to support communities of women that may not necessarily have had the opportunity to be at the table, to develop leadership and skills so that they could be at the table and hold their own.

Charlene expressed the belief that “our biggest success is that as a movement we’re still here.” Barb K. spoke of the transformation she witnessed inside government as feminists at every level brought passion and zeal to their work. Among the positive aspects of working in the movement, she identified her solidarity work with other women to bring improvement at the

governmental level and to the judicial system:

Well, having worked with women like you, having worked to make improvements in the government and the justice system and to hopefully leave it better than 20 years ago when I joined it and to see that women who have been traumatized have more supports, have more opportunities to make choices and to have more choices now. I mean things are still tough, I know, but not as tough as they were 30 years ago. I retire feeling like I did my best. It was frustrating at times, but I was part of making some change and, you know, that's the reward. That makes me feel good. Yes, that's my reward.

Holly encouraged other activists to lay claim to all the accomplishments they have made as a victory for feminist work:

I think the positive impacts are feeling like you are a part of something big. It's been one of the most important, probably the most important social movement in our time, right? We're nowhere in the same social, economic situation that our mothers and grandmothers were in.

Barb M. spoke passionately about the power of coalition-building and saw her work with the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Center (OCRCC) as a major success of feminist organizing:

The Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centers was a very radical group of women ...they were *second wave* feminists, very firmly committed to having violence against women publicly acknowledged, understood and to have institutions held accountable, have communities [take on the issue], not sweeping this issue under the carpet. I think we all felt like it was an organization that gave us voice, that gave us a possibility of being heard in a way that in our own centers we didn't have that. We felt strong [together].

Participants were animated in naming their successes, but no one believed their work was done. They shared their thoughts on the importance of what the next phase of the movement should be about. This leads me to the last subtheme on moving forward.

Moving Forward

The majority of participants strongly believed in the power of social movements to transform society. They have devoted their lives to their beliefs. And they also insisted they are only four or five decades into the changes they have started. Many of their ideas have yet to take hold. In terms of moving forward, they lay out their 'wish list', their dreams and aspirations, for where the movement will be in the next 50 years. Among their aims is

educating new social work students with an ARAO trauma-informed, empowerment approach to develop VAW expertise, and doing so within a historical movement lens. For example, Angela urged the academy, especially the social work profession, to teach young social workers about a VAW-specific framework for analysis:

I think there's a piece of work that's unfinished business where those of us now need to respond to the academy to say, "We need you to make some things mandatory," because in order for us to really make this sector, we need a new group of workers who will bring that analysis.

In other words, the activists interviewed emphasized the importance of bringing in new voices that historically have been invisible in the VAW movement, and thus building solidarity with women in their struggles. In Jane's words:

So, we have to somehow hear those voices and ask what they want. And that movement is coming whatever that is, maybe that's what the next 40 years is about [laughter].

Another goal involves rethinking the mandatory charge policy in Ontario by being willing to have bold conversations about revisiting the way the criminal justice system addresses violence against women. While no participant wanted to return to the days when VAW was not considered a criminal issue, most participants believed that the criminal justice system has been highly ineffective for most women, particularly racialized women. Sly asked the following question as a way of offering up her wisdom:

How do we have these critical conversations, these courageous conversations where everybody leaves all of their shit at the door and we're actually really able to sort of build and think together and then challenge each other in a way that you're not losing anything but [think through] what is the best answer for women now?

Angela provided the reminder that though the criminal justice system is deeply flawed, it is still a tool that feminists can use to engage in continuous law reform, though it should not be the exclusive use of our talents and energies. For some participants like Pam, law reform is their feminist work. Angela lifted up "the fact that we have legal precedents, as limited sometimes as they can be in terms of how they get interpreted by the people who make decisions...about how rape cases should be processed through the court systems." She said that

these give rise to questions about “where there should be limits put, what are the pieces of women’s history, as much as we have challenges about how that gets implemented and we continue to have to be vigilant about that.” For her these are legitimate questions that “we can pose back to the courts as a challenge to say: ‘You know what? This law crosses the line.’”

Many participants also bemoaned the lack of funding available to educate a new generation of VAW activists about how to do authentic empowerment work, and in particular, how to do effective advocacy. Lynne C. demonstrated in action the meaning of ‘to empower’ and provided an excellent example of the kind of effective advocacy that well-trained VAW activists do on a daily basis—a necessary, but too often unfunded, aspect of VAW work:

Women need a navigator through these systems. I mean, who knew that when you apply for Ontario Disability Support that there is a denial period. A lot of people go ‘oh geez, I was denied.’ No, you prepare people for that and you say you are going to be denied and then we’re going to do this and then we’re going to do that, and then you’re going to get you approved, right?

And lastly, participants claimed the recent victories of high-profile sexual violence cases and the accompanying new media campaigns such the *#Me Too* and *#Times Up* to be a direct result of decades of VAW feminist organizing. Women and their advocates have always been speaking up and breaking the silence about the suffering they have endured, primarily at the hands of men. The problem was that no one was listening to them or believing them. Even in the face of substantial evidence, women have lost their cases when exposed to the misogynist, racist, colonial scrutiny embedded in the criminal justice system. The difference in this current era of *#Me Too* is that more than one woman was publicly accusing the same predator of similar acts of violence and the courts and the public began to listen. For the first time, men who committed these acts of violence and bullying have been held accountable in the court of public opinion, if not yet in the legal system. Beth affirmed the view of a number of participants:

I think all of that pushing, and pushing, and pushing that we’ve done for years laid the groundwork for there to be an open and public conversation around this sort of the lightning rod that has become Jian Ghomeshi [2015], which is really about violence against women, gender-based violence against women, rape, sexual assault and the dismantling, or attempt to dismantle, rape culture, which we’ve been naming

for years—maybe not calling it rape culture.

Michele went further to say:

I think as of this week [November 2017], we're seeing part of the fruits of our labours. If it hadn't been for the women's movement plugging away at these issues and dragging them into the light by main force...That was our doing. We did that, and it's unfolding. This whole exposé about sexual harassment in the entertainment industry, I am wondering when we are going to see it in other industries become a public issue. When will others start coming forward? This couldn't have happened without our movement and it builds on the history of humanity... it takes a thousand years for things to change. So, I think this is a success that we can claim to.

This chapter paints a unique and rarely understood picture of the cycle of a social movement through the eyes of a select group of activists. The participants in this study began their activism during the period from 1973-1993 and continued it until the present time in several forms. The five themes that emerged from the data offer an unusual glimpse into the experiences of anti-violence activists over the course of their involvement in the VAW movement in Ontario. The themes shine a light on the following areas (a) pathways to activism; (b) building a movement; (c) surviving as a movement; (d) opening up as a movement; and (e) hope for a movement. The themes underscore the complexities of the issues facing activists and their attempts to remedy these dilemmas.

The next chapter offers a discussion of the study findings, and the meaning they hold for other social movements struggling with similar issues. As well, insights will be gleaned that may improve the relationship within the VAW movement as well as between the VAW movement and the profession of social work, offering lessons learned and directions for moving social work forward in its efforts to address ending violence against women. I will articulate the limitations of the study, the implications for the profession of social work and final concluding remarks.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss the interpretation of the findings in light of the literature review provided in Chapter Two. I also demonstrate how the problem for investigation as described in Chapter One can be addressed through my findings. I draw the reader's attention to the significance the findings may have in strengthening the VAW movement in Ontario as well as the profession of social work.

In recent years, there has been increasing debate among feminist scholars and activists within the VAW movement as to whether it still indeed constitutes a social movement or, alternatively, has become a handmaiden to the state (Arnold & Ake, 2013; Lehrner & Allen 2008, 2009). In other words, the question arises as to whether the movement has transformed into a social service sector creating and delivering services to select populations of women, rather than existing as an expressed political commitment to uncovering and eliminating the root causes of VAW. Research has revealed that many of the original goals of the VAW movement have been lost, due to the activist energy expended to create and build much-needed services for women and their families where none had previously existed (Richie, 2012; Schechter, 1982). Some authors go so far as to suggest that what is now left is ostensibly a vacuum of collective energy and leadership devoted to revolution—that is, to overturning oppressive hierarchies and systems (Lehrner & Allen, 2009; Richie, 2012).

In response to these concerns, the purpose of my dissertation research was to give voice to the activists on the ground who participated in building the VAW movement in Ontario, beginning in the 1970s and continuing to the present day. I wanted to illuminate the connections between the stated goals of early activism in the 1970s and the struggles and challenges the participants faced throughout the subsequent decades. This dissertation research also marks the end of a decade-long journey of immersing myself in the literature, particularly the critical feminist standpoint literature. This journey was motivated by an interest in

uncovering the powers and limits of social movements, with particular attention to the VAW literature on achievements and failures. I then decided to deepen my knowledge by investigating how my peers in the VAW movement in Ontario thought about these issues.

I interviewed 22 feminist anti-violence activists, including myself, as part of the research. I used a purposive sampling strategy, meaning that “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposively inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p.125). Participants were selected to allow for multiple perspectives reflecting a variety of critical feminist standpoints, as well as for their experience working in a range of sectors, including: 1) the legal system, 2) the shelter system, 3) the health care system, 4) the education system, 5) advocacy and coalition groups, 6) direct service providers, and 7) policy advisors who were experts in both representing and shaping the face of the VAW movement in Ontario. My inclusion criteria for the sampling strategy comprised activists who: 1) began their work during the period between 1973 and 1993;¹⁹ 2) had a minimum of 20 years of direct experience in the VAW movement; 3) had been active in the VAW movement until the time of their interview; 4) were from various parts of the province of Ontario, including both urban, and rural spaces; 5) represented the various sectors as stated above; and 6) had both a local and a provincial focus in their VAW work.

My involvement in the VAW movement allowed me to create questions and propose topics to my participants based on my knowledge of what was happening during the timeframe of my investigation. Broadly speaking, I wanted to understand why and how activists began their journeys in activism and how they came to develop their critical consciousness about their social location, their power, their privilege (both earned and unearned), as well as their own experience with oppression. As noted earlier, the concept of critical consciousness is a well-

¹⁹ I chose this period specifically because Interval House in Toronto, Ontario, first opened its doors on April 1, 1973, although three participants in my study actually began their feminist activism prior to 1973. I chose 1993 as my end point because I wanted all the participants to have some knowledge of the period prior to the backlash that occurred in Ontario in 1995, with the election of the Conservative government led by Premier Mike Harris.

established and essential aspect of an AOP social work approach and is defined as the “process of continuously reflecting upon and examining how our own biases, assumptions and cultural worldviews affect the ways we perceive difference and power dynamics” (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). I wanted to understand their notions of what makes a social movement successful and whether their views reflected the claims found in the literature as regards the VAW movement in Ontario. I also wanted to know what VAW activists identified as the unanticipated consequences of their decisions. Did they still see the VAW movement as a movement or did they think it had become a social service sector and if so, was that transformation viewed as a success or a failure? I wanted to identify their reflections on the lessons they had learned after 20 to 50 years engaged in social movement activism, including their view of the power and limits of social movements. Looking back, would they have done anything differently knowing what they know now? Given my own commitment to the health and wellness of those who did VAW work, I was curious about their thoughts on how the VAW movement work had impacted their lives, both from a personal and professional standpoint, and both positively and negatively. How did they think about self-care for themselves and self-care for the VAW movement? I wondered if they thought a social movement could be traumatized, and if so, what could they suggest to remedy that experience. Lastly, I was interested in the lessons they had learned and their collective wisdom for future generations of activists. What directions, strategies and possibilities did they envision in advancing the goals of the VAW movement in Ontario? Finally, given that I am a practicing social worker and completing my doctoral studies at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work (FIFSW), University of Toronto, I was particularly interested in the study participants’ opinions on how to engage the social work profession in becoming more effective allies to the VAW movement (see Appendix G501).

This dissertation is thus a story about a social movement, specifically the VAW movement in Ontario—a strand of the women’s liberation movement frequently referred to as the *second wave*. I specifically document the time period from 1973 to 1993—a period that spans the start

of the era when all of the participants in this study began their activist work -- up until the time of their interviews, which took place between 2014 to 2018.

The motivating spirit underlying this dissertation research is an interest in moving the VAW movement in Ontario forward. The dissertation is also about advancing the profession of social work. Both places have been my home for the past five decades. When I set out on this academic journey, I was motivated by the need to correct my thinking errors about my place in the feminist movement. As an able-bodied, middle-class, heterosexual, White woman, I knew I filled all dominant spaces of privilege, except sex and gender, which meant that I had to learn how to unpack my social identity, how to decolonize myself and critically assess my unearned privilege, and then how to use that privilege in the service of those who have less. In other words, I needed to learn how to become an “authentic ally” (Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2013, p. 108).

I was also keen to question how I was ‘social working’, be it in teaching, counselling, training, public speaking, policy work, community development, supervision, expert witness work, or the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) work. I was keen to question how I used my voice in those arenas to bring in an anti-racist, anti-oppression (ARAO) lens. My interest in this dissertation research was to investigate the role a social movement played in addressing a major social problem to which I, and all the participants in this study, have devoted our life’s work, namely: the epidemic of violence against women occurring across the globe. I was interested in the power and the limits of a social movement to create lasting change.

Feminist Interpretations of Violence Against Women

Several participants saw the cultivation of feminist interpretations of VAW and related significant events to be major successes of feminist VAW organizing. Participants recalled their struggle to challenge the dominant discourse on domestic violence, beginning in the early

1970s. Prior to feminist interpretations of violence against women, the dominant narrative on domestic violence was one of victim-blaming and abuser-excusing. During the initial days of building the movement, participants in my study had positioned themselves firmly in the epistemology that male violence against women was a direct result of patriarchal beliefs. Based on women's countless testimonies and heartbreaking disclosures of severe abuse, participants sought to create legitimate alternative knowledge claims to the dominant narrative by "using the radical research tool of believing women and what they say" (Cole, 1995, p.18) as their beginning point. In remembering the dominant discourse of the time, participants believed it was critical for the reader to understand the climate out of which the Ontario "wife assault is a crime" campaign was born. Prior to feminist interpretation, the traditional police response took place within the centuries-old patriarchal European view that domestic violence was a private family matter and that the police, as an arm of the state, should not interfere. When women were assaulted in their homes by their husbands/boyfriends, they did not receive the same citizenship rights as those assaulted by strangers in public spaces (Gillis & Diamond, 2006; Goodmark, 2013; Sack, 2004).

One of the starting places that participants considered important to address concerned law reform. Most people do not recall that in May 1982, when the first report on wife battering was tabled in the House of Commons, some of Canada's political leaders responded to it with laughter, heckling and jeering. Women across the country were outraged, and together with frontline feminist activists and scholars, they pressured policy makers to take action (MacLeod, 1987). Participants strongly emphasized that the criminal justice system was only one of many pillars of intervention that required feminist attention and interpretation. Participants also devoted their attention and energies to building shelters, developing counselling programs for women and their families, influencing policy reform, and orchestrating public education campaigns and prevention strategies. As well, the majority of study participants were actively engaged in the development of VAW feminist-informed curriculums for cross-sectoral

responses in health, child welfare, housing, family law, social services, immigrant serving agencies, and so on.

Since misogynist attitudes were so visible in the criminal justice system, some of the participants discussed why they focused some, but not all, of their energies on law reform as an initial landing place after the shelters were started. Because VAW in intimate relationships was often condoned or ignored and treated as a noncriminal private family matter, those study participants engaged in law reform had a desire to shift that thinking. Their experiences with the criminal law system in those early days of VAW activism were not positive. They witnessed on the ground what was later supported in the literature. This sexist response to women fleeing violence within the criminal justice system was the scenario that they organized to shift. For example, when charges were laid, prosecutors rarely proceeded to trial, particularly if women appeared uncooperative with the process (Buzawa & Buzawa, 1990). When women did have the courage to reach out, their calls for help were given very low priority, often not responded to at all or only after long delays (Martin, 1976). Even when a serious physical assault had occurred, officers rarely made an arrest, leaving it up to the woman to lay a private charge. (Langley & Levy, 1977). A typical intervention in the pre-1970s era would involve removing the abuser from the home, calming him down with a walk around the neighbourhood, and then returning him to his wife/girlfriend to continue their life 'behind closed doors' (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Guberman & Wolfe, 1985; Martin, 1976; Richie, 2012; Schechter, 1982; Sinclair, 1985). Police saw domestic violence as 'social work', not real police work. This approach condoned the abuser's patriarchal views that he was the 'king of the castle' in his own home, and thus could act with impunity (Buzawa & Buzawa, 1990; MacLeod, 1987; Pence, 2001; Sinclair, 1985).

Women were considered objects, only worthy of officers' scorn, in that wives/girlfriends were seen as deserving of 'domestic discipline' if they stepped out of line in their role as wife (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, 1992; Langley & Levy, 1977; Martin, 1976; Schechter, 1982;

Sinclair, 1985). While some participants in this study focused their energy on addressing these injustices in the criminal justice system, it is important that the reader not conclude that it was their sole focus. This finding is also supported in the literature (Ferraro, 1996). In fact, several participants believed that there continues to this day to be many flaws in the ways women, particularly racialized women, are treated in the criminal justice system.

Of those early days of challenging misogynist, sexist ignorance as to the extent of violence women are subjected to, all participants reflected on the critical importance of feminist interpretation. For the participants in this study, there were several key moments when they were perfectly prepared to leap at the opportunities to influence government, as both insiders and outsiders. When the state called on them, they were ready and armed with a feminist interpretation; whether it was in response to the sexist politicians' laughter in the House of Commons in 1982, the public and media response to the Montreal Massacre in 1989, the more recent sexual assault trial of CBC media icon Jian Ghomeshi in 2015, or the current *#MeToo* movement in 2018. In each of these cases, feminists, including several participants in this study, were called on by the media and the state to interpret what these events mean for people across the country and internationally. Several participants saw this growing space for feminist interpretation of these events to be a major success of feminist VAW organizing.

How Social Movement Theory Helps Us to Understand the VAW Movement

In Chapter Two, I reviewed the social movement theory (SMT) literature, primarily housed in the fields of sociology and political science, paying particular attention to feminist interpretations of SMT (for example, Naples, 2003; Richie, 2012; Staggenborg, 1998, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Whittier, 1995).

Early social movement theorizing included 'collective behaviour' theory, which

emphasized the psychology of movement actors and viewed them as a group of disconnected individuals acting out of a sense of great outrage (Staggenborg & Ramos, 2016). Feminist critique of this theory challenged the idea of disconnected individuals and suggested that feminist organizing emphasized the strength of the connections among women to act collectively as a single voice so as to constitute an effective tool to lobby against the state (Weldon, 2002, 2011). My study findings support this idea of connectedness among women as an effective tool in feminist organizing. In Ontario, this connectedness was illustrated when participants described the sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction they felt when they could come together to create a collective action to challenge those in power (i.e. the *Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy* (CSVAWS); the *Step It Up Campaign*).

The participants in this study shared early theorizing related to the root causes of VAW as a direct result of power relations between men and women. The participants' narratives reflected their efforts to secure resources (i.e. build shelters and rape crisis centres), garner public attention and support, and establish a strong working relationship with the state and other elites, such as private foundations and philanthropists who could lend support to their cause. This view of social movements that came of age in the 1970s provided a helpful way of examining the VAW movement. Analytic tools that seemed most relevant to the goals of the VAW movement addressed in the SMT literature include resource mobilization theory, which emphasized the structural issues facing social movement participants (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

Political process theory (PPT) extended the social movement literature by suggesting that social movements are influenced by both internal and external factors (Tarrow, 1998). Tarrow (1998) argued that political 'windows of opportunity' are created by particular political, social and economic circumstances, which can be exploited by social movements in moments of both opportunity and threat. The participants in my study confirmed this idea. As a result of all their preparations to develop feminist interpretations of VAW that challenged the dominant narrative, when a political opportunity presented itself, they were positioned to take advantage of the

moment. The first example they provided included presenting their feminist interpretations of VAW at Ontario's first *Standing Committee on Family Violence* (Legislature of Ontario, 1982).

The second example showcased their intervention in the McGuire rebellion, wherein several participants were able to change the course of history by challenging a confidential hostile report under the Harris government in 1996. By publicly distributing the document across the province to VAW activists and their allies, VAW activists were able to force the Harris government to withdraw its position of offloading its state responsibilities for funding shelters to the municipalities, among other things. These moments of opportunity and threat were woven throughout the interviews with participants.

The participants in this study did not agree with popular media images and scholarly articles that suggest a 'declining movement' narrative in relation to the VAW movement in Ontario (Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009). Whether they were able to publicly display their feminist interpretations and intentions or forced into silence, several participants agreed that they were able to act as 'political infiltrators' at all times, even when it appeared that they were 'ducking'. Rupp and Taylor (1987) described the activist work that occurs in the 'troughs'—those less visible moments of feminist work. They confirmed that even though feminist organizing may appear invisible at times because it is too dangerous to speak out for fear of losing funding, being targeted for unfair audits, and so on, it does not mean that movement work has stopped. Participants suggested that it was during those times, when under attack, that they had to go under the radar so as to regroup and strategize. This finding is supported by what feminist SMT scholars described as the concept of 'abeyance', an analytic tool that accounts for these ebbs and flows of visible and invisible periods of activism. This is a particularly useful tool to help explain why the participants in this study challenged the notion that the work of VAW organizing is in decline. The concept of 'abeyance' is one of the most noteworthy contributions of feminist theorizing related to social movements and is particularly relevant to my dissertation research (Taylor & Rupp, as cited in Grey & Sawyer, 2008). This concept has

been described as “the organizational and cultural processes that facilitated social movement survival in a hostile environment” (p. xiii).

Participants in this study approved of the idea that feminism can re-emerge and appear to the public as a ‘new’ social movement capturing the public imagination, much like the current *#MeToo* movement (Booth, 2018). In reality, participants have been pushing for recognition and accountability from men and institutions since the emerging days of VAW activism in the 1970s. The difference in this current case of public recognition of VAW is that it took several women of one high-profile sexual predator speaking out to impress upon the public that abusive men are expected to be accountable to the women and the public. The results of the *#MeToo* movement have been stunning and swift to date. Men in high-profile positions have lost their jobs and been found guilty in the court of public opinion. This current social phenomenon did not occur in a vacuum. It was the direct result of thousands of hours and several decades of feminist activist work preparing for this moment in time. Participants in this study were there and they were doing the work on a daily basis, along with countless other feminist activists who are part of the VAW movement, locally and globally.

Participants also acted as transmitters of existing ideas, offering an alternative explanation of VAW, working with the state to frame policy issues through a feminist lens, and availing themselves as a resource to the public to assist state actors in understanding the real story of what went on behind closed doors when women were subjected to violence in their private and public lives. This notion of a ‘framing’ perspective seems to resonate with the views presented by participants in this study. ‘Framing’ refers to how we construct meaning (Taylor, 2000). It has become a useful tool through which to understand the meaning-making powers of social movements in defining a social and political problem, maintaining momentum, and producing sustainable change. The participants in this study employed ‘framing’ as an essential core strategy used to engage the state in policy reform, to educate the public in how to think about issues of VAW and to build the capacity of the movement to move through the various stages of

movement life as outlined in this thesis.

While social movement theorists frequently point to the VAW movement as an “exemplar of a movement with a cultural change agenda” (Lehrner & Allen, 2008, p. 220), participants in my study questioned how effective they have been in maintaining a social change agenda. They speak to the tensions between building and running a high-quality service such as a shelter or a rape crisis centre while also holding a movement lens with a revolutionary message. Feminist organizations such as shelters, and rape crisis centres were the early concretizations of the VAW movement and are currently referred to as social movement organizations (SMOs) in the literature (Arnold, 2011; Mayer & McCarthy, 1997; Zald & Ash, 1966). Participants struggled to determine if they were still a social movement or whether they had been reduced to a VAW sector—that is, merely a social service industry without a political agenda (Lehrner & Allen, 2009; Miller, 2010; Richie, 2012). They struggled in their reflections on what defines a ‘movement’ lens.

The overall consensus of the participants suggests that holding a movement lens means holding a macro analysis of social change, while simultaneously doing the everyday micro work on the frontlines, be it in policy, community development, law reform, shelter work, rape crisis centers, counselling services and so on. A key finding from this study is that it is the embracing of a movement lens that is the most critical strategy employed in sustaining the VAW movement through its various cycles and stages, not the particular service an activist is attached to at any particular time in their lives. Nonetheless, it is the everyday micro work being done in SMO’s and in mainstream settings—if accompanied with a movement lens—that strengthens the power of a social movement.

Shifting Relationships with the State

There were mixed impressions among participants about how well they have accomplished their original goals of revolutionary change. Participants worried about the price

the VAW movement has paid for gaining public funding from the state. This is what Richie (2012), educator and activist scholar, eloquently described as “How we won the mainstream but lost the movement” (p. 65). Kathleen Ferraro (1996), feminist scholar, refers to this dilemma as the “dance of dependency” (p. 77). In my words, it is the feminist dream and the feminist nightmare. The irony is that while study participants believed the state had a responsibility to fund services such as shelters and rape crisis centres, they also had no doubt that the state would then have the power to hold certain expectations of how the funding would be spent, both in positive and negative ways. For example, under the Rae government, when there was also a group of strong feminist voices present in the Ontario Women’s Directorate (1990–1995), funding was substantially increased to the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre and a demand placed upon it to open the board and staff so as to be more reflective of the diversity of the women they served. While challenging in terms of accelerated growth and structural change, the demand that accompanied the increased funding was perceived as a positive initiative by one of the participants. In another example, in recollecting a negative experience under the Harris government (1995–2002), participants collectively cited several examples of being told, in essence, to ‘shut up’ if they wanted funding; the term ‘advocacy’ had to be removed from all funding proposals during this period.

Participants were eloquent in their descriptions of the critical importance of state/activist relationships. There was no doubt that governments do matter. For example, in Ontario, there was a huge difference in what could be accomplished under feminist-friendly governments, such as the NDP and Liberal governments under Rae and McGuinty/Wynne respectively, versus the anti-feminist, neoliberal Harris and Harper governments. Weldon’s (2002, 2011) research supports this idea. She studied the influence and power of social movements to advance the interests of disadvantaged groups in our society. She further stated that during the 1970s and the 1980s, of all examined countries, Canada had the strongest working relationship between the women’s movement and the state. Weldon’s research pointed to what is possible when there is

the political will to support a robust state-movement relationship and thus provided hope for the possibility of stronger state-movement relationships in the future.

Exposing and challenging neoliberal ideology became a key political strategy for the feminist movement at large, and VAW movement activists in particular, given the limits placed on feminist efforts in Canada to end violence against women in all its forms (Bonisteel & Green, 2005; Rodgers & Knight, 2011; Sinclair, 2003).

Brodie's (2008) political analysis traces the effect of the shifting political agenda, the erosion of the Canadian women's movement under the Harper government, and the devastating impact on the feminist movement at large and the VAW movement in particular. Further, by the mid-1980s, a 'racialized' neoliberal agenda took hold among governing political leaders and dominated the Canadian political stage, claiming to be 'race-neutral' in their intent yet ignoring the harsh differential impact that the application of such policies has on racialized communities (Badwall, 2016; Kivel, 2017). Feminist scholars, such as Colleen Collier (2008) and Casey Ready (2012), trace the evolution of neoliberal state policies and their impact on the current VAW movement in Ontario from the years 1985 to 2005 in Collier's case, and from 2003 to 2008 in Ready's case. Their research collectively helps us understand the invisible hand that often rules state funding and policy decisions, which frequently fly under the radar of activist knowledge. For this reason, participants in this study recommended the importance, as a political strategy, of nurturing positive relationships with allies inside government at all times. In their view, having allies on the inside (i.e. FIGS and femocrats) will assist the VAW movement to move forward despite the ebbs and flows of the ruling government's agenda at any given time. In their opinion, authentic allies make a profound difference in movement-building activities and so do feminist-friendly governments. The effectiveness of feminists working within institutions is a recent area of study in the feminist scholarly literature and one that is supported in the findings of this study (Bereni & Revillard, 2018)

Resilience: An Unexpected Finding

One surprising discovery was the absence of resilience as a characteristic of activist work in the social movement literature. In the present study, while few participants used that specific term in reference to activist work, all participants embodied what I would refer to as resilience.

I refer to the definition of resilience as provided by Alaggia and Donohue (2018):

Resilience is a process of navigating through adversity, using internal and external resources (personal qualities, relationships, and environmental and contextual factors) to support healthy adaptation, recovery and successful outcomes over the life course (p.22).

An important question is whether their resilience protected them against harmful burn-out and VT/CF, which in some severe cases can become permanent. Feminist scholar, writer and activist Sara Ahmed (2017), in her timely work *Living a Feminist Life*, affirms what my participants embody: living a feminist life in theory and practice sustained through support in like-minded circles of feminist allies who ‘get it’.

I was curious about resilience as an antidote to VT, as an aspect of post-traumatic growth (PTG) (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2014). I asked myself why none of the participants were suffering from burn-out, a not-uncommon feature of the activist world (Cox, 2009; Wettlaufer, 2015). Yet, the study participants embody resilience. Their narratives conveyed strength. They possessed a sense of internal authority. They could see the necessity of engaging in everyday movement practices, such as sheltering, advocacy and counselling, with individual women and children, and yet they could also maintain an ability to see the big picture. They could hold what I would call a ‘movement frame’, regardless of their daily responsibilities. All participants believed that they have influence, that they can use their voice, their bodies, their knowledge, and their evidence, to make a difference in the world. They believed they had the power within to change things—and they did change things. They conveyed their belief in the power of self-care for themselves, their peers and staff. They also valued the right to rest and replenish. While the VAW movement to date may not have created the revolution, they had planned and

hoped for in their early days of activist work, they nonetheless believed they had made a difference. They took pride in their progress and accomplishments. They took the time to celebrate their victories. Despite the painful learning during their activist journeys, they were not defeated. They learned from their mistakes and they used the new knowledge they had gained to accomplish new tasks. They did not take ‘no’ for an answer. They were strategic in their approaches, knowing when to lend a high profile to issues or when to ‘lie low’ and use novel subversive acts to achieve change. These are the voices of my participants. They still persist; they learn from their mistakes, and they do not give up. They understand how important it is to have a reflexive practice, and to strengthen their critical consciousness skills as a radical practice that helps them reflect on their own experiences of both oppression and privilege. It is a combination of all these traits that makes for a strong, healthy activist mentality that, with personal sustainability, becomes the backbone of a strong healthy social movement.

Activists all need role models to hold the hope, to inspire confidence that individuals have the power to change things, to model taking breaks, to take care of themselves, to find variety in their work, to pace themselves, to value their staff and more. That is the spirit that will take the VAW movement into the next five decades of movement-building activities.

All study participants recognized that there is still much work to do in building coalitions between the VAW movement and other movements and fostering more inclusion of marginalized voices. They described the need to be focused on the use of an intersectional lens and how to translate this lens into everyday practice on the ground; all the participants were proud to claim ownership of the ARAO work done to date in Ontario. Their pride in this work is an example of their embodied resilience, in that, despite tremendous adversity, the participants in this study grow stronger in their commitment to eliminating violence against women. This brings me to the next section on embracing the concept of intersectionality in our work and how that plays out in the practical day-to-day work in the VAW movement.

Integrating Intersectional Feminism as a Practice

Interestingly, each participant began their journey to developing critical consciousness by first examining their own personal feminist standpoint on their experience of oppression—be it their sex and gender, their race, their class, their ability, their sexual orientation, their immigration status, and/or their ethnic identity. Critical feminist standpoint theories assist in explaining the everyday work of activism in the VAW movement. This theoretical knowledge can advance our work once we better understand not only where survivors of violence are socially located but also where we as activists are socially located. Audre Lorde’s (1984) words bear repeating at this point as a reminder that by using our own standpoint to the fullest we can each be empowered—those of us in the role of VAW activist and those whom we serve through our movement work:

My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves, without the restriction of externally imposed definition. Only then can I bring myself and my energies as a whole to the service of those struggles which I embrace as part of my living (p. 121).

Earlier in the thesis I provided an in-depth examination of my epistemological perspective embedded in the seven critical feminist standpoints I chose to study, including: 1) intersectionality theory; 2) Indigenous feminist theory; 3) Black feminist theory; 4) Post-colonial feminist theory; 5) Queer feminist theory; 6) Disability feminist theory; and 7) Critical White feminist theory (see Chapter 2 for a detailed description).

Participants in this study affirmed the principles of critical feminist theory in that they too believed there is not one feminist truth; rather, contemporary feminisms are “multivocal and polyphonic” (Swigonski & Raheim, 2011, p. 20). Participants were vocal in their opinions that women’s lives must be contextualized and understood holistically. They strongly suggested that the mainstream VAW movement must embrace an intersectional lens that allows both activist and survivor to bring their ‘whole selves’ to the conversation. The implications for the VAW movement, as a social movement, for embracing critical feminist theory in their everyday

practice are profound. Participants recommended that applying an intersectional feminist lens could lead us to integrate higher level thinking and doing in our everyday movement work. Higher level thinking embraces three essential elements of abstract thinking skills in the literature including reflective thinking, critical thinking and inquisitive thinking (Geertsen, 2003)

This thinking and doing would not only acknowledge, but also critically challenge, those systems that continue to oppress all women and their communities, and to find constructive ways to address their multiplicity of needs. The theoretical framework I proposed in this dissertation, highlighting the contributions of critical feminist standpoint theories, was supported by the participants, as they each drew implicitly from these theories in both a theoretical and an experiential way. To this end, a shared agreement appears to exist that a practical intersectional method of doing the activist work may bring the mainstream VAW movement one step closer to moving from simply an intellectual way of understanding intersectionality to embodying the principles of intersectionality in its everyday work.

Critical feminist scholars and anti-racist feminist activists have challenged the dominance of gender oppression since the beginning of the *second wave*, although frequently their voices were not part of the official record in the mainstream VAW movement. This phenomenon was sometimes referred to as ‘hegemonic feminism’ by White anti-racist activists and women of colour because of the exclusive use of such a female standard (Burgess-Proctor, 2006). Participants in this study recognized the critical importance of opening up the VAW movement to embrace a more complex understanding of the meaning of an intersectional approach for dealing with VAW. Theoretically, study participants believed that the VAW movement was well on its way to embracing an ARAO framework as outlined in the Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses’ document first published in 1999 and later revised in 2005, known as *Creating Inclusive Spaces for Women: Implementing an Integrated, Anti-racist, Feminist Service Delivery System* (Moses, 2005; Stone & Enyolu, 1999).

The majority of participants in this study spoke frequently about the issues that activists in the VAW movement go through as they navigate the stages of developing critical consciousness. How successfully they do so depend on their openness to learn and change, and on their access to effective and ongoing ARAO training. Current literature helps us to better understand these stages of changing consciousness within a critical ‘whiteness’ pedagogical framework. For example, ARAO scholars have described three stages of consciousness which include: 1) the ‘unconscious stage’, referring to an unexamined worldview of White dominance and colour blindness; 2) the ‘responsive stage’, referring to an openness to learning about other cultures while maintaining a hidden worldview of White superiority; and 3) ‘critical consciousness’, referring to the development of a new worldview that questions the social, political, and historical causes of structural violence, perpetuated by a White superiority discourse (Hill-Jackson, 2007). All participants agreed that continued ARAO training is critical to the health and effectiveness of the VAW movement moving forward.

Practically speaking, several participants reflected on the challenges that doing ARAO work surfaces among VAW activists. There was a consensus among participants that feminist interpretations of sexism and misogyny were widely understood among the majority of mainstream VAW movement activists to be connected to the system of patriarchy. Feminist interpretations saw men’s misuse of power and control over women as the root cause of male violence against women. There was no such confidence expressed, however, in terms of how the mainstream VAW movement understood racism, colonialism, heterosexism, ability, ageism and classism. Participants spoke frequently in their narratives about the painful memories of participating in ARAO training when it was first introduced in the 1990s, primarily through the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)’s efforts to train the VAW shelter movement. The majority of the participants were either experienced ARAO trainers themselves or had taken various workshops on how to integrate an ARAO lens into their activist work. Not one participant felt the work was complete. According to OAITH records

documented in Moses (2005), “the majority of women working in anti-violence organizations in Ontario today are White, middle class, heterosexual, non-disabled women with a Christian, English-speaking heritage” (p. 26). Given that fact, participants thought one of the biggest challenges facing the VAW movement in Ontario was to develop and sustain the critical consciousness skills required to unpack their own social location. Another key challenge was to understand all systems of oppression, such as racism, colonialism, ableism, ageism and heterosexism, and how they played out in their everyday world of VAW activism.

In Chapter 2, I laid out the theoretical advantages of embracing an intersectional approach to open up the current White-dominated model of the VAW service delivery system. Critical feminist scholars have struggled to help those on the frontlines to think more critically about how they do the work that allows both activists and survivors to bring their ‘whole selves’ to the table. As Deb C., one of the participants reminded us, “we are all steeped like tea in colonialism.” There is a Canadian rhetoric that remains invisible to most White people and it hides oppression (Sinclair, 2003). It goes like this: Canada is a tolerant, benevolent, non-racist country where anyone who works hard will succeed, and where all people are created equal and everyone has a fair opportunity to advance. This belief system is what Anderson (2006) writes about in his classic book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. This belief system as discussed by Anderson is frequently referred to in the literature as the Western individualist dominant discourse (Backhouse, 1999). It denies the existence of inequity and unearned privilege, and ultimately perpetuates a social system that sanctions discrimination and unjust practices, which cements in place racialized and gendered hierarchies (i.e. structures that uphold the superiority of White-skinned people and place non-whites in the Other/inferior position).

As stated earlier, hiding behind this national rhetoric allows those in the dominant category to ‘blame the victim’ or the ‘Other’ for their lack of success (Jiwani, 2006). If we do not see it, if we do not name it, then we do not have to fix it. DiAngelo’s (2016) interpretation

of colour-blind racism is applicable here. What it means is “pretending that we don’t notice race or that race has no meaning. This pretense denies racism and thus holds it in place” (p.130). Srivastava (2005), in her classic article, “*You’re calling me a racist?*”: *The Moral and Emotional Regulation of Antiracism and Feminism*, documents the ideas behind the expression of grief, anger, rage, and defensiveness that White women frequently resort to when confronted with challenges around White privilege and superiority. DiAngelo (2011) refers to this reaction as ‘White fragility’.

While Srivastava (2005) does not question the ARAO work that has taken place in the feminist movement, she does emphasize that many critical feminist scholars see the resistance of White women to developing a self-reflexive practice as a barrier to advancing the VAW movement’s ability to address all forms of oppression in the movement (Dua & Robertson, 1999). In her investigation of antiracism and feminism, Srivastava interviewed several ARAO trainer activists in feminist organizations in the Toronto, Ontario area. She discovered that the emphasis on embracing antiracism was too often focused on personal self-examination to the neglect of structural organizational change.

Of note, several participants, especially racialized participants, observed the refusal of White feminist organizations to make room for their less privileged sister organizations. Consider, as an example, when Indigenous women have competed for VAW funding and not received it, or when leadership opportunities for women of colour were blocked by more established White organizations. The anger and resentment I observed and that was expressed by some participants were evident in their narratives. Srivastava (2005) described the ‘individualist’ understanding of racism as a major stumbling block for the VAW movement to overcome. Several participants saw this ‘individualist’ form of analysis as a barrier for the VAW movement and prevented them from building strong viable coalitions with other social movements, such as the *Idle No More* movement and the *Black Lives Matter* movement. For example, many mainstream VAW activists lack critical insight into how systems of oppression,

such as racism and colonialism, operate in the world. As a result, they are left to personalize any challenges they receive and take them as a personal attack on their character, not realizing it is not about them as an individual but rather about the system:

Racist is seen not as a political analysis, organizational problem, or even as an insult but as a definition of character, one in conflict with a movement's and an individual's moral and political identity—“How can you call me racist?” Here racist is seen as an attack on goodness—a framing that is supported by a liberal, nonracist discourse that sees racism as bad acts done by individuals rather than as systemic (p. 46).

Interestingly, participants also described the importance of lending their gendered analysis skills to other movements, such as *Black Lives Matter*, to build bridges and coalitions. For instance, one Black participant who was an insider of the movement and fully supportive of its aims, described the importance of lending a gendered as well as an anti-racist lens to further the movement work because, in her words, *Black Women's Lives Matter* too. Becoming an authentic ally to those with less power and privilege was seen as critical to the health of the VAW movement moving forward. In addition to learning how to construct a movement, build shelters, create services, fight with funders, plead with the public, educate professional groups, work with survivors, their families, and their communities, and keep a social change agenda at the forefront, participants also learned how to deal with the unexamined parts of themselves, their sisters and the movement. In order to change the world, they had to change the movement, but first had to change themselves.

In the initial days of the movement, participants noted that in collectives especially, there were endless fights to be heard, and to express themselves, first in small groups and then in the larger arena. Collectives were viewed as a feminist organizational alternative to what was perceived as male dominated hierarchal organizational structures. According to Bordt (1997), collectives arose from the more radical branches of the *second wave* feminist movement. They shared a number of characteristics including:

- 1) authority is distributive among all members; 2) leadership is a temporary role assumed by each member through the rotation of a chair or facilitator position; 3)

decision making is participatory; 4) division of labour is minimal and specific tasks are rotated among individuals; 5) information, resources and rewards are equally shared among all; 6) power is conceptualized as empowerment rather than domination; 7) the process of organization is as valuable as the outcome and 8) social relations are based on personal, communal and holistic ideals (p.134).

Participants who were active members of early collectives, described opportunities where they developed a unique set of critical skills to think about their social location, and the power and privilege or lack thereof bestowed on them. Those participants who had the benefit of this early political training in collectives learned these skills within small groups committed to achieving political solidarity, not by dominating each other but by understanding each other and systems of oppression. These opportunities tended to occur during the early days of collectives when the work of the collective was to examine oneself and each other in the spirit of seeing first, and then understanding, differences. Pioneer facilitators, such as Hoagie Wyckoff (1973) and Gracie Lyons (1976), laid the groundwork for political allies to learn how to engage in constructive criticism as a way to develop political solidarity across differences. Participants who had access to this kind of intensive and ongoing training had an ability to overcome defensiveness and avoid what DiAngelo (2016) describes as ‘White fragility’. Well-trained anti-racist activists recognize that naming systems of oppression such as racism is not an attack on the individual goodness of people or on their character. Rather, doing ARAO work well is an attack on oppressive systems that keep us all trapped in unequal, unhealthy and toxic “power over” relationships (Eisler & Loye, 1990). In the words of anti-racist and feminist ally, Paul Kivel, (2017) author of the popular ARAO manual, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Social Justice*:

Determination is what it takes to confront racism. We need to keep going back and picking up the task no matter how uncomfortable, angry, or frustrated we become in the process. Being an ally is like that. We keep learning, doing our best, leaving something out, making mistakes, doing it better next time. It is a practice, not an identity—and it is best done in collaboration with others (p. 4).

Participants’ expressions of the painful challenges of doing activist work were threaded throughout their interviews. Their views illustrate what Freire (2002) has reminded us: that the

journey of developing a critical consciousness is not an easy one. To discover one is complicit in maintaining oppressive systems as an oppressor (and that one's ancestors, by extension, were also oppressors) creates anguish and suffering. Their observations of the benefits of doing critical consciousness work were also present throughout the findings. In the literature, for example, Pewewardy (2004) has built a case for the benefits White people will gain when they redress historical wrongs. In her analysis, she began by confirming the price White people pay when they remain in a state of unconsciousness regarding their whiteness. She confirmed what several participants felt when they discovered so much of what they had learned about Canada being built on a foundation of untruths that then compromised their historical and contemporary integrity. The emotional costs of incomplete White consciousness are manifested in White defensiveness, White fragility, denial, guilt, insecurity, uncertainty, shame, and what Pewewardy referred to as a "perpetual malaise" (p. 60). She asserted, "The only remedies known to relieve the discomfort of incomplete White consciousness are reparations for past crimes against humanity and contemporary injustices" (p. 60).

Indigenous participants in this study spoke passionately, and with despair at times, about the impacts of intergenerational trauma, the residential school legacy, the sixties scoop and the cultural genocide on Indigenous peoples. They shared their dismay about how Indigenous women and their communities, the most vulnerable women in Ontario, were marginalized and their needs dismissed by the mainstream VAW movement. Indigenous scholarship assists those in the VAW movement to better understand the importance of addressing both past and current "soul wounds" (Pewewardy, 2004, p. 63). By providing alternative explanations for healing seven generations back and seven generations forward, Indigenous scholars and healers challenge the Western pathological individualist explanations for human suffering (Duran & Duran, 1995; Million, 2013).

Several participants also emphasized how the language was taken over by mainstream actors such as police, crowns, educators, social workers, child protection workers, etc. and that

the voices of women who experience violence and those activists, such as the participants in this study who represent their voices and act as their allies, have been deafened. A mainstream discourse took off which did not include their voices. This is similar to the young shelter workers in the Lehrner and Allen's (2008) study who appeared to be familiar with some aspects of movement talk such as the use of 'power and control' in their language. When they were pressed, however, to share their analysis, it was clear they operated within an 'individualist' lens and some workers had no idea what a social movement even was, let alone the historical roots of the VAW movement, in particular.

Participants revealed that the ARAO framework was an essential underpinning of the current VAW movement in Ontario and that activists would benefit from learning new ways to understand their own history, past and present. The literature addressed this phenomenon of decolonizing processes. For example, Pewewardy (2004) recognized that, as a White person, she too carries a "soul wound that results from the cultural benefits of colonialism" (p. 63). Recognizing current White privilege is rooted in a long history of crimes against humanity and is the first step in making genuine amends (Freire, 2002). The literature supports the participants' claims in this study: that knowledge without action does not lead to solidarity with the oppressed. The pursuit of right relations with oppressed groups must be accompanied by right actions for historical reparations. According to Edgington (2000), such action is a powerful remedy for White guilt and shame, and in the view of several participants, unpacking privilege such as whiteness is the next significant move the mainstream VAW movement must make in order to open up the movement to become more inclusive and critical.

Implications for Social Work

In this section, I discuss the implications of these study findings to advance social work knowledge, education and practice, including recommendations for how these findings can be used to advance the social work profession in becoming a better ally to the VAW movement in

furthering its social change agenda to end violence against women.

Social Work Knowledge

The profession of social work has had a similar trajectory as the VAW movement. The pioneering days of the social work profession were initially dominated by White, middle-class women who operated under a ‘charity’ or ‘helping’ model of care (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). There were other voices, however, that followed a more radical transformative social justice orientation under the leadership of social workers like Jane Addams, considered one of the founding voices of the North American social work profession. Addams and her peers were instrumental in the development of Hull House, the first settlement home for European immigrants, which opened in Chicago in 1889 (Benjamin, 2017). Her work inspired the settlement movement in Canada at the turn of the century and provided the impetus to a more radical activist element in the profession, creating a strong alliance with social movement activists. Unfortunately, the profession took a turn to a more conservative ‘scientific philanthropy’ approach which focused on micro interventions, positioning the role of the social worker as ‘objective’ expert and the ‘client’ as one in need of social work expertise (Benjamin, 2017). The turn to a scientific approach to human problems—currently referred to in the social work literature as evidence-based practice—was an effort to raise the esteem of the profession and to gain ‘respectability’ as a profession. It was not until the new wave of social movements in the 1960s that branches of social work, such as ‘structural’ social work (Moreau, 1990; Mullaly, 2006) and later ‘critical’ social work (Kennedy-Kish, Sinclair, Carniol, & Baines, 2017), began to reclaim their social justice roots. These branches laid the groundwork for a ‘multiple voice, multiple-oppression’ analysis, which resulted in the later adoption of anti-oppressive practice approaches that are so widespread in the profession presently (Baines, 2017, p.10). This focus on the social, political, and structural aspects of multiple oppressions preceded what is now referred to in critical feminist literature as intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). It is

in the tradition of the social justice, anti-oppressive perspective (AOP) of social problems, such as violence against women, that the profession of social work has much to offer the VAW movement (Baines, 2017; Barnoff, 2001; Dominelli, 2004, 2017).

A similar pathway occurred in the VAW movement. Initially dominated by White middle- and working-class feminists in the early 1970s and 1980s, the VAW movement has embraced an ARAO framework that promotes an intersectional understanding of women's oppression, and in particular, women's experience of violence. "Social work finds itself at a moment when there is no master theory but, instead, the space to entertain and experiment with many" (Williams, 2006, p. 218). Applying this idea to activist work means that, for VAW workers to effectively advocate for woman abuse victims/survivors, workers need to stretch across differences and develop expertise in ARAO practice (Baines, 2007; Davies, 1998; Elliot, 2002). Training and education, as well as research, must address how women, children, and men face various oppressions. They must also acknowledge that VAW is an issue involving the intersections of race, nationality, class, sexuality, and ability, in addition to gender.

Sokoloff and DuPont (2005) suggest the following ways to transform our practice: actively give voice to marginalized women; move women from the margins of our discussions to the centre of them; create cultural safety in our work spaces (not cultural competence); dispel stereotypical images of abused women and their partners; create new theoretical frameworks that are empowering and focus on success; and create alternative ways to view the mainstream criminal justice system as the primary and only form of intervention. An excellent example of this kind of transformative practice is noted in the work of Aboriginal scholar, Cindy Baskin (2006). Her social work practice embodies these ideals in a program known as *Mino-Yaa-Daa* (healing together), specifically designed for the needs of urban Aboriginal women and their families.

Social Work Education

This dissertation takes up a call to action directed to the profession of social work as expressed by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). In its 2014 *Global Definition of Social Work*, it sought to challenge Western hegemony in social work practice, education and research, and to integrate a decolonizing agenda for their membership.

The statement reads as follows:

- a) an outcome of considered feedback received during consultations; b) an attempt to counter Western hegemony in social work practice, education and research; and c) an effort to work towards a decolonizing agenda. (IASSW, 2014).

The social work educational foundation that students receive currently grounds them in several skill sets, such as direct service skills (crisis counselling, long-term individual, couple and family counselling, group work skills with women, men and children), policy work, administrative work, and community development. Social work also educates students on a variety of intervention strategies at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. Students are taught about how to hold both a macro lens that addresses structural barriers, especially from the branch of critical social work, and a micro lens when working with individual women and their families. As well, social work students are introduced to an ARAO lens when doing clinical work with individuals. This is my call to action for social work to advance as an ally to the VAW movement: the field must train its students with a social change movement lens as well as a critical social service lens. This is political work and social work; the critical parts of social work have always taken up political work from a social justice lens. As part of the interview process, I asked study participants for their wisdom in how social work could do better as an ally to the VAW movement. Their responses are outlined below:

1. *Teach from a social movement lens*, including the radical roots of the social work profession and what can be learned from the literature on the power and limits of social movements. Social workers are perfectly positioned to be allies to many current social movements such as *Black Lives Matter*, *Idle No More*, and the *#MeToo* movement. In

this study, participants advised the social work profession to educate its students to be activists, leaders, resources, and allies in ending VAW. Students need to be taught the difference between being an ‘authentic’ ally versus an ‘apathetic’ ally, as outlined in the work of Thomas and Chandrasekera (2013).

2. *Teach critical feminist theories* as a way to immerse students in the standpoints of several marginalized voices within the academy and the profession as a whole.
3. *Shift the first guiding principle of social work* of ‘starting where the client is’ to ‘starting where the social worker is at’. This means that before one can understand the ‘Other’, one must be critically aware of their own unconscious bias and be prepared to step down from the ‘expert’ role so as to join in a more collaborative and equitable relationship with those who are allies—be it clients, colleagues, movement actors and so on. Only then, when the social worker is steeped in knowledge of their colonial roots, their positionality and their social identity, can they begin the process of understanding other multiple voices and oppressions.
4. *Make VAW courses mandatory* for all social work students and teach them from a critical feminist, trauma-informed lens within a social movement perspective. While typically a trauma-informed lens has been used primarily as an approach with individuals, it is equally important to consider it as a helpful approach with organizations, communities and social movements. (see Tseris, 2013; Walkley & Cox, 2013; Wilson, Fauci, & Goodman, 2015).
5. *Teach from a compassionate, embodied lens.* Introduce the power of embracing mind, body, and spirit practices, such as those taught in Capacitar²⁰, into mainstream social work as a method of radical self-care for the student, the client, the faculty and the

²⁰ Capacitar is an “international network of solidarity and empowerment,” founded by Dr. Pat Cane, currently operating in over 40 countries across the globe. Members of the Capacitar movement work to alleviate the suffering caused by war, poverty, trauma and violence through teaching wellness practices that assist people of all ages to access the wisdom of their own body, mind and spirit (see website www.capacitar.org).

VAW movement. Explore the politics of teaching radical self-care strategies for both the VAW movement and the profession of social work.

6. *Teach from an ARAO or AOP lens* that includes an emphasis on the history of racism and colonialism in Canada. Extend the ARAO lens to include an anticolonial lens until workers have it embedded in their practice and possess accurate knowledge regarding the historical and current racist and colonial treatment of the original peoples of Turtle Island. This notion is compatible with the recent initiatives at FIFSW on the newly established program for MSW students on Indigenous issues and resilience, known as Indigenous Trauma and Resiliency. This initiative is also harmonious with the current University of Toronto efforts to address the *Truth and Reconciliation: Calls to Action*. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).
7. *Teach from a decolonizing framework*. At first students must be able to critically assess their own colonial roots and learn what a decolonizing framework is. As well, social work students should be taught the critical skills needed to effectively explore their own relationship to unearned power, privilege and oppression. Learning about the development of critical consciousness not only from the personal level but also the structural level is essential. For example, the research efforts of critical feminist scholars in social work schools across the country hold tremendous promise for both social work students and the VAW movement (see Baines, 2007; Jennissen & Lundy, 2011; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005; Williams, 2006).

Social Work Practice

Last but not least, participants offered their words of wisdom for activists doing VAW movement work and in Table 3 propose an extensive collection of lessons learned and wisdom gathered based on their lifetime experience of living and acting a feminist life. They believed that these lessons might hold merit for both activists coming into the VAW movement and

social work students as well as to promote their ability to grow and thrive in the exciting yet challenging work of ending VAW.

Table 3: Wisdom Gathered and Lessons Learned for a Social Movement

Wisdom Gathered and Lessons Learned for a Social Movement

Radical reflexive practice

- Be self-reflective: examine your life for inconsistencies and then fix them.
 - Learn to develop a self-reflective practice that includes compassionate curiosity.
 - Make a self-reflective practice part of your daily movement work.
 - Be a life-long learner.
-

Collective work

- Never do the work alone. It is too isolating and too dangerous to slip into despair.
 - If you cannot find your allies within your organization, find them on the outside.
 - Work in coalitions wherever possible.
 - Attach yourself to the places where there is zeal for activism.
 - Find your ‘place’ in the movement work. Not everyone can be good at everything, but we can all contribute our skills to a collective movement, whether it be frontline organization, policy, research, education, etc.
 - Find your allies, keep them close, and praise them for their support.
 - Develop your allies inside and outside of the state.
 - Foster patience. Bill 168 took 14 years of feminist activism before it became reality.
 - You can do everything but not all at once.
-

Leadership work

- Take risks, be clear about your goals, and don’t compromise.
 - Take every opportunity to speak out and educate the community.
 - Know the facts of VAW work.
 - Bring men into the movement as allies but do not allow them to take over. Their work is with other men and boys; support them and teach them how to do the work.
-

Theoretical grounding

- Be intentional about using an intersectional feminist lens.
 - Hold a macro lens even while doing micro work with individuals.
 - Find the balance between service work and political work; it is always changing.
 - Reignite notions of movement building in VAW.
 - Be very good at what you do.
 - Bring your wisdom and ARAO lens to other social movements and build a wider tent.
-

Relationships

- Do not gossip—it is contagious and creates a toxic environment.
 - Learn to do constructive criticism.
 - Be generous with praise and kindness.
 - Encourage mentoring and shadowing to bring more young activists to the table.
 - Be generous in sharing your resources.
 - Be proactive in reaching out to marginalized communities in your area.
 - Get to know those faces in the community who do not look like you. Listen, find out what they need and share what you have.
 - Embrace their leadership, their ideas and their presence.
 - Promote their work to the wider community.
-

Cultivate strength

- Find variety in your everyday work to keep your spirits up.
 - Keep a sense of humour; you will need it.
 - Train yourself to be a marathon runner/activist.
 - Do not spread yourself too thin.
 - You have a right to pace yourself and take a break to renew your energies.
 - Treat your body as your sacred temple.
 - Consult with the Elders.
 - Have ceremony in your life.
-

Proactive outreach

- Build leadership capacity with youth.
 - Create innovative programs.
 - Use social media as a powerful tool for our purpose.
-

Legacy work

- Maintain a succession-planning practice as a strategy to sustain the movement.
 - Document the organizing history of the movement.
 - Archive movement work; do not shred documents unless they have been digitized.
-

Gratitude

- Be grateful to do this work. It is sacred work and it is an honour to serve.
 - Balance the sorrow with the joy.
 - Celebrate life and share success stories.
 - Never give up hope for a better world.
-

Future Directions for Research

Investigating a social movement spanning five decades of VAW activism was an immense topic to explore. I would like to focus on five areas for future research that emerged from this study. I also provide a less fully developed list of additional research initiatives arising from the data in this study in no particular order of importance:

1. Explore the acceptance and effectiveness of existing ARAO/AOP training programs within the broader VAW field to further understand issues moving forward. Among these issues are the current type of ARAO/AOP training available to both the VAW movement and to the social work field; the barriers impeding sustainable training; and evaluating current models of such training to explore the most effective types of ARAO training. The scholarly work of social work colleagues in the creation of models useful in the development of self-reflexivity, critical consciousness and cultural competency would be beneficial to apply to both social work students and to VAW activists in a variety of SMO settings (see Lundy, 2011, Sakamoto & Pitner; 2005; Sakamoto, 2007; Williams, 2006).
2. Investigate further the several pathways to activism as outlined by the participants in this study. One understudied area, which I would be interested in exploring, is the role that social workers play in social movement work—particularly those social workers who currently deliver VAW services through VAW-funded family service agencies, such as the one I worked in during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Harris & Sinclair, 1981). Do these social workers see themselves as part of a VAW movement? Do they hold a

‘movement’ lens, or do they see themselves as more aligned with a social service delivery model?

3. Investigate further the work of Lehrner and Allen’s (2008, 2009). Their research on the ‘declining narrative’ of the VAW movement as a social change movement suggested that the meaning-making narratives of activists have become de-politicized, degendered, and individualized and that the radical social change roots of the early VAW movement have been largely unknown, forgotten, ignored, or dismissed. The findings in my study refute their findings but they raise important questions for the field to consider. Potential future research would duplicate their study in Ontario using similar questions, with a random sample of VAW workers working in VAW SMOs across the province.
4. Explore the processes involved in documenting and archiving our expertise gleaned during the past five decades of VAW movement work. Several SMOs in Ontario are suffering for space and funding. As well, many VAW activists and leaders in the VAW movement are retiring. A digital research project to ensure the preservation of essential historical documents would be an added strength for showcasing the work of the VAW movement. Investigate the possibility of a documentary of the VAW movement in Ontario. Several of the participants in this study were agreeable to have their interviews videoed and this could serve as raw footage for the documentary as currently none exists. This could be achieved in collaboration with the current development of an archival collection on the VAW movement in Canada that is for the *Feminist History Society*, to be published by Second Story Press, under the direction of Professor Connie Guberman (University of Toronto) covering a similar time period as this study—1960-2010.
5. Investigate the experiences of both VAW activists and social work students in the teaching of an ARAO lens. I am particularly interested in whether VAW activists and social workers think it would be helpful to add an anti-colonial lens to the current ARAO model. This would be in the spirit of furthering the University of Toronto’s commitment

- to honour the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, located in the summary report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (see Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).
6. Explore what constitutes resilience for activists, what constitutes resilience in a social movement and in similar fashion within the social work profession. (see Alaggia & Donohue, 2018; Park, Crath, & Jefferey, 2018).
 7. Investigate further the role of social movements and their relationship to the social work profession, particularly as it relates to the education of workers in both fields (see Bhuyan, 2018).
 8. Explore the role of men as allies in the global project to end violence against women. (see Messner, Greenberg, & Peretz, 2015).
 9. Engage in the controversial but nonetheless essential question of mandatory arrest policies, specifically as they impact racialized communities across Ontario (see Conners & Johnson, 2017).
 10. Investigate the role of effective allyship in all aspects of VAW social movement building activities, particularly within the social work profession, building on the work of ARAO feminist social work scholars (see Bhuyan, Bejan, & Jeyapal, 2017; Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2013).
 11. Explore the development, sustainability and effectiveness of coalitions and identify ways to strengthen them, building on the work of feminist scholars who have researched the underpinnings of powerful coalitions such as the existence of close personal ties that facilitate a greater degree of trust and thus, possess a willingness to share: detailed knowledge, effective conflict resolution mechanisms and respect for each other's preferences and limitations (see Arnold, 2011).
 12. Consider how to construct and implement a social work course rooted in the critical

whiteness literature (see Abrams & Gibson, 2007; Lee & Bhuyan, 2013).

Limitations

All of the participants invited to be a part of the study had worked with me at various points over the course of the past several decades in the VAW movement, in capacities such as working groups, policy tables, training events, consultations, specific projects and so on. I had, therefore, a collegial relationship with the participants, but there was no power differential (actual or perceived) that I am aware of. I am a member of the White dominant branch of the VAW movement and that may have impacted the forthrightness with which participants shared with me about sensitive topics in the movement, such as racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, and so on. My social identity did not appear, however, to impede anyone's comfort level in sharing their experiences. Perhaps it was because we had a track record of shared respectful working relationships, although it is important to state that none of the participants were ever supervised by me, in my employ, or worked with me as a client in my clinical practice.

This study focused on the perspectives of the participants in the broad topic areas outlined in Appendix G. Depending on the participant, each topic was a rich area of investigation that could not be mined in its depth given the limited length of interviews, which were typically 1.5 to two hours. Participants were fervent in their desire to share their reflections and their experiences. As the researcher, it was challenging to have to monitor the time involved. Although desired, it was not possible to reach saturation in each of the categories of social identity and sector experience. Descriptive data was documented and included in the findings as a way of keeping the significant variables at the forefront of future case studies of social movements, particularly feminist projects such as the VAW movement.

Limited time and resources made it impossible to geographically cover the province. As a result, the majority of interviews took place within the vicinity of Toronto and Ottawa. Study

participants from across the province made every effort to meet with me when visiting Toronto. Inevitably, that impacted the speed with which I could access the participants and it served to slow down the interviewing process substantially, extending it over a four-year period.

While I did not proactively search out a group of thriving, resilient activists, in fact, that is what they were. Qualitative findings are rarely generalizable due to small sample sizes. The inclusion of voices of activists who had left the VAW movement for any number of reasons, such as burn-out, VT/CF, dissatisfaction and/or disillusionment, would have offered a more complete picture and would be a theme for future research efforts.

Finally, limiting the sample size was a personal challenge for me. Despite a sufficient sample size of 22 participants, there was great pressure on my part to keep extending the sample size to include as many voices as possible. While I was able to reach saturation for the information I sought from the research questions I asked, the project of my dissertation journey was well known in the VAW community. As a result, several activists were enthusiastic about the project and would have liked to participate in the interviews. It was extremely difficult for me to have to deny them access to the study as some did not fit the inclusion criteria or came too late into the project.

Concluding Remarks

In this dissertation, I investigated how contemporary theoretical insights from critical feminist scholars and feminist social movement scholars can influence our everyday practice on the frontlines in the development and delivery of services to all women who are abused. More importantly, I addressed the role that social movements can play in addressing social problems, specifically the elimination of violence against women. I used an intersectional analysis to assist me to understand the multiple voices and experiences that should be included in VAW movement work but frequently are not. My participants in this study embraced the usefulness of intersectionality as a theoretical tool to better understand the bringing of their ‘whole selves’ to

the table. Even though one participant did not think the term useful as it derived from colonial roots, she did embrace the notion of a holistic approach to confronting VAW and suggested that view was compatible with an Indigenous worldview. Despite the articulated social justice goals of the VAW movement to advance equity and access for all women, mainstream women have been the primary beneficiaries, leaving an ever-widening gap between the stated ideals and the actual practice of social justice. This is an unacceptable situation that needs to be remedied.

Applying a critical feminist lens to address this problem aided in exploring these dynamics in the service of making transparent what has been invisible to many in the VAW movement. In fact, my desire to uncover these problems was the primary motivation behind this dissertation. Historically, the VAW movement has operated within an analytical framework dominated by White middle-class feminists—like myself. Gender was at the centre of our analysis and within that theoretical framework, patriarchy was the overarching system of rule, reflecting broader power relations that required dismantling. Mainstream VAW activist efforts focused on both personal and political strategies that were limited by that theoretical framework since it did not include seeing the ‘whole woman’. In this dissertation, it was my desire to place these theoretical choices within an historical context. In recent years, critical feminist scholars have rightly argued that an intersectional framework that incorporates multiple forms of oppression and worldviews must be at the centre of the VAW movement theoretically and practically. Therefore, I maintain that the current theoretical base cannot be merely expanded to add on race, nationality, class, sexual orientation and ability. Rather, we must develop a new model that will underpin our understanding of policies and practices, and that will guide our future work in the VAW movement, moving from a ‘single identity/worldview’ movement to a ‘multiple identities/worldviews’ movement. This research study is one such step in that direction.

Even though many doors were opened for women as a result of the activist efforts of the mainstream women’s movement, not all women’s experiences have been included in the dominant discourse (Ashcraft, 2000; Richie, 2012). This is not to imply that the initial feminist

paradigm shift that occurred during the *second wave* of the women's movement was not far superior to previous approaches, which pathologized women's experience of abuse, but to say that it is essential to understand that only a particular group of women were assisted and they were generally women who were members of the dominant class (Bograd, 1999; Ferraro, 1996; Harris & Sinclair, 1981; hooks, 1984; Sinclair, 1985, 2003, 2012; Walker, 1990).

By centering the voices of activists and championing them as knowledge producers with the expertise and wisdom they have gleaned during the past five decades of their work in the VAW movement, my study has aimed to shine a light on a little-known group of women who helped to create a movement and collectively changed the course of history in Ontario for countless women, their families and their communities.

As I write this conclusion, Ontario is facing a new government agenda, led by Conservative Premier Doug Ford. A populist government won handily in a divided province, tired of progressive-leaning Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne, an outspoken feminist and a tremendous ally to the VAW movement, facilitator of the *Roundtable on Violence Against Women* that operated from 2015 to 2018. Wynne, for the first time in the history of the VAW movement, attached a welcomed funding formula of \$243 million to infuse some life and equity back into a besieged and fragmented movement. Building on the work of past governments that were, to varying degrees, allies to the VAW movement, Premier Wynne brought together several provincial representatives of SMOs across the province to craft an innovative way of doing activist work.²¹ Premier Wynne suffered a devastating loss, which was in part surmised to be rooted in unconscious sexism and homophobia.

I had hoped to be able say in this conclusion that as a VAW movement we were on an upward swing in our ability to recover past losses under the Harris and Harper governments, but with this new right-wing Conservative Premier, we are again facing a devastating setback as a

²¹ The Roundtable on Violence Against Women was one of 13 key initiatives from the *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*. Twenty or more provincial SMO representatives with expertise in VAW participated in the three-year working process.

movement. Since the provincial election on June 7, 2018, we have already witnessed attacks on several fronts, including on Indigenous people, the most vulnerable population in the province. For example, there was an abrupt cancellation of the Truth and Reconciliation curriculum revision program, which was a commitment from the Wynne government in 2016 to teach all public-school children across Ontario about the legacy of residential schools and to integrate Indigenous perspectives into the mainstream provincial curriculum (Laing, 2018). In this political climate, we are called upon to join our voices in coalitions and collectively strategize how we are going to weather the negative shifts that are bound to trickle down from a hostile government.

To ensure inclusivity within the VAW movement, all voices need to be heard and every effort made to intentionally integrate anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-oppressive practices into all aspects of the work (Khosla, 2003). While cooperation and coalition building are essential in the face of the anticipated political backlash with the new government in Ontario, mainstream Eurocentric VAW activists must first develop a critical awareness and acknowledgement of power and privilege and take proactive steps to deconstruct it, realizing that with privilege comes responsibility. Once critical consciousness (reflexivity) is established, then activists must turn their gaze to the underlying structural barriers that cement multiple oppressions in place. The findings in this study confirm that view.

Mainstream VAW activists have spent five decades developing their expertise in deconstructing sexism, misogyny and the system of patriarchy initially embraced as the root cause of violence against women. For the next 50 years, if the VAW movement chooses to extend the teachings from this first phase of the movement, then the good news is, according to Ellen Pence (2005), activist scholar, that we are in a 100-year cycle of this social movement, which means we are only half way through our work. If we can apply the lessons learned from these study participants and their sisters in the movement, then we have a chance to address the problems created by other equally harmful systems of intersecting and interlocking oppressions,

such as racism, colonialism, ableism, heterosexism, neoliberalism and toxic capitalism, which harm women, their families and their communities.

The voices of the participants in this study have an inspiring message for the VAW movement and the profession of social work. They all demonstrated the capacity to sustain a critical social movement lens of the VAW movement, to inspire and motivate others, to embrace an anti-racist, anti-oppression, anti-colonial framework, to maintain their energy and compassion for the work and the movement, and to strengthen their resilience as they met their challenges. They now thrive in the work. They did not give up; they persisted, they struggled, they laughed, they cried, they raged, they held the tensions, but they did not give up. They had an ability to hold the hope even in midst of despair. Their message to the rest of us is to not give up. We have much to be proud of and we have much still to do. Encouragement for us all rests in the words of beloved feminist elder, Maya Angelou:

I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Demographic Data Summary

Voices from the Margins: Critical Conversations with Activists in the Violence against Women (VAW) Movement in Ontario from 1973-1993: A Case Study

	Participants	Title	Dates of Inv.	Age	Self-Identified Ethnicity
1.	Charlene Catchpole	ED (shelter)	1993/25yrs	47	Aboriginal
2.	Sly Castaldi	ED (shelter)	1989/29yrs	51	Italian
3.	Deb Chansonneuve	Indigenous Rights Activist	1979/39yrs	63	First Nations Blackfoot Descent
4.	Lynne Cheliak	ED/(Shelter)	1988/30yrs	45	Caucasian Ukrainian-Irish third generation
5.	Pam Cross	Feminist Lawyer	1973/45yrs	60	Caucasian
6.	Jane Doe	Educator/Anti-violence Activist	1981/37yrs	58	White, Canadian
7.	Debbie Douglas	ED (OCASI)	1982/36yrs	52	African-Caribbean
8.	Gloria Harris	Professor (AWCCA)	1986/32yrs	63	Aboriginal
9.	Holly Johnston	Researcher/Activist/Professor (U of Ottawa)	1980/38yrs	59	Caucasian
10.	Beth Jordan	Strategy & Org. Dev. Consultant	1990/28yrs	42	Black Woman Caribbean Ancestry
11.	Barb Kane	Senior Manager/MAG VAW Initiatives for ON	1975/43yrs	60	White
12.	Wendy Komiotis	AO Feminist Activist (ED-prevention)	1975/43yrs	59	African-Caribbean
13.	Michele Landsberg	Feminist Writer and Activist	1970/48yrs	78	Jewish

	Participants	Title	Dates of Inv.	Age	Self-Identified Ethnicity
14.	Erin Lee	Life Position- Feminist Activist Work Position-ED (shelter)	1988/30yrs	49	Biracial
15.	Barb MacQuarrie	Community Director	1978/40yrs	61	Caucasian
16.	Fran Odette	Activist/Educator	1988/30yrs	53	Irish French (Anglo-Saxon)
17.	Angela Robertson	Feminist Activist (ED-Health)	1985/33yrs	48	Black
18.	Silvia Sampsa	ED (shelter)	1983/35yrs	56	Slavian/Croatian/ Canadian-first generation- immigrant in 1957
19.	Marsha Sfeir	Lifelong Activist (ED-SR)	1985/33yrs	67	Lebanese American/ Canadian
20.	Deborah Sinclair	Feminist Social Work Activist	1973/45yrs	63	Fifth generation Canadian/ Irish Scottish heritage (White European)
21.	Anna Willats	Feminist Activist/ Educator (Prof)	1982/36yrs	58	White European
22.	Lynn Zimmer	Elder Feminist/ED	1972/46yrs	69	German & Irish- great grandfather fifth generation

* Gender – all participants identified as CIS females ** Education – all participants had post-secondary education (Child and Youth, Social Services/ BA/ BSW/ Master's in Psych/ Criminology/ Social Work/ Law degree) – all participants identified as lifelong learners and engaged in ongoing training throughout their careers.

Appendix B: Document Review: Key Government Policy Documents in Ontario/Canada

1. Canada, Status of Women (1979). *Toward Equality for Women*. Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada.
2. MacLeod, L. (1980). *Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Circle*. Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
3. Canada, House of Commons (1982). *Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs Report on Violence in the Family: Wife Battering*. Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada.
4. Ontario, L. A. (1982). *First Report on Family Violence: Wife Battering*. Toronto: Standing Committee on Social Development.
5. MacLeod, L. (1987). *Battered But Not Beaten: Preventing Wife Battering in Canada*, Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
6. Joint Committee on Domestic Violence (1999). *Working Towards a Seamless Community and Justice Response to Domestic Violence: a Five-Year Plan for Ontario*. Toronto: Attorney General of Ontario.
7. Ontario Women's Directorate (2004). *Domestic Violence Action Plan*, Toronto.
8. Ontario Women's Directorate (2009). *Transforming Our Communities: Report from the Domestic Violence Advisory Council for the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues*. Toronto.
9. Ontario Women's Directorate (2011). *Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives: Sexual Violence Action Plan*. Toronto.
10. Ontario Women's Directorate (2012). *Domestic Violence Action Plan Progress Report, Update May 2012*. Toronto.
11. Ontario Women's Directorate (2015). *Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*, Toronto.
12. Ontario Women's Directorate (2015). *Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women*, Toronto.
13. Canada (2016). *The Minister's Advisory Council on the Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*, Toronto.
14. Ontario Women's Directorate (2018). *It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy*, Toronto.

Appendix C: Key Events in the History of Ontario's VAW Movement Activism²²

1967	Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSOW) established its first federal report
1967	United Nations adopts the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
1968	Anduhyaun Inc. opens the first hostel for Indigenous women in Ontario funded by the Ministry of Indian Affairs and the YWCA
1970	Royal Commission on the Status of Women tabled its first report to the House of Commons
1971	Ontario Committee on the Status of Women was formed
1971	Women's Studies program at University of Toronto was launched
1972	National Action on the Status of Women was formed
1972	Family Consultants opened within the London Police Services to assist police officers to deal with families in crisis including family violence calls
1972	Women's Place opened in Toronto, Ontario
1973	Interval House opened on April 1 in Toronto, Ontario
1973	Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) was established based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women
1974	The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre opened
1974	Native Women's Association of Canada formed
1975	United Nations claimed the year as International Women's Year
1976	First National Conference for Canadian Rape Crisis Centres held in Ottawa, Ontario
1976	National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) was formed
1977	Support Services for Assaulted Women (SSAW) opened in Toronto, Ontario/becomes Education Wife Assault in 1992/ currently Springtide Resources
1977	United Nations designated March 8 as International Women's Day
1977	Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) was formed
1977	Toronto Day of Protest against VAW held
1977	Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) was formed
1978	Ontario Coalition of Interval and Transitions Houses (OAITH) was formed
1978	Family Service Association of Metropolitan Toronto launched their first Domestic Violence Project (DVP), a holistic community intervention social work model of effective service delivery to assaulted women and their families
1979	Government of Canada released its first policy statement <i>Towards Equality for Women</i> , National Plan of Action on the Status of Women as part of the United Nations World Plan of Action

²² Sources: Expanding on the work of Collier, 2008; Fraser, 2014; Ready, 2012.

1979	United Nations adopts the <i>Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women</i>
1980	Canadian Congress of Black Women was formed at the 7 th annual Conference for Black Women
1980	Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) commissioned the first national study on wife battering by Linda MacLeod's <i>Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Cycle</i>
1980	Speech from the Throne recognizes the "serious problem of violence against women"
1980	London developed one of the first non-shelter resources for abused women known as the Battered Womens Advocacy Centre (BWAC)
1980	The first community coordinating committee (CCC) was formed in London, Ontario
1980	The first federal Parliamentary Task Force on Family Violence convenes
1981	London police services is the first police service in Canada to develop formal policy to support charging in wife assault cases
1981	Conservative Premier Bill Davis hosts Ontario's first All-party Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs (Wife Battering)
1981	Report on domestic violence written by DVP team of a Family Service agency in Toronto, Ontario – Susan Harris and Deborah Sinclair: <i>Domestic violence project: A comprehensive model for intervention into the issue of domestic violence</i> : Toronto: Family Service Association of Metropolitan Toronto
1982	<i>Report of the Federal Standing Committee on Health, Welfare, and Social Affairs (Wife Battering)</i> introduced to the House of Commons by Margaret Mitchell NDP MP, greeted with laughter from MPs
1982	National Clearinghouse on Family Violence under the Federal Ministry of Health and Welfare was established
1982	Report of the Standing Committee on Social Development tabled its <i>First Report on Family Violence: Wife Battering to the Ontario Legislature</i>
1982	Federal Solicitor General began calling on police services across Canada to implement mandatory charging policies for wife battering
1982	The Criminal Code is amended so that spouses can be charged with sexual assault
1983	First Federal-Provincial study of advances and recommendations for reform on wife battering was undertaken
1983	Ontario Solicitor General ordered police forces to lay charges in cases of wife assault in accordance with how other assault charges are laid in the general public- the launch of the Ontario campaign " <i>Wife Assault is a Crime</i> " begins
1983	The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) developed their first <i>Policy Statement on Social Work Practice with Assaulted Women and Their Families</i> , based on the wholistic Social Work Model developed by Harris & Sinclair, (1981)
1983	Ontario Women's Directorate was established
1983	Family Violence Unit was established within the Ontario Women's Directorate
1983	City of Toronto released final report from Task Force on Violence Against Women and Children

1983	WAWAW and OCRCC protested video pornography
1983	Federal government release new Sexual Assault law – Bill C-127
1984	Meeting of the Federal Provincial Territorial Ministers responsible for the Status of Women focused on wife battering
1984	Final report of the Toronto Task Force on VAW (the Pink Ribbon Committee) released
1984	Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on VAW and Children (METRAC) founded
1984	The Family Violence Unit/OWD launched the first province wide training on VAW- 1100 workers were trained in 43 communities - Deborah Sinclair was commissioned to do the training. This work is documented in a report entitled, <i>Training Activities: Summary Report</i>
1985	Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney formally established the Court Challenges Program
1985	The Family Violence Unit/OWD commissioned Deborah Sinclair to write the first training manual for the province, <i>Understanding Wife Assault: A Training Manual for Counselors and Advocates</i>
1985	The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic was founded in honour of Barbara Schlifer, a young feminist lawyer who was brutally murdered in Toronto by a stranger, the evening she was called to the Bar.
1985	The Black Women’s Collective was formed in Toronto, ON
1986	The National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women was formed
1986	The first provincial conference in Ontario of disabled women was hosted by Disabled Assaulted Women’s Network (DAWN)
1986	The Liberal/NDP Ontario government introduces the Ontario Joint Family Violence Initiatives across ministries (for a five-year term– services for victims, public education and prevention, and law-enforcement, specifically mandatory charging and vigorous prosecution adopted as policy frameworks)
1986	Bill C-15 is introduced regarding child sexual abuse and passed
1987	CACSW releases Linda MacLeod’s second report, <i>Battered But Not Beaten: Preventing Wife Battering in Canada</i>
1987	The first time the Ontario Government attached \$7 million in funding for family violence, including first time funding for second-stage housing
1987	Liberal Premier David Peterson Ontario government launched Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sexual Assault
1988	Family violence initiative is launched by government of Canada with \$40 million for new shelters, more policing, crime prevention, programs, and research
1988	The National Clearinghouse for Family Violence, Health and Welfare commission David Currie to write the first manual on working with men who are abusive entitled: <i>The Abusive Husband: An Approach to Intervention</i>
1989	DAWN releases <i>Beating the ‘Odds’: Violence and Women with Disabilities</i>
1989	National Clearinghouse and Family Violence releases <i>Wife Battering and the Web of Hope: Progress, Dilemmas and Visions of Prevention</i>

1989	CACSW releases report <i>Preventing Wife Battering Towards a New Understanding</i>
1989	Montreal Massacre - on December 6, Marc Lepine targets and murders 14 female engineering at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, Quebec.
1989	Ontario Women's Native Association released the first report - <i>Breaking Free: A Proposal for Change to Aboriginal Family Violence</i> , Thunder Bay, ON
1989	The federal Conservative government invited 400 researchers, practitioners and policy makers in the areas of child abuse, elder abuse and wife assault to attend a four-day national consultation called <i>Working Together: National Forum on Family Violence</i> .
1990	Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney cut the Women's Programme of the Secretary resulting in a loss of 1.6 million in core funding that impacted women's publications and women's centres across the country. Activists occupied selected Secretary of State offices to show their resistance and the funding for women's centres was reinstated
1990	New Democratic Premier Bob Rae commits the Ontario Government to \$30 million dollars over five years to address sexual assault
1990	National Clearinghouse on Family Violence released <i>Isolated, Afraid and Forgotten: The Service Delivery Needs and Realities of Immigrant and Refugee Women who are Battered</i>
1991	The White Ribbon campaign was established
1991	The House of Commons subcommittee on Status of Women issues report, <i>The War Against Women</i> , recommending the government establish a Royal Commission on Violence Against Women
1991	Mary Collins, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, established the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women
1991	NDP MP, Dawn Black introduces Bill C 202 - to declare December 6 th , a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, it was supported by all parties and passed
1991	A federal Family Violence Initiative was renewed for another four years at a cost of \$136 million
1991	The Ontario government committed an additional \$8.26 million to the sexual assault initiatives, \$12 million to the Wife Assault Prevention Initiatives, and \$4.6 million to make shelters more accessible
1992	The 1 st report on <i>Woman Killing: Intimate Femicide 1974-1990</i> was released in Ontario by Rosemary Gartner and Maria Crawford
1992	The Alliance of Canadian Research Centers on Violence Against Women was established
1992	The NDP Ontario government added \$11.5 million to prevent sexual assault
1993	The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women released their final report <i>Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence – Achieving Equality</i>
1993	The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence released <i>Like a Wingless Bird: A Tribute to the Survival and Courage of Women who are Abused and who Speak neither English or French</i>

1993	The Vancouver Rape Relief Centre, in collaboration with NAC, released the report <i>99 Federal Steps... Towards an End to Violence Against Women</i> by Lee Lakeman
1993	The United Nations adopted <i>The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women</i>
1995	Liberal Prime Minister John Chrétien dismantled CACSW
1995	Conservative Premier Mike Harris slashed VAW funding across the province—eliminating all MCSS funding for second-stage housing, men’s programming, and counselling and a 2.5% cut to all shelters; including a 21.6% cut to those on social assistance
1996	Conservative Premier Mike Harris cut an additional 5% from funding to women’s shelters
1996	The Ontario Chief Coroner’s inquest into the murder of Arlene May and the suicide of Randy Iles-OAITH had standing
1996	The Ontario government released the <i>Framework for Action on the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Ontario – The McGuire report</i>
1996	On December 9, at George Brown College, activists gather to hear recommendations from The McGuire report, a secret report that the Harris government refused to release. Panelists reject “No” and remove the report from the speaker. Copies are quickly made and distributed across the province. The recommendations of the report were never acted upon. This act of resistance was captured on video and is part of the documentary, <i>Status Quo? The Unfinished Business of Feminism in Canada</i> , produced by Ravida Din and written by Karen Cho. Released in 2012
1996	Coalition in Defence of Women’s Anti-Violence Services was established
1997	The Ontario government released a new report, <i>Prevention of Violence Against Women: An Agenda for Action</i> adding \$27 million for new prevention initiatives
1998	The federal Liberal government cut funding to advocacy groups, including NAC’s core operational funding
2000	The Ontario Chief Coroner’s inquest into the murder of Gillian Hadley and suicide of Ralph Hadley- feminist expert witnesses used in the inquest/OAITH had standing
2000	Conservative Premier Mike Harris cut funding to women’s centers but funded \$5 million for children who witness violence; \$5 million for transitional support workers, \$50 million for Victim Services Assistance
2000	The Cross-Sectoral VAW Strategy (CSVAW) group formed
2000	Pam Cross, Punham Khosla, and Beth Jordan (2000) release the <i>Emergency Measures for Women and Children</i> report which called for all-party co-operation in the Ontario legislature
2000	Ontario Government introduces Bill 117, the Domestic Violence Protection Act
2001	Conservative Premier Mike Harris dedicated \$4.5 million over five years for a province wide crisis line—The Assaulted Women’s Helpline (AWHL)
2002	The Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) was established in Ontario as a result of feminist intervention in the earlier femicide inquests

2002	Office of the Chief Coroner. Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) 1 st Annual Report to the Chief Coroner: Domestic Violence Deaths, 2002. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.
2004	Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty launched the <i>Ontario Domestic Violence Action Plan</i> attaching \$60 million to the VAW funding budget
2006	Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper cuts funding from Status of Women and changes its mandate radically, eliminates the Court Challenges program, and the Law Commission of Canada
2007	Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty updates the <i>Ontario Domestic Violence Action Plan</i>
2007	The Ontario Chief Coroner's inquest into the murder of Lori Dupont
2009	The Ontario Chief Coroner's inquest into the deaths of Andrew and Jared Osidacz
2009	Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty released the report <i>Transforming our Communities - Report from the Domestic Violence Advisory Council for the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues</i>
2010	Bill 168: An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters came into effect in June after 14 years of feminist activism
2011	Ontario released the report <i>Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives: Sexual Violence Action Plan</i>
2012	Under Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Bill C-19 was passed, dismantling the long-gun registry
2015	Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne launched the <i>Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment</i>
2015	Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne invests \$100 million in the initiative, <i>Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women</i>
2016	Bill 132: An Act to amend various statutes with respect to sexual violence, sexual harassment, domestic violence and related matters – came into effect in July
2016	Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau launched The Minister's Advisory Council on the Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence
2018	Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne invests \$243 million and launches the report from the round table on gender-based violence - <i>It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy</i>
2018	On June 7, 2018, Conservative Premier Ford is elected, and the cuts begin again

Appendix D: United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (excerpt)

Article 1

For the purposes of this Declaration, the term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Article 2

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

Article 3

Women are entitled to the equal enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. These rights include, inter alia:

- (a) The right to life;
- (b) The right to equality;
- (c) The right to liberty and security of person;
- (d) The right to equal protection under the law;
- (e) The right to be free from all forms of discrimination;
- (f) The right to the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health;
- (g) The right to just and favourable conditions of work;
- (h) The right not to be subjected to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

*United Nations, General Assembly, 85th plenary meeting
20 December 1993*

Appendix E: Research Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form

[Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work Letterhead]

Research Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form

Research Project: Voices from the Margins: Critical Conversations with First Generation-Veteran Activists in the Violence Against Women (VAW) Movement in Ontario from 1973–1993: A Case Study

Researcher: Deborah Sinclair PhD candidate, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto.

You are being invited to participate in this study that is completely voluntary. This information sheet and consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records, is part of getting your informed consent. It gives you information about the research project and what your participation would involve. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have. Please take the time to read this carefully. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study is being conducted, you can speak to someone who is not involved in the study but can advise you on your rights as a participant. You can contact Daniel Gyewu, research ethics officer at the University of Toronto, at (416) 946-5606 or d.gyewu@utoronto.ca.

What is the purpose of this study?

My name is Deborah Sinclair and I am a doctoral candidate at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto. I am in the process of conducting my doctoral dissertation on aspects of the Violence Against Women movement. In particular, my interest is to examine the various perspectives of first generation-veteran (FGV) activists such as yourself in order to capture your insight into the gains and challenges of the VAW movement in Ontario. I propose to investigate this by conducting a case study of the VAW movement from 1973 to 2013. In the words of Shulamit Reinharz (1992), “case studies are essential for putting women on the map” (p. 174) and making visible the voices of women for study and action on behalf of future generations. One of the goals of this study is to put the voices of FGV activists in the VAW movement in Ontario on the map as a means to expand on current knowledge, which often exists within an historical vacuum of movement history.

I will be conducting approximately 12 to 15 interviews with FGV activists. I have a number of questions I would like to ask you, but I also want this to be a satisfying experience for you so I would like you to feel free to tell your story in your own way. Please raise any issues that you think I may have missed.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and if you do choose to withdraw from the study, your decision will have no consequences on your professional work or your place of employment. If you do decide to take part, please keep this information

sheet.

What will happen if I do take part?

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to complete one brief questionnaire at the time of the individual interview. The questionnaire is meant to gather general demographic information such as your age, relationship status, education, income and so on. It should only take a few minutes to answer the questions. **In addition to completing the questionnaire, you will participate in a one-on-one individual interview with me.** The interview will be approximately one to two hours. The interviews will be conducted at a mutually agreeable time and in a setting convenient for you. This may be at an office at the University of Toronto, my work office in Toronto, your office if you wish, or by phone if that is more convenient for you.

Once I complete all of the individual interviews and conduct a preliminary analysis of the emerging themes, you will be invited you to attend a focus group with other study participants where I will share the findings and seek your insight on interpreting the data. **Please refer to Appendix G for the Interview Guide for the Focus Group.**

What will happen during the interview?

You will be asked a series of questions about your experiences and perspectives as an activist in the Violence against Women movement in Ontario in each of the following areas: early reflections of your role in the VAW movement; what you see as successes of the VAW movement; consequences that you may not have anticipated for the VAW movement; lessons learned; impact of the work; and lastly, wisdom for future generations of activists.

With your permission, I will be **videoing and/or digitally recording** this interview to ensure I am able to fully capture your experience. You will be given the opportunity to have the video and/or digital recording turned off at any point and I will take notes. You may also choose to speak off-the-record at any point or refuse to answer certain questions. In essence, you will be requested to answer only those questions that are within your comfort zone.

Anonymity may be an issue for you and this will be honoured if requested. If you choose to remain anonymous: once your interview is transcribed, your data will be delinked. This means that all identifying information will be removed and within one month, I will destroy the recording of your interview. At that stage, you will no longer be able to withdraw from the study. However, if you consent to participate in the follow-up focus group, you will be reminded that participant identities will be revealed to each other at that stage of the study. If you choose to participate in the focus group you will be asked to maintain each other's confidentiality.

If you wish to maintain your public identity and therefore not have your data delinked, you will have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time.

I will keep the video and/or digital recordings and my notes locked in a secure cabinet in my home office. The transcripts will be kept in an encrypted, password-locked computer in my secured home office. No details that would reveal your identity would ever be made public against your wishes and your confidentiality will be safeguarded during all phases of the research study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I anticipate some minimal risks that may arise as a result of your participation in the study. It is possible that in reflecting on past or present experiences/perspectives in the VAW movement there may be some unsettling moments. In being sensitive to these possibilities I am taking the following step to maximize your comfort level: you may take a break at any time; you may refuse to answer any question; you may wish to pause for a moment; you may stop the interview and reschedule it; or you may wish to end your participation. Once the interview is completed, I will provide you with a referral list of professional resources that will assist you in debriefing any unresolved issues that may have been triggered during the course of the interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The immediate benefits to participants in this study relate to the notion that you may experience some personal and professional satisfaction in having the opportunity to reflect on your work in collaboration with me and your peers in the focus group. The long-term benefits relate to your contribution in the development of more effective strategies in furthering the dual goals of the VAW movement in Ontario as it relates to both service provision and social change.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information collected about you for the study will be kept confidential. All interviews will be videoed and/or digitally recorded, transcribed and analyzed. If in the event that I hire an assistant to help me in transcribing some of the interviews, she will be asked to sign a confidentiality waiver to not reveal any information she has acquired as a result of the transcription of the interviews. If you do not wish to be recorded then I will take detailed notes. The video and/or digital transcripts will be stored in an encrypted, password-protected computer and hard copies of the transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet in my secured home office. If you agree to have your data retained for future projects (i.e. post-doctoral work, documentary, feminist archives, etc.), then the data will be retained indefinitely. Otherwise, all data will be destroyed seven years after the completion of the study. As stated earlier, if you wish to remain anonymous, your recording and transcript will be delinked and then deleted permanently one month after your interview.

What will happen with the results of this study?

This is a study that is being completed as part of the requirement for my doctoral dissertation. If requested, you will be provided with a summary report of the results of this study. **Future dissemination practices and knowledge mobilization activities will include the publication of journal articles, possibly a book, conference presentations and workshop materials.**

I understand:

- My participation in this study is completely voluntary. **I can decline to participate in the study at any time. If I request to be anonymous, I understand that my data will be delinked one month following my interview and I will no longer be able to withdraw from the study.**
- I will fill out a brief questionnaire and participate in a 1-2 hr. individual interview with Deborah Sinclair, a doctoral candidate enrolled at the Inwentash-Factor Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, and principal investigator of this study. The interview will take place at a location of my choosing, or by phone.

My responses to the interview questions will be **videoed and/or digitally recorded** and transcribed verbatim with my permission, with any identifying information removed, **at my request**. The transcripts will remain on an **encrypted**, password-protected computer in the secure office space of the principal investigator.

My responses will be reported in summary with other participants for research purposes and individual participants will not be identified in any report or resulting publications unless I wish my identity to be public at my own request.

I know the potential benefits associated with this study and that the information will be kept confidential. I also know that there are no identified risks to my participation in this study.

I agree to have the findings (which may include quotations) from this study published and/or presented in a manner that does not reveal my identity unless I give my permission to have my identity made public.

I agree to have my interview digitally recorded. () Yes () No

I agree to have my interview videotaped. () Yes () No

I agree to have my data (interview transcript, digital and /or video recording) saved indefinitely for future use related to VAW movement work (i.e. post-doctoral work, documentary, feminist archives, etc.) () Yes () No

Do you wish to receive a summary of the findings? () Yes () No

How do you wish to receive the findings? () E-mail () Surface mail

E-mail or mailing address: _____

I agree to be contacted for a follow-up focus group () Yes () No

Based on my review of the Information Sheet and the above listed statements:

- I CONSENT (I CONSENT TO DIGITAL RECORDING __)
- I CONSENT (I CONSENT TO VIDEO RECORDING __)
- I DO NOT CONSENT TO DIGITAL RECORDING
- I DO NOT CONSENT TO VIDEO RECORDING

Participant Name (Please print)	Participant Signature	Date
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I confirm that I have explained the nature of the study to the participant named above. I have answered their questions.

Name	Signature	Date
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Principal Name (Please print)	Principal Investigator's Signature
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Thank you for taking your valuable time to participate in my research study. Once I have your interview transcribed, I am happy to send it to you for your review to make sure I have gotten it right. **And just another reminder that even though you have signed the consent form, if you change your mind and no longer wish to participate in the study, just let me know and I will destroy any of the data related to your interview if it has not already been delinked.** If at any time you have concerns or questions about the study, do not hesitate to contact me at my office number 416 691-6631 or by email deborah.sinclair@utoronto.ca.

Appendix F: Demographic Information

Participant's ID # _____

Title of your position (i.e. feminist activist) _____

Dates of your involvement in the VAW movement (i.e. 1978-2013): _____

Age: _____

Gender: CIS Female CIS Male Trans Other

Education: Secondary School Post-secondary Other

Income Range: > \$29,000 \$30,000-\$49,000 \$50,000- \$79,000 \$80,000+

Relationship Status: Single Common-law union Married Separated/Divorced Other

First Language _____ Other Languages _____

Self-identified Ethnicity: _____

Dependents: _____

Appendix G: Interview Guide for Individual Interviews – Areas of Further Exploration

- **Early reflections** – What was your starting point? When did you join the movement? How did you understand the issue of VAW in those early days? Where did you locate yourself initially in terms of your experience of oppression? How did your own social location inform your analysis of the work? Why did you pick up this issue the way you did? Why is it so important to you? How did you make those connections between race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, and colonial consciousness? Were you always aware? How did this happen? What were the steps you went through to develop self-awareness re: your social location and identities and their impact on your work?
- **Successes** – What do you see as the successes of the VAW movement?
- **Unanticipated consequences** – What did you expect to happen as a result of your strategies? What did you not anticipate? What do you see as the limitations of the VAW movement?
- **Lessons learned** – What do you think as you look back on your work? Would you do anything differently? What do you now think social movements can and cannot do? What do you see as the current challenges facing the VAW movement?
- **Impact of the work** – How has this work impacted on your personal and professional life, both in positive and negative ways? What inspired you to make VAW work your life's work?
- **Wisdom for the future** – What wisdom would you like to pass on to future generations of activists? What directions, strategies and possibilities do you envision in moving forward with the goals of the VAW movement in Ontario? What do you suggest the profession of social work can do to become more effective allies to the VAW movement?

Appendix H: E-mail Invitation to Participate in this Research Study

Dear [Name of Participant]

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that is part of my doctoral dissertation. I am currently a PhD candidate at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto. I am in the process of conducting my doctoral dissertation on aspects of the Violence Against Women movement. In particular, my interest is to examine the various perspectives of first generation-veteran (FGV) activists such as yourself, in order to capture your insight into the gains and challenges of the VAW movement in Ontario. I propose to investigate this by conducting a case study of the VAW movement from 1973–2013. In the words of Shulamit Reinharz (1992), “case studies are essential for putting women on the map” (p. 174) and making visible the voices of women for study and action on behalf of future generations. One of the goals of this study is to put the voices of FGV activists in the VAW movement in Ontario on the map as a means to expand on current knowledge that often exists within an historical vacuum of movement history.

Please feel free to ask me any questions or share concerns you may have regarding this study. Your participation is completely voluntary and confidential.

If you decide this study is something you are interested in learning more about, please contact me by email and we can set up a brief phone conversation. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for considering this project.

Warmest regards,

Deborah Sinclair

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form for Participation in the Member-Checking Group

[Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work Letterhead]

Informed Consent Form for Participation in the Member-Checking Group

Research Project: Voices from the Margins: Critical Conversations with First Generation-Veteran Activists in the Violence Against Women (VAW) Movement in Ontario from 1973–1993: A Case Study

Researcher: Deborah Sinclair PhD candidate, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto.

What is the purpose of this study?

My name is Deborah Sinclair and I am a doctoral candidate at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto. I am in the process of conducting my doctoral dissertation on aspects of the Violence Against Women movement. My interest is to examine the various perspectives of first generation-veteran (FGV) activists such as yourself, to capture your insight into the gains and challenges of the VAW movement in Ontario. I propose to investigate this by conducting a case study of the VAW movement from 1973–2013. In the words of Shulamit Reinharz (1992), “case studies are essential for putting women on the map” (p. 174) and making visible the voices of women for study and action on behalf of future generations. One of the goals of this study is to put the voices of FGV activists in the VAW movement in Ontario on the map to expand on current knowledge which often exists within an historical vacuum of movement history.

Now that I have completed all the individual interviews and conducted a preliminary analysis of the emerging themes, I invite you to attend a member-checking group with other study participants where I will share the findings and seek your insight on interpreting the data.

With your permission, I will be videoing and/or digitally recording this member-checking group to ensure I can fully capture your experience. You will be given the opportunity to have the video and/or digital recording turned off at any point and I will take notes. You may also choose to speak off-the-record at any point or refuse to answer certain questions. You will be requested to address only those issues that are within your comfort zone.

You have consented to participate in the follow-up member-checking group on December 11, 2017. As a participant in the study, you are requested to maintain each other’s confidentiality in relation to the discussion that occurs during the member-checking group.

I understand:

My responses to the interview questions will be **videoed and/or** digitally recorded and

transcribed verbatim with my permission. The transcripts will remain on an **encrypted**, password-protected computer in the secure office space of the principal investigator.

My responses will be reported in summary with other participants for research purposes and individual participants will not be identified in any report or resulting publications unless I wish my identity to be public at my own request.

I know the potential benefits associated with this study and that the information will be kept confidential. I also know that there are no identified risks to my participation in this study.

I agree to have the findings (which may include quotations) from this study published and/or presented in a manner that does not reveal my identity unless I give my permission to have my identity made public.

I agree to have the member-checking group be digitally recorded. () Yes () No

I agree to have the member-checking group be videotaped. () Yes () No

I agree to have my data (interview transcript, member-checking group transcript, digital and/or video recording saved indefinitely for future use related to VAW movement work, such as post-doctoral work, documentary, feminist archives, etc.) () Yes () No

Do you wish to receive a summary of the findings? () Yes () No

How do you wish to receive the findings? () E-mail () Surface mail

E-mail or mailing address: _____

Based on my review of the above listed statements:

- I CONSENT (I CONSENT TO DIGITAL RECORDING __)
 I CONSENT (I CONSENT TO VIDEO RECORDING __)
- I DO NOT CONSENT TO DIGITAL RECORDING
 I DO NOT CONSENT TO VIDEO RECORDING

Participant Name (Please print)	Participant Signature	Date
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I confirm that I have explained the nature of the study to the participant named above. I have answered their questions.

Name	Signature	Date
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Principal Name (Please print)	Principal Investigator's Signature
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Thank you for taking your valuable time to participate in my research study. If at any time you have concerns or questions about the study, do not hesitate to contact me at my office number 416 691-6631 or by email deborah.sinclair@utoronto.ca.

Appendix J: Participant Biographies

Sly Castelli is the Executive Director of Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis. She co-chaired Premier Wynne's Round Table on VAW from 2015-2018.

Charlene Catchpole is the Executive Director of Leeds and Grenville Interval House, a women's shelter in rural Eastern Ontario. Charlene is the present Chair of Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH).

Deb Chansonneuve is a freelance writer, researcher, community developer and passionate Indigenous rights activist.

Lynn Cheliak is the Executive Director of Pavilion Women's Centre, a shelter serving rural and isolated women in Northern Ontario.

Pamela Cross is a feminist lawyer who works as a consultant in the area of women's equality, violence against women and the law. Pam is also the Legal Director of Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre in Durham Region.

Debbie Douglas is the Executive Director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI).

Gloria Harris is the former Executive Director of Marjorie House, a women's shelter in Northern Ontario, professor at George Brown College in the Assaulted Women and Children's Counsellor/Advocate program and currently works in her home reserve with the Band Council.

Holly Johnson is Associate Professor and Senior Research Associate in the department of criminology at the University of Ottawa.

Beth Jordan is the Founder and Principal of Adobe Consulting Services and former Executive Director of the Assaulted Women's Helpline (AWHL).

Barbara Kane was the Manager of Violence Against Women Initiatives in the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG). Upon retiring, Barbara joined the board of the Huron Women's Shelter in rural Southwestern Ontario.

Wendy Komiotis is the Executive Director of Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC).

Michele Landsberg is a writer, social activist and former journalist for the Toronto Star newspaper.

Erin Lee is the Executive Director of Lanark County Interval House, a shelter serving rural and isolated women in Eastern Ontario.

Barb MacQuarrie is the Community Director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women & Children in the Faculty of Education at the Western University in London Ontario.

Fran Odette is Professor in the Assaulted Women and Children Counselor Advocate Program at George Brown College in Toronto, Ontario.

Angela Robertson is the Executive Director of Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre and former Executive Director of Sistering, an organization that serves homeless women in Toronto, Ontario.

Silvia Samsa is the Executive Director of Women's Habitat, a women's shelter in Toronto, Ontario.

Marsha Sfeir is the former Executive Director of Springtide Resources (Education Wife Assault), Toronto, Ontario, and currently consults with various groups on VAW and equity issues.

Deborah Sinclair is a senior social worker, consultant, trainer, writer, expert witness and community organizer in independent practice in Toronto, Ontario. Her clinical practice specializes in work with trauma survivors, their families and their allies.

Anna Willats is Professor in the Assaulted Women's and Children's Counsellor/Advocate Program and Project Manager for the Women Transitioning to Trades & Employment Program at George Brown College in Toronto, Ontario.

Lynn Zimmer is the Executive Director of the YWCA Crossroads Shelter serving rural and isolated women in Eastern Ontario.