

**The (Un)Making of Home, Entitlement, and Nation:  
An Intersectional Organizational Study of Power Relations in  
Vancouver Status of Women, 1971-2008**

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## Abstract

Women's organizing and organizations in North America emerge at historical moments within the larger women's movement across geographies, political climates, and nation formations. Within all movements, the workings of power relations are active, demanding constant negotiations and contestations. This is a case study of one feminist organization, Vancouver Status of Women (VSW). I illustrate the ways VSW challenged, contested, reproduced and reinforced power relations and specifically nation-building discourses.

Drawing on both extensive historical archival data and in-depth expert interviews, I engaged in a qualitative case study of VSW's workings of power relations from its inception in 1971 to 2008. I interviewed thirty-one women who worked in some capacity as staff or board members. Archival research involved locating primary documents such as organizational meeting minutes, policies, annual reports, bylaws, newsletters, publications, organizational correspondence, and other relevant documentation. By engaging in an intersectional critical race feminist discourse analysis, I explicate the construction of VSW as *home*, and demonstrate how nation-building discourses of belonging and entitlement are embedded within this organizational site. Organizational processes and policies indicate the historical trajectory of how, when and who challenged, responded, and reproduced power relations.

This study provides several theoretical, methodological, and substantive implications. My research challenges dominant organizational theory's notion that organizations are neutral sites. I argue that organizations are constituted as sites of colonial encounters by demonstrating how power as relational and archival are invoked and deployed in VSW, and some of its effects. I illustrate how VSW is embedded in the colonial archive of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women which reproduced nation-building discourses of essentialism, racialization, and exclusion. The research also offers a conceptualization of power present in organizations while applying Foucault's understanding of power as a network of relations and discourses that circulates as productive. I also present a theoretical framework of the modalities of entitlement embedded in national belonging and accumulated national capital across multiple sites producing the *exalted feminist of the nation*. Lastly, I propose a more nuanced ethical Affirmative Action Policy based on participants' lessons learnt that shifts beyond tokenism and representation.

## Preface

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## Dedication

*I dedicate this dissertation to my mother who teaches me every day about endurance, courage, forgiveness, healing, and love.*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*It is the very strangeness of the past which makes us able to see clearly the strangeness of the present.*<sup>1</sup>

Feminist organizations are sites of colonial encounters<sup>2</sup> and contact zones<sup>3</sup>, as are all institutions and organizations in North America. Feminist organizations are political organizations primarily focusing on advocating for women's rights and equality for all women. Feminist organizations are diverse organizational sites that are organic, fluid, complex, and constantly changing due to their location within and across historical, geographical, political, economic, and social landscapes. Furthermore, feminist organizations may also intersect and interact with other women's organizations and the larger women's movement as well as with other social change movements such as the peace/antiwar movements, Indigenous<sup>4</sup> movements, students' rights movements and queer<sup>5</sup> movements. Therefore, a feminist organization as a site responds constantly to both internal and external strengths and challenges while interacting with the complexities of its own organizational life cycle and trajectory.

Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail (1988) examine the women's movement in Canada by discussing the contributions and limitations of First and Second Wave feminisms. Feminism itself is not a unified political ideology. It is predominantly categorized within the mainstream women's movement by different currents of feminism such as liberal, Marxist, radical/cultural, and socialist feminisms (Adamson et al., 1998; Sandoval, 2004). There are also other feminist currents that have been marginalized within hegemonic feminist<sup>6</sup> discourses, and these include Indigenous feminism, postmodern feminism, eco-feminism, anti-racist/critical race feminism, and post-colonial/Third World feminism. Feminist organizations engage in complex discussions and negotiations when determining their organizational culture, including form, structure, processes, and policies most appropriate to their shifting feminist agendas. It is imperative to acknowledge the multiple tensions, differences, conflicts, and divisions that continue to exist across feminist organizations.

### Research Purpose and Questions

There is limited research regarding the organizational culture and policies of feminist organizations in Canada which addresses internal responses and interruptions of power relations. This

research is an in-depth study of one feminist organization's making of and responses to power relations throughout its organizational life cycle. By engaging in an in-depth study of the *Vancouver Status of Women* (VSW) from 1971 to 2008, I examine the complexities, negotiations, and disruptions of power relations through time while considering its intersections with the larger nation-state.

Using an intersectional feminist framework<sup>7</sup>, I examine the following questions within the specific trajectory of multiple and intersecting histories and locations of a feminist organization born out of Liberal Second Wave feminism in British Columbia.

1. What is the relationship between Canada as a colonial nation-state and the making of the feminist organization and culture? How are organizational discourses of belonging and entitlement related to nation-building discourses?
2. What organizational processes and policies have been developed and implemented internally by Vancouver Status of Women to respond to the complexities of power relations? How do feminists across time challenge and/or reproduce power relations?

By addressing these research questions, this dissertation contributes to the scholarship on organizational theory, power relations, archival studies, intersectional feminist frameworks, critical race/whiteness theory, and nation-building discourses. This study brings forth the discourses of feminist organizations as part of the nation-building<sup>8</sup> project within the larger power relations and hegemonic<sup>9</sup> formations of patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism. According to Das Gupta and Iacovetta (2000):

Nation-building, the privilege of a few, is a process of inclusion and exclusion, of distinguishing between 'us' and 'them', of conferring rights of citizenship to some but not 'others'. As a white settler society, Canada's so-called 'rise' from 'colony' to 'nation' was predicated upon the colonial displacement and genocide of the First Nations. Furthermore, neo-colonial relations between white and aboriginal peoples, as well as racist, class delineated, and heterosexist paradigms, continue to define mainstream and malestream definitions of Canada and Canadians. (p. 1)

Through the examination of one specific feminist organization, I investigate the making, deployments, and effects of power relations. I illustrate the making and unmaking of *home* within larger nation-building discourses of entitlement while investigating organizational policies and processes which contested or reproduced particular hierarchies of power. This organizational case study explores the complexities and contradictions of VSW as actively challenging, contesting, interrupting, as well as reproducing and enforcing power relations. It highlights power relations as repressive and constraining but also as resistance and productive. Michel Foucault's (1990; 2000) model of power is the primary

conceptual framework used for this dissertation, illuminating the making and deployment of power relations deriving from all social relations and not only emanating from the State.

This research helps to understand the contradictions, assumptions, agreements, processes and meanings which guided both counter-hegemonic and hegemonic power relations within the organization. It reveals the intricate processes of responding to power differences framed within the macro landscapes of the larger women's movement, the nation, and globalization. VSW was born out of nationalist liberal discourses' attempt to lobby and challenge state practices which also reproduced nation-building discourses and practices of dispossession and exclusion.

The story of power relations at VSW is one of colonial encounters. Such encounters demonstrate that the subjects involved are not equal and that they carry traces of difference which are markers of power and power relations. Encounters require not only spatial negotiations as Ahmed (2000) states but also affective, political and symbolic negotiations. They can promote happiness or anxiety. When I speak of colonial encounters within VSW, I do not speak merely of the power relations between but also across white and non-white bodies. Colonial encounters are encounters with the strange and the familiar; they produce each other. Such encounters reproduce and contest colonial discourses embedded in imperialist legacies across social relations of race, class, sexuality, ability, citizenship, migration, time and space. We are born into such encounters and our entry point begins within colonial contact zones and proximities<sup>10</sup>. Specifically for myself, the researcher, such colonial contact zones began in Mauritius<sup>11</sup> as a descendent of South Asian indentured labourers - Indian Coolies. I am an embodiment of the entanglement of the British Empire. My ancestral, familial, and personal travels include the voyage from Calcutta to Mauritius (while both nations were under British occupation), and from Mauritius to Canada (a constitutional monarchy of the Queen of England).

My entry point in VSW is itself a colonial encounter where VSW becomes a colonial contact zone producing proximities between differently positioned bodies across its organizational trajectory. I walked into VSW in June of 2000 at 877 Hastings Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, as a newly hired staff. On my first day, I was greeted by three black lesbian feminists positioned differently from each other. Each of these racialized<sup>12</sup> women had their own experiences of colonial encounters and contact zones which brought them to this feminist organization. This dissertation is most interested in the power relations that were invoked across these colonial encounters and the reproduction and

contestation of nation-building discourses. These nation-building discourses include discourses of racialization, exclusion and homemaking which are produced, policed, sustained, challenged and resisted.

## **Vancouver Status of Women as the Case Study**

Vancouver Status of Women (VSW) was established in 1971, to ensure that the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) were implemented. VSW's current mandate is "freedom and self-determination for all through responsible, socially just, healthy and joyful communities both locally and globally. Vancouver Status of Women works with women to ensure our full participation in the social, economic and political life of our communities".<sup>13</sup> The organization was created out of liberal feminist "equality" discourses during a conference in Vancouver on January 30, 1971 on the RCSW Report which had recently been launched by the Federal government. A year or so later the organization received federal funding and, soon after, provincial and municipal funding to maintain its mandate of lobbying for the recommendations of the RCSW and to sustain its advocacy Ombudservice program. Chapter 4 of this dissertation further discusses the birth of VSW as an organization and the events surrounding its inception.

VSW transformed its organizational newsletter *Kinesis* into a national feminist newspaper<sup>14</sup> in 1974; *Kinesis* circulated until 2001. VSW also produced a weekly television program, *Women Alive*, which was a public education media forum that brought women's equality issues to the forefront. Through nearly four decades, the organization engaged in research, assertiveness training, consciousness-raising, and organized conferences, workshops, and rallies while playing a leadership role in coalition and lobby work. Throughout VSW's historical trajectory, it experienced funding cuts by federal, provincial, and municipal governments. As an organizational site it employed up to 15 staff during expanded funding periods while shrinking to two staff during more regressive funding periods. During its existence, VSW moved to numerous locations in Vancouver, from Kitsilano to Commercial Drive, and later to several locations on East Hastings.<sup>15</sup>

By 1992, VSW had gone through significant challenges which resulted in shifting from a Board of Directors to a Coordinating Collective with increased engagement with consensus decision-making processes. During the same period, VSW implemented an affirmative action policy<sup>16</sup> with a particular focus on hiring racialized feminists in permanent, full-time positions. In the early years, VSW's

priorities focused on women's exclusions due to sex discrimination, pay inequity, pornography, anti-choice and unemployment; by the mid 1990s they shifted to anti-racism and anti-oppression work, with a focus on resource development and poverty in relation to Indigenous and immigrant women, women of colour, and single mothers. In the early 2000s, VSW reprioritized and focused primarily on welfare policies and the racialization of poverty as it impacted differently positioned racialized women, particularly single mothers.

## **Positioning the Researcher**

As a racialized queer<sup>17</sup> feminist studying feminist organizations, I find it responsible and responsive for me to position myself within the context of this dissertation. My engagement with the Canadian women's movement and feminist organizations since 1997 at the national, provincial and local levels contributes to a vision and investment in healthy and sustainable social justice movements. My involvement in different capacities as staff, board member, collective member, and volunteer with the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, Vancouver Status of Women, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, the BC Coalition of Women's Centres, and the Women of Colour Mentoring Program, as well as the Women's Students Office at UBC have been the primary sites which have informed my understanding of feminist organizations in Canada. I value such transformative sites of social change and also recognize their limitations in which I play a temporary and partial role.

This research directly positions me as a researcher across discourses of belonging/unbelonging and inclusion/exclusion within VSW, as well as in the larger women's movement, and the nation-state. My experience in the Canadian women's movement has predominantly been as an outsider who is invited at times to play on a playground built on nationalist discourses of citizenship, entitlement and belonging. From such experiences I have come to ask, "*who is the rightful feminist of the nation?*" and I respond "*she does not look like me*".

I became aware that just as nationalist subjects' sense of belonging and home was largely based on how one feels entitled or has entitlement granted by the nation, this was also true within the women's movement and feminist organizations. I continuously experienced white women's sense of entitlement within the movement, but most importantly I learned to read and navigate their tolerance of me and those like me. I further came to understand that this outsider status and lack of belonging

continues to haunt the Canadian women's movement. This is the entry point for this study; *how, why, when* and *who* wields power and what are the effects and implications of power relations within VSW as a feminist site embedded within the women's movement and the larger nation-state.

As a racialized queer feminist researcher who has been involved with VSW since 1999, my specific positionality allows me to carefully examine important historical and current tensions and anxieties of the women's movement and feminist organizations while recognizing my responsibility and accountability to future generations. This particular topic speaks to my own struggles and the struggles I have witnessed of racialized women whose experiences and identities intersect across various discourses and spaces of exclusion within the current women's and social justice movements. I engage in this research with the ongoing learning and understanding that my construction of *home* in Canada, which began as an immigrant girl-child arriving from Mauritius in the early 1980s, remains contingent on the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples in relation to the ongoing colonial legacies of imperialism. Such a realization of creating one's home at the expense of Indigenous *homelessness* is brutal and painful, demanding deep accountability and responsive visioning. Moreover, I recognize that my accumulated privileges and entitlements in relation to the nation remains intact as long as Indigenous populations remain dispossessed. Therefore, this research project invokes my complicity in sustaining and reproducing, as well as being subversive to nation-building discourses.

I was involved with VSW since 1999 as a volunteer Committee member, and in 2000 I was hired on a full-time contract as the *Kinesis* Restructuring Facilitator. I then occupied the position of Administrator/Fundraiser Coordinator and from 2002 to 2007, became the Project Coordinator for two multi-year projects on welfare and the racialization of poverty. In 2007, I was no longer a staff member and joined the Coordinating Collective member. In January 2009, I left the organization in order to pursue this research. My history with this organization brings forth a complexity of power relations both as effect and affect. VSW has facilitated much personal growth and profound lessons, including joy, trust, herstories, friendships, mentorship, pain, frustration, anger, satisfaction, leadership, and critical reflection. Most importantly for me, VSW has been a site that has been welcoming not only to me but to my grandmother, my mother, and my nieces. This is a rare experience for a queer racialized woman of South Asian descent in Canada; but then it is also a rare

opportunity to have the support of a feminist organization to engage in such a study of the making and mechanics of power relations.

During the summer of 2008, as a member of VSW's Coordinating Collective, I embarked on a journey of critically reflecting on the workings of power within this particular feminist organization. This began with a critical self reflection of how I had worked, facilitated, abused, manipulated, distributed, and shared power. It became evident, as I reflected back on my own invocations of power as a VSW staff and Coordinating Collective member, that I was part of larger relations of power that appeared to be locally managed but yet were a reproduction of larger discourses of power relations within the women's movement and the nation-state. I became acutely aware of the many accumulated privileges and entitlements within the organization which positioned me differently to others. My organizational history of 11 years reflected the following: holding multiple positions, having a university education, teaching in Women's Studies, speaking and articulating in English without an *accent*. These privileges largely positioned me at an advantage and position of leadership, even though the organization worked with a consensus decision-making process and collective structure. I began to recall the times that decisions appeared to be through consensus and yet the power relations that I invoked, as well as those that were invoked by others in relation to my positioning, resulted in centering my knowledge, my understanding, and my desire.

Furthermore power relations became more transparent when I recognized that I had been part of most of the staff hiring committees as well as a key person in recruiting Coordinating Collective members. These relations constructed certain power relations which endured during my tenure at VSW and also ensured that individuals in the organization looked to me for the *right* answers and leadership. This awareness was troubling and had to be discussed with the staff and Coordinating Collective members of the organization. We began to speak to the ways that I had reproduced power relations which brought me to an advantage, but I also became quickly aware how others also facilitated this process. Those others who did so included VSW members, members of the women's movement, as well as funders and, to a certain degree, the nation.

As I deeply began to critique my own workings of power within VSW, I became strongly aware of my sense of ownership and entitlement which was largely attached to how I had constructed and how others constructed power relations vis-a-vis my history within the organization. I also became

alert of the reality that my leadership in relation to power relations did not provide the space that was needed for others to step up and learn to navigate their own power in a much more visible and critical manner. How one comes to study their own power relations in the every day is a humbling experience demanding careful negotiations and accountability to respond to organizational conflicts, surprises and troubles. It is precisely these experiences that pushed me to engage in this study of power at VSW. Beginning from my own experiences of power within one organization, I learned how to investigate such relations which exists in all spaces.

## **Conceptual and Methodological Frameworks**

In order to explicate and examine power relations, I engaged in a qualitative case study<sup>18</sup> of Vancouver Status of Women. Two types of qualitative methods were used to collect data for this case study. Drawing on both extensive historical archival data and in-depth expert interviews, I analyze the data using an intersectional feminist discourse analysis. I explore VSW's organizational historical engagement with power relations from its inception in 1971 through to 2008. I interviewed 31 women who worked in some capacity as staff or board member at VSW from 1971 to 2008. Archival research involved locating primary documents and engaging in archival/text-based research. Archival material included publications, organizational meeting minutes, policies, annual reports, funding reports, bylaws, newsletters, organizational correspondence and other relevant documentation. Every attempt was made to locate and identify archival materials which reveal omissions, silences, and interruptions regarding power relations and nation-building discourses of belonging and entitlement.

This research is about the workings of power relations and the materiality of power. This dissertation draws heavily from Michel Foucault's (2000) theory of power relations with a particular focus on power as relational within organization, movements and the nation, as well as power as archival. Sara Ahmed's (2000a) ontology of *strangers* provides the primary framework that allows me to examine colonial encounters within VSW as constructed by larger nation-building discourses. I also draw on Sunera Thobani's (2007) theorizing of *exaltation* which contributes to deepening the analysis of how some national subjects become exalted and learn to perform this elevated subject position. Ghassan Hage's (2000) theoretical framework of *accumulation of national capital* and *field of Whiteness* also adds to the overall analytical and discursive framework for this dissertation.

To develop a deeper understanding of the mechanics of power relations and how they are

invoked and deployed, this dissertation draws on participants' narratives<sup>19</sup> and VSW archives, within the larger landscape of analyzing power relations within the women's movement and the nation-state. Power relations within these larger landscapes intersect and influence organizational responses and decisions. Foucault (2000) encourages us to focus on contingencies rather than simple relations of cause and effect when it comes to power. Foucault recognizes that when we analyze events in the past, we tend to try to attribute simple, clear causes for those events. This attributing of cause and effect in a simplistic way masks the fact that there are always multiple contingent contributing factors that lead to specific actions and responses. Sara Mills (2003) affirms in her discussion of Foucault's work on power relations:

This notion of analysing contingency instead of a simple cause-and-effect relation is extremely important to the analysis of power relations, since it enables the Foucauldian analyst to focus more on the way that power is dispersed throughout a society in all kinds of relationship, event and activity; focusing on contingent factors enables us to examine the way that power operates. (pp. 51-52)

Foucault urges one not to solely locate power in a centralized institution or loci of power, such as the State, as early Marxists had done. Instead, he defines power as a major force permeating all relations within society, which is both enacted and contested as performance rather than possession. He further argues that power relations are not easily observable when they are invoked, which was one difficulty encountered in this research. Foucault (1988) suggests the following:

To investigate what might be most *hidden* [emphasis added] in the relations of power; to anchor them in the economic infrastructures; to trace them not only in their governmental forms but also in the infra-governmental or para-governmental ones; to discover them in the material play. (p. 119)

In this research I illustrate the making and workings of power relations within VSW by following and tracing power through the archives and narratives. Hence, this research strives to study power in its forms and the way that they are negotiated by VSW staff and board members.

Also, embedded in this study of power is the examination of discourses. Foucault (1972) refers to discourse as rules and structures which produce particular utterances and texts. Discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak while recognizing that power is a fundamental aspect of discourses (Mills, 2004). Foucault (1981) is interested in the way that discourses are regulated when he states:

In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable

materiality. (p. 52)

This research emphasizes the procedures and processes which constrain discourse while also examining processes of power which lead to discourse being produced. Foucault's work on discourse as power facilitates an understanding of the way *we know* what *we know*, the historicizing of processes and ideologies, and how they were produced and under what circumstances. His work helps us identify whose interests discourses serve and whose interests they do not serve. Most importantly, we become aware of the ways to think differently within our different positionalities of what we see as knowledge and truth. Foucault explains how archives and texts allow for analyzing the possible forms of expression which circulate within a given period.

[Archives and texts] provide material for a thorough examination of the way in which a particular kind of knowledge (e.g. medicine, psychiatry, psychology) is formed and acts in relation to institutions and the roles prescribed for them (e.g. the law with respect to the expert, the accused, the criminally insane and so on). They give us a key to the relations of power, domination and conflict, within which discourses emerge and function, and hence provide material for a potential analysis of discourse...which may be both tactical and political, and therefore, strategic. (Foucault, cited in Mills, 2003, pp. 111-112)

In my examination of power and discourses of nation-building, I draw on the works of Sara Ahmed's (2000a) *Strange Encounters*, Sunera Thobani's (2007) *Exalted Subjects*, and Ghassan Hage's (2000) *White Nation*. By identifying the intense collisions in struggles over identity, belonging and the longing for home within colonial Canada, this dissertation is critical of how we construct this *home* within the shadows of the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, families, communities and lands. As Ahmed, Castaneda, Fortier and Sheller (2003) ask, *who inhabits whose land* and "how are the materialities, affects and politics of diverse uprootings and regrounding simultaneously played out upon bodies, families and nations, within the constraints imposed by violences and disciplines of many kinds?" (p. 5).

Ahmed's (2000a) theorizing of strangers asserts that the construction of the nation and the national subject can only exist within the presence and articulation of the stranger or Other<sup>20</sup>. As Ahmed (2000) argues, the stranger or alien "is the one who does not belong in a nation space, and who is already defined as such by the Law" (p. 3). Such outsider discourses establish the demarcation of spaces of home and belonging both within social spaces as well as bodily spaces. It is through these demarcations of encounters that I examine the workings of power relations. Ahmed explains that it is through strange encounters that the stranger is produced because the stranger has been recognized

prior to its physical manifestation. She demonstrates how the stranger is already recognized as the body out of place and as the origin of danger. Ahmed (2000) also illustrates how the stranger is produced through knowledge, rather than as a failure of knowledge. She explains that it is precisely the process of encountering and knowing strangers that the *we* comes into existence. It is through this ontology of strangers that national subjects determine what is safe as well as what is dangerous. It must also be noted that there are some strangers who are constructed as more dangerous than others. Accordingly, national policies such as multiculturalism can appear to benefit and welcome the stranger but only as the origin of difference.

Bannerji (2000) examines multiculturalism as an ideological state apparatus and its fabrication of whiteness and Otherness within the nation. Multiculturalism as "a device of power" produces subjects based on legitimacy and citizenship through symbols, discourses and practices, identifying who truly belongs to the nation and who remains forever a stranger.

There is in this process an element of racialized ethnicization, which whitens North Americans of European origins and blackens or darkens their 'others' by the same stroke. This is integral to Canadian class and cultural formation and distribution of political entitlement. The old and established colonial/racist discourses of tradition and modernity, civilization and savagery, are the conceptual devices of the construction and ascription of these racialized ethnicities. (Bannerji, 2000, p. 6)

Thobani (2007) argues that multiculturalism is a means to ensure the exaltation of privileged white national subjects because it stabilized white supremacy in current eras of colonization/globalization. Whiteness became constructed as tolerant yet remaining a feature of the founders and rightful national subjects, in the process, constructing Others as less tolerant and monocultural. Ahmed (2000) suggests that "it is in the process of expelling or welcoming the one who is recognized as a stranger that produced the figure of the stranger in the first place" (p. 4). Therefore, this dissertation focuses on examining how the stranger is an effect of processes of inclusion and exclusion, and of belonging and unbelonging while constructing borders of bodies and communities. As I witnessed my making, invocation, and deployment of power relations during my time at Vancouver Status of Women, I also noticed that such power relations partly remained intact post-VSW engagement, particularly during the research process with participants and potential participants whom I worked with at VSW.

Ahmed's (2000a) analysis of the *proximity of strangers* is central to this dissertation as it not only explains when strangers are seen to destabilize or threaten homes, but also when the stranger is no longer seen as outsider but rather on the periphery or inside the home. I carefully investigate the

responses and interruptions when strangers outside the VSW space are seen to trespass or destabilize this space that has been constructed as home. Similarly, I examine what happens when the organization welcomes particular strangers during its organizational trajectory. How are some Others and stranger Others differentiated and welcomed differently? What are the similarities to this welcoming in relation to a feminist organization and the nation? According to Ahmed (2000), the "difference of 'strangers' is claimed as what makes the nation be itself, rather than being seen as that which threatens the nation" (p. 16).

### **Vancouver Status of Women's Organizational Eras**

I have chosen to examine the story of Vancouver Status of Women and its relationship to power relations across four organizational eras. The organizational eras derive from my knowledge of VSW's organizational trajectory through participant narratives, archives, and my own historical positioning within the organization. Therefore, the eras reflect my feminist researcher-insider knowledge and how I come to be in this space and to understand the organization. In particular, the eras demonstrate the shift in composition of those in leadership positions. The first era is inclusive of the birth of the organization in 1971 to the early 1980s (1971-1982). The second era includes the mid 1980s to the early 1990s (1983-1991). The third era includes the mid-1990s to late 1990s (1992-1999). And the fourth era is from 2000 until 2008 (2000-2008). Below, I provide a brief description of the four eras based on the content from VSW archives and participants' narratives.

During the first era (1971-1982) women involved in VSW were very much engaged in challenging national patriarchal exclusions as predominately experienced by white middle-class heterosexual women who were mostly housewives. At the same time, the organization was confronted by individuals and groups both within the organization as well as outside the organization who contested and altered its heteronormative, middle-class culture. Yet this was also the era where white middle-class women were very much reproducers of nationalist bodies, including nationalist ideologies, cultures, and actively participated in transmitting constructions of difference regarding class, sexuality and race. During this first organizational era, VSW was deeply embedded in what Ahmed (2000) refers to as *strange encounters*, where the stranger must be maintained as the outsider in order not to contaminate or destabilize the home. Through the Royal Commission on the Status of

Women (RCSW) and its ideologies, Vancouver Status of Women actively participated in both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic nation-building practices.

During the second era of the organization (1983-1991), VSW experienced encounters with strangers particularly lesbian women and women of colour, who brought about contestations, demands, and surprises. Women who traditionally had not been part of the organization also engaged in contesting the organization around exclusion, leadership, policies, and decision-making. Women who had traditionally experienced belonging within the organization found themselves being destabilized and challenged regarding their whiteness and the reinforcement of white dominance. The culture of the organization was destabilized by the proximity of the stranger who by the end of the second era was granted precarious and minimal access to the space, *the home*, either through committees with little decision-making power or as part-time/contract staff in precarious positions.

The making of the nation is intrinsically embedded in discourses of racialization - Whiteness and Other. Whiteness becomes a marker of national belonging. Hage's (2000) field of Whiteness illustrates that whiteness does not just refer to colour because throughout history it has included people who were previously categorized as non-white. He explains whiteness as "an everchanging, composite cultural historical construct" originating from discourses of Imperialism and Orientalism, and argues that it has "become the ideal of being the bearer of 'Western' civilization" (p. 58). Hence, whiteness becomes an aspiration of all subjects. The field of Whiteness is the field of power which reflects beyond discourses of national belonging but also governmental belonging. Governmental belonging involves the practice of nation-building, making and reproducing by national subjects as the natural and true managers of the nation. The nationalist manager is constructed as "someone with a managerial capacity over this national space...such a space has to be perceived as one's own national space" of legitimized belonging (p. 42).

This process of legitimization and belonging is also discussed by Thobani (2007) which she argues produces national subjects as exalted. This exaltation reinforces the subject to experience the self as preferred and differently valued above all Others. Thobani illustrates that the act of exaltation began at contact through colonization and the construction of Canada and Canadian identity as legitimate by law and policies such as the Indian Act, immigration, and citizenship. This belief that one is above all Others produces discourses of what is right and good and becomes the basis for the

foundation of the nation through white supremacy. Hence, the creation of white Canada is based on processes of exclusions and exaltation which is profoundly embedded in our institutions and organizations. I demonstrate how the national feminist subject also invokes this subject positioning and becomes exalted feminists of the nation. Additionally, I argue that Hage's white nation fantasy as the field of Whiteness is where exaltation resides. Hence, national practices involve the aspiration of accumulating Whiteness as capital and entitlement in the making of the homely nation as fantasy<sup>21</sup>.

Ironically, during VSW's second era, federal governmental policies such as Unemployment Insurance (UI) Top Up grants paved the way for traditionally excluded women to enter the organization. UI Top Ups played an important contradictory role within the organization as well as many other organizations. These programs were particularly focused on shifting women off UI and into the workforce while also creating a hierarchy between those hired in these positions and permanent full-time staff. UI Top Up staff experienced precarious employment creating uncertainty and a lack of security for these women regarding their employment. Through such federal precarious employment policies, we began to witness, as Ahmed (2000) demonstrates, the *welcoming of some strangers*, and not Others, into the organization. The presence of such women began to destabilize the organizational culture of VSW in a profound way. At the same time, in this era the organization is heavily challenged and criticized for its ongoing reproduction of white feminist culture and aspirations. It was further critiqued for producing the essentialist approach of *adding on* diversity. This approach involved adding the token immigrant woman of colour or working-class lesbian to the Board without investing in systemic and institutional changes. It reinforced essentialist discourses of the Other as needing to be thankful to have been included but did not develop into their entitlement or ownership within the organization.

During this period, the organization shifted from a Board of Directors to a Coordinating Collective (CC) while implementing a consensus decision-making (CDM) model. An affirmative action<sup>22</sup> policy was developed and implemented in 1992, which ultimately shifted much of the white culture of the organization.<sup>23</sup> Understanding this process and the power relations involved illustrating the fears, anxieties, and loss of home as experienced by many white women. Frankenberg (2004) explains the racial superiority attached to whiteness as experienced by white women. She implies that whiteness is not a raceless identity but that it is "a position of structural advantage", a "standpoint from which to

look at one's self, others, and society", and lastly, a "set of cultural practices" regarding white normativity across intersecting social relations (2004, p. 141).

Also throughout the second era, the organization shifted from consciousness-raising workshops to diversity and anti-oppression workshops. They developed an understanding that neither gender alone nor *adding on* of difference was the answer. This realization pushed the organization to develop a policy of *inclusion with influence* which would be accountable and responsible for ensuring that women who had traditionally been excluded from VSW would now have a space and voice in leadership positions.<sup>24</sup> By the end of the second era, difficult turbulent times of intense conflict and challenges were invoked due to the hiring of the first woman of colour permanent full-time staff, the *Kinesis* Editor. Race became privileged as a site of diversity with the intention of creating equal decision-making opportunities for racialized women by shifting away from tokenism.

In the third era of VSW (1992 to 1999), it invested in increased organizational policy developments responding to unequal power relations. The beginning of this era demonstrated the outcomes of an affirmative action policy; all permanent full-time positions would now be occupied by Indigenous women and women of colour. By the fourth era, the presence of white women remained on the periphery within the organization, mostly as members of the Coordinating Collective (CC) or part-time workers. Much of the policy development were led by racialized women who were differently positioned within their intersectionalities of queerness, ethnicity, class and education. VSW became publicly visible as a feminist organization under the leadership of politicized racialized women who provided an alternative understanding of the women's movement. Accordingly, VSW and *Kinesis* became a powerful site of organizing and belonging for racialized lesbian feminists in the city of Vancouver. By the end of the third era, conflicts over power relations continued to erupt, but this time between differently positioned racialized women. Embedded in these conflicts were another layer in the complexity of colonial encounters between and across women of colour and Indigenous women. These tensions required outside facilitation to mediate such relations, initially by white feminist consultants, and later by Indigenous women and women of colour consultants.

The fourth and final organizational era is from 2000 to 2008. In the latter period, the organization engaged in discussions of transgenering, shifting away from the more transphobic discourses of the late 1990s towards implementing a trans-inclusive policy.<sup>25</sup> By the mid-2000s, VSW

had an increased presence of Indigenous women working in permanent positions. This brought forth more complex interactions and implications as Indigenous women and women of colour at VSW negotiated power relations and differences. The organization and all those involved were forced to envision alternative relationships rather than reproducing hegemonic feminism and other forms of dominance.

I illustrate how Vancouver Status of Women staff and board members at different periods of time converged on shared meanings of political organizing and feminist values/ideologies. Each era was an opportunity to understand how women articulated who was in the movement, what direction the movement was taking, and what goals the movement supported. It was also the opportunity to hear those who demonstrated and spoke something different. Often, they were not necessarily seen as belonging to the movement because of their concerns and the tensions they invoked. I also discuss VSW's decision-making process across the eras, and describe the moments when decision-making processes were challenged and interrupted.

As the publisher, distributor and employer of *Kinesis*, Canada's national feminist newspaper, VSW had an intricate relationship with this newspaper. VSW was heavily influenced by the presence and politics of *Kinesis*. *Kinesis* brought depth and breadth to political and feminist issues not only in Vancouver and British Columbia, but also throughout Canada. *Kinesis* deeply influenced VSW's position and standpoints as well as political discussions and awareness regarding a diversity of women's issues. *Kinesis* was a fundamental vehicle which positioned VSW and its politics in national spaces of feminist gatherings and conferences. Hence, nationally VSW became visible through the staff, content, and analysis of *Kinesis*, particularly within the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW).

The presence and visibility of *Kinesis* was also the constant tension which brought to the fore unique power relations between VSW and *Kinesis* until 2001 when *Kinesis* could no longer be sustained. This is ultimately my entry point into the organization, when I was hired as the *Kinesis* Restructuring Facilitator. My position was to facilitate the re-envisioning of *Kinesis* by breathing life back into Canada's national feminist newspaper. Ironically, my position focused predominantly on studying the conflict and power relations that played out while mediating tensions between individuals

within the organization and investigating the expectations of *Kinesis*' readers in the larger women's community.

In this dissertation, I identify several dramatic moments of change: these include the shift away from the board structure and towards a more collective structure, as well as decision-making practices such as consensus decision-making. In addition, the implementation of VSW's Affirmative Action Policy significantly shifted the organization at multiple levels: staff personnel, Collective Coordinating members, programming, priorities, and alternative knowledge systems, highlighting the diversity of racialized feminists and power relations among racialized bodies. We also witnessed the organization as a leader during its first era at the provincial level, and later during the second and third eras, at the national level. In the fourth era, VSW focused more on specific local issues and struggles at the municipal level. Concerns arise over how feminists who are so scattered across the nation can unify into one national social movement with a common agenda and identity. This has largely been troubling for feminists who have predominantly been left out of the mainstream women's movement.

This dissertation also speaks to the culture of funding within the nonprofit industrial complex system.<sup>26</sup> This culture dictates who will get funding, under what circumstance, for what duration of time, and what the deliverables will look like for the community, membership, and funders. This culture imposed by the State and other funders pushed the organization toward a culture of documentation which profoundly shifted the organization's priority as it became more micromanaged. VSW attempted to resist the institutional forces that seek to contain and normalize this culture of documentation and bureaucracy, but would often reproduce it.

Women who engaged in dissent within VSW took many risks and experienced a lack of belonging and entitlement within the organization. Based on an analysis of the data, I illustrate the intersectionality of power relations, as well as the different modalities of entitlement. I argue that symbolic, affective, spatial and political entitlements represent the rituals to perform exaltation embedded in citizenship rights.<sup>27</sup> These include affective recitations of the national anthem, raising of the Canadian flag, public pledges and oaths of allegiance to the Queen and nation, as well as rituals performed during national holidays both in the public sphere and in the privacy of the home.

Performance of this exaltation also includes the practice of political entitlements in relation to voting and elections.

Further I suggest that those who engaged in dissent provided the productive force needed to shift the organization producing discussions and actions as effects of power relations across multiple sites. These multiple sites include VSW, the women's movement, the nation-state and globalization. These critical transformations were productive of specific politicized discourses of organizational feminist culture. This often led to action and activism embracing intersectionality within multi-issue agendas, which further trickled into the larger women's movement.

## **Dissertation Outline**

The chapters in this dissertation attend to the organizational histories, practices, processes, and experiences of power relations that mark discourses of nation-building, belonging, and entitlement. Chapter 2 presents the literature review and theoretical frameworks that inform and situate this research. The literature review on power relations, nation-building, and the women's movement frames this case study of how Vancouver Status of Women invoked, deployed and responded to power relations over four decades. Chapter 3 discusses the methodological framework for this study, including strengths and limitations of the research. I also address the complexity of the researcher's fluid positioning when engaging with participants and archives across the organizational eras, as an *outsider* in the earlier eras, and as an *insider* to the organization.

Chapter 4 illustrates the *making* of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) Report as a key event in the birth of VSW. The RCSW Report was released in December 1970 and VSW's inception was early 1971. I argue that the RCSW era (1967-1971) reproduced the landscape of hegemonic feminist discourses and processes of exclusion and racialization marking Vancouver Status of Women. Chapter 4 demonstrates how liberal feminist ideologies were crystallized within the RCSW and became instilled in VSW. This crystallization of hegemonic feminism became the primary source which haunts VSW across spaces in time.

The next three chapters, Chapters 5, 6, and 7, address the colonial anxieties and tensions of home as negotiated across the organization's history while demonstrating moments of contestation as well as reproduction of hegemonic forms of belonging. It is through the narratives as well as the archives that I reveal the workings of power relations in constructing and deconstructing entitlement

and belonging attached to home. Chapter 5 illustrates participants' conceptualization of power and the mechanics of power as invocation, deployment, and effects within a settler colonial nation. Chapter 6 addresses the complexities of the participants' narratives about how home was constructed within the organization and how it was challenged and disrupted. This chapter also demonstrates how participants at different time periods contested and reproduced nationalist practices of white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy. I illustrate colonial anxieties and complexities of Indigenous and other racialized bodies engagement in discourses of home-making within national discourses of belonging and entitlement.

Chapter 7 investigates organizational policies, processes, and structures that were implemented to reproduce and/or subvert nation-building practices. I demonstrate the workings of power relations materially and discursively by examining organizational responses or lack of responses as effects of power. Chapter 8 provides a summary of the findings as well as implications. I discuss theoretical, methodological and substantive contributions and implications of this research while suggesting considerations for future research. This research on the Vancouver Status of Women is an important site of study as it enables analysis of power relations and how such relations are embodied and imagined as colonial relations and encounters across multiple sites: VSW, the women's movement, nation-state, and globalization.

This study has relevance beyond VSW because it also brings to the forefront emerging discourses of power within the women's movement across multiple sites as well as other social movements' organizations more broadly. Further, the findings and discourses of this study are useful for all institutions and organizations as it illustrates the interacting complexities of power, organization, and nation. I hope that this research will create a heightened awareness and deeper understanding of our fluid positions as feminist/social justice organizers in reproducing nation-building practices and discourses. It is imperative that we think through how we continue to be complicit in such reproduction and reinforcement of power as abusive and exclusive. It is only through this process of reflexive investigation one can envision alternative discourses of movement and organizing. Most importantly one's struggle is deeply intertwined with the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples and their land. By critically examining how the intersections of positionalities, the historicizing of the women's

movement and the nation are embedded in one's everyday/night, one can begin to envision, shift and transform such sites of colonial encounters.

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<sup>1</sup> Mills, 2003, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> According to Ahmed (2000), an *encounter* is a mediated meeting of subjects involving surprise and conflict. Colonial encounters continuously constitute subjects and their identities as they come together in what is familiar and strange. Ahmed (2000) explains that such meetings "are not simply in the present: each encounter reopens past encounters" (p. 8).

<sup>3</sup> Mawani (2009) refers to a *colonial contact zone* as "a space of racial intermixture - a place where Europeans, aboriginal peoples, and racial migrants came into frequent contact, a conceptual and material geography where racial categories and racisms were both produced and productive of locally configured and globally inflected modalities of colonial power" (p. 5). Mawani's analysis of contact zones brings a multiplicity and depth by reworking Mary Louise Pratt's theorizing of contact zones.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I use the term *Indigenous* to refer to First Nations, Metis, Inuit and Aboriginal communities and peoples. I explicitly use the term Indigenous Peoples to demonstrate their active presence and connection globally not only as those who have experienced dispossession through colonization and imperialism but also to acknowledge their multiplicity of traditional and ancestral knowledges. Indigenous Peoples of Canada are the original inhabitants whose identities are deeply connected spiritually and politically to the land (Monture-Angus, 1999). It is on this basis that Indigenous Peoples are committed to uphold their inherent rights to self-governments and self-determination (Monture-Angus, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> According to Moore and Bunjun (2005), "when used by heterosexuals, this term is often a degradation of non-heterosexual practice and identity. 'Queer' has been reclaimed and re-defined by many non-heterosexuals as a political identity, communicating pride, gender rebellion, and resistance against oppression. It is also used as an inclusive term to encompass lesbian, gay, bisexual, Two-Spirit, transgenering, and nonstraight heterosexuals as a group" (p. 168).

<sup>6</sup> The term *hegemonic feminism* was constructed by women of colour and Third World feminists to contests white hegemonic feminism's essentializing of Indigenous women and women of colour particularly in the US and Canada. Hegemonic feminism is discussed in detail by Sandoval (2000; 2004). Thompson (2002) explains that "this feminism is white led, marginalizes the activism and world views of women of color, focuses mainly on the United States, and treats sexism as the ultimate oppression. Hegemonic feminism deemphasizes or ignores a class and race analysis, generally sees equality with men as the goal of feminism, and has an individual rights-based, rather than justice-based vision for social change. Although rarely named as hegemonic feminism, this history typically resorts to an old litany of the women's movement that includes three or four branches of feminism: liberal, socialist, radical, and sometimes cultural feminism" (p. 337). See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of hegemonic feminism.

<sup>7</sup> *Intersectional feminist frameworks* engage with discourses, identities, experiences and systems of domination/oppression as interacting, fluid, changing, negotiated, historical, locational, situational and diverse. I discuss the concept of intersectionality in detail in Chapter 2. According to Dill, McLaughlin, and Nieves (2007) "intersectionality is grounded in feminist theory, asserting that people live multiple, layered identities and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege. It is an approach to creating knowledge that has its roots in analyses of the lived experiences of women of color - women whose scholarly and social justice work reveal how aspects of identity and social relations are shaped by the simultaneous operation of the multiple systems of power. Intersectional scholarship is interdisciplinary in nature and focuses on how structures of difference combine to create new and distinct social, cultural, and artistic forms. It is intellectually transformative not only because it centres the experiences of people of color and locates its analysis within systems of ideological, political, and economic power as they are shaped by historical patterns of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ethnicity, and age, but also because it provides a platform for uniting different kinds of praxis in the pursuit of social justice: analysis, theorizing, education, advocacy, and policy development" (p. 629).

<sup>8</sup> I refer to nation-building as the process of building, maintaining, and gate-keeping a colonial nation. According to Lawrence (2002), nation-building is fundamental to the maintenance of settler colonialism in Canada by sustaining "its posture of being innocent of racism and genocide" (p. 26). It is important to differentiate between nation-building and state-building. State building refers "to the creation of viable political and administrative institutions that enable a political entity, the state, to function efficiently as an independent unit. The key elements of state building include the assertion of monopoly on violence through control of the police and military forces. This is essential for the state's ability to rule over its territory. Finally, state building also entails the creation of an effective fiscal system as a basis for the establishment of a functioning legal and administrative system" (Kostic, 2008, para. 4). Therefore, the State reflects the workings and apparatuses of the nation such as State policies (i.e. Indian Act, welfare) and institutions (government Ministries, police, schools) to ensure the material control and regulation of society. When I refer to nation-state, I then include both processes as interdependent on each other, yet distinct constructions and processes.

<sup>9</sup> The term *hegemony* was developed by Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci's (1971) understanding of how different groups struggle to gain the consent of other groups, producing social relations where the interests of the ruling class are presented as dominant and universal. Gramsci's use of the term hegemony is historically situated to reflect the dominance of one social class over others with an emphasis on the importance of the struggle against bourgeois values. Hegemony is understood as the permeation throughout society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality with the effect of sustaining and reproducing dominant power relations. According to Fleras (2010), hegemony involves "changing people's attitudes without an awareness that their attitudes are being changed, those in positions of power are able to secure control and cooperation through consent rather than coercion" (p. 373). Therefore, hegemony presents the processes by which the dominant culture reproduces and maintains its dominant position.

<sup>10</sup> According to Mawani (2009), colonial proximities involve "exploring the transnational and intersecting lineaments of colonial projects, the social and juridical knowledges that imperial circuits and mobilities produced, as well as the legal responses and modalities of governance that were inspired and enabled through the colonial regime's production of competing racial truths" (p. 4).

<sup>11</sup> Mauritius, located off the South-East coast of Madagascar. It was a French and later a British colony. Mauritius became independent in 1968.

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<sup>12</sup> The term *racialized* refers to the process of racialization and explicitly represents Indigenous and people of colour. See Thobani's (2000b) discussion of the process of racialization as a two-sided process that constructed Others as less human and uncivilized, and Europeans as superior and civilized. Thobani (2000b) states racialization was "the primary principle underpinning British rule in North America...and later in the production of the Canadian nation, its national sovereignty, and its citizenship" (p. 284). The term racialization is further discussed in detail in Chapter 4, including the racialization of white subjects as Other and later as white - a marker of national belonging. I find the term women of colour to be inadequate and static, because it does not capture the fluid process of being racialized differently across subjects and history. In particular, Indigenous feminists in social justice movements have criticized being included in the term women of colour by pointing out the specificity of colonial relations as it has impacted Indigenous women in Canada in regards to non-Indigenous people of colour. Over time, the term racialized was adopted by both Indigenous women and women of colour to be inclusive of both. I identify as a racialized feminist because I belong to an era of the women's movement and of VSW where we identified ourselves as racialized. Therefore, in this dissertation, the term racialized explicitly refers to non-white subjects.

<sup>13</sup> VSW Annual Report, 2003-2004.

<sup>14</sup> The newspaper was known as *Kinesis: News About Women That's Not in the Dailies*.

<sup>15</sup> VSW Archives. Herstory.

<sup>16</sup> According to Zawilski (2010) affirmative action policies are "policies and practices favouring groups (mainly ethnic groups and women) that have historically experienced disadvantages of discrimination, usually in the fields of employment and education" (p. 397).

<sup>17</sup> I use the term *queer* because I am from a generational cohort within the women's movement where identifying as queer was/is more common than lesbian. Queer refers to any form of gender bending.

<sup>18</sup> See Stake's discussion of case studies (1995; 2003). See also Chapter 3.

<sup>19</sup> When drawing on a participant's *narrative*, I use the term *narrative* to refer to segments of the participant's interview data.

<sup>20</sup> The term *Other* is constructed as different and abnormal in opposition to the "normative self" who is the *dominating* group "against which normality, abnormality, superiority and inferiority are evaluated. The normative self is the image of the individual that we are taught is most valued and important" (Moore & Bunjun, 2005). According to Cannon and Sunseri (2011), the Other is a "theoretical term used to refer to the creation of an us/them binary, where normality is understood in the 'us' and the abnormality, subhumanity, or inferiority is understood as belonging to 'them'-the Other" (p. 279).

<sup>21</sup> See Hage's (2000) theorizing of the field of Whiteness.

<sup>22</sup> Henry and Tator (2006) describe affirmative action as "a set of explicit actions or programs designed to eliminate systemic forms of discrimination by increasing the opportunities of individuals and groups who have historically been excluded from full participation in and access to such areas as employment and education" (p. 347).

<sup>23</sup> VSW's Affirmative Action Policy is discussed in-depth in Chapter 7.

<sup>24</sup> Further discussed in Chapter 7.

<sup>25</sup> Discussed in Chapters 5 and 7.

<sup>26</sup> Described here as a State apparatus. See the work of Andrea Smith (2007), also discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 6 for a theoretical discussion of entitlement.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature and Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter focuses on the review of literature and theoretical frameworks on power, nation-building, and the women's movement in Canada. Michel Foucault's model of power (1990; 2000) provides the necessary foundation for this dissertation while also considering Teun van Dijk (2008) conceptualizing of power as abuse and Dorothy Smith's (1987; 1990) relations of ruling as power. I particularly focus on power as relational and archival as relevant to this dissertation. I then articulate the theoretical development of nation-building discourses as conceptualized by Sara Ahmed (2000), Sunera Thobani (2007, 2009), and Ghassan Hage (2000) in relation to belonging and entitlement within the nation. Next, I proceed to discuss the theory of social movements, and focus specifically on the making of the women's movement and feminist organizations. I demonstrate how hegemonic feminism reproduces discourses of essentialism, racialization and exclusion. The chapter concludes by examining the contribution of an intersectional feminist framework as analysis and methodology.

### The Complexity of Power

Extensive debates exist on whether power is property, practice, or relation. When studying power, scholars argue that the complexity of power cannot simply be reduced to a single definition. The everyday use of the term power has predominately focused on the exertion of power over others. This emphasizes imposing one's will, desires, interests, or preferences on others. Over time and especially due to the influence of Foucault, theorists have come to understand that power is much more complex than *doing onto others*. Foucault complicated not only the simplistic notion of *power over others* but also the assumption that some groups or individuals either have or do not have power. Foucault conceptualizes the complexity of power as a network of relations and discourses that moves beyond repression and resistance or disadvantages and advantages. He argues that power circulates throughout society as a productive force producing discourses, realities, and "domains of objects and rituals of truth" (Foucault, 1991, p. 194).

In Dorothy Smith's (1987) *The Everyday World as Problematic*, she introduces the concept of power as *relations of ruling or the ruling apparatus*. She affirms that the ruling apparatus and its values and principles are constructed by those in power, predominately men and their public world. Smith explains "they are those forms that we know as bureaucracy, administration, management,

professional organization, and the media. They include also the complex of discourses, scientific, technical, and cultural, that intersect, interpenetrate, and coordinate the multiple sites of ruling" (Smith, 1990, p. 6). According to Smith, the term relations of ruling refers to the institutions organizing and regulating society through discourses of power, and particularly, texts. These institutions include the complexity of organized practices within government, law, business/financial management, and educational institutions, which Smith refers to as the extralocal mode of ruling. She discusses the problematic of the everyday world as the "matrix of our experience" which "is organized by relations tying it into larger processes in the world as well as by locally organized practices" (Smith, 1987, p. 10).<sup>28</sup> Hence, relations of ruling are webs of relations through which ruling comes to be organized.

More recently, Smith has shifted away from the concept of the extralocal towards the concept of the translocal to better reflect and capture the interaction of social relations and relations of ruling as non-binary and fluid. Hence, this complex field of coordination is the form through which power is produced and invoked in society. DeVault and McCoy (2005) add to this discussion by stating, "in contemporary global capitalist society, the 'everyday world' (the material context of each embodied subject) is organized in powerful ways by translocal social relations that passed through local settings and shape them according to a dynamic of transformation that begins and gathers speed somewhere else" (p. 17). For example, when a feminist organization shuts down, the explanation will not be entirely local but rather translocal in regards to funding cuts, policy changes and political climate of the nation.

Van Dijk's work on power examines the discursive reproduction of power abuse and social inequality. According to van Dijk (2008) abuse of power is the "domination that results in social inequality and injustice" (p.1). He discusses the complex relations between discourse and power; he defines social power as control (van Dijk, 2008, p. 9). He asserts that power abuse is when "control is ... in the interests of those who exercise such power, and against the interests of those who are controlled" (p. 9). He also differentiates between symbolic power and social power, where symbolic power represents the preferential access to, or control over, public discourse.<sup>29</sup>

According to van Dijk, a study of an organization would allow for the examination of "how power is actually expressed, signalled, reproduced or legitimated in various structures of text and

talk" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 42). Through studying power, we are able to articulate its enactment and the type of influence power generates. Van Dijk's framework of power is useful only so far as discussing power as *abuse*; his analysis of counter-power (forms of resistance) does not provide sufficient depth for studying power as resistance. He does recognize that dominated groups are not completely powerless and that they also engage in some sort of resistance or counter-power. This implies that the enactment of power is not merely a form of action but also a form of social interaction.

Power not only gets invoked as a capacity but also as empowerment through resistance. Such power reveals the gaining and securing of autonomous power in order to act with self-determination. Foucault (2000) refers to autonomous power as productive power, which produces autonomous individuals as subjects. He considers power as a multiplicity of force relations which secures the individual beyond repression through the structures of discourse and social practices. According to Foucault, power pervades the body of the individual and constitutes the subject itself. Hence, the power derives from multiple sources within the subject based on their social relations and their environment interacting to produce the effects of power on individuals, communities and nations.

Foucault argues that power is inextricably linked to knowledge. Therefore, one cannot consider power without considering knowledge, and vice-versa. Gordon (2007) suggests that if knowledge is inextricably linked to power, then one is always subject to it and one always has access to it. Rather than possessing power, it surrounds and permeates people through their knowledge. Foucault's view of power suggests that power is not a convenient, manipulable, or deterministic resource under the control of sovereign actors. I would argue that this is not and has not always been the case; colonizing projects were certainly under the control of imperialists. I do agree with Foucault that actors are subject to what he terms, disciplinary power—a historically constituted knowledge of the prevailing web of power relations in which these actors function.

In this thesis, I recognize that knowledge is power. One becomes most aware of power relations in organizations when one witnesses individuals with greater levels of knowledge having more power than those who have limited organizational knowledge. Foucault claims that in order for knowledge to be accepted as valid it must attain legitimacy. In this process of attaining legitimacy, different viewpoints struggle for power against other viewpoints. Foucault (2000) argues that:

"Truth" is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. "Truth" is linked in a circular relation

with systems of power that produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it - a "regime" of truth. (p. 132)

As different truths struggle, dominant and marginal, with each other to be seen as legitimate, discourses of power and knowledge reproduce and challenge grand narratives which reinforce or undermine this legitimacy .

### **Foucault and Power Relations**

The idea of power as *relational* largely derives from Foucault's *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1990)<sup>30</sup> and *Power* (2000). According to Foucault (1990), power only manifests itself through power relations, and power relations are invoked in all relations where differences exist or are created. Power is not a fixed entity but rather it is a relational force that operates in all interactions across and within individual, institutional, and systemic relations as they intersect to create knowledge claims and discourses. Foucault rejects Marxist theorists' definition of power as solely a negative infringement on someone else's rights. He understands power relations to extend beyond the State, where power is not owned or captured by one group; rather, it circulates within society and is constantly being negotiated in and around institutions and interactions.

It is certain that, in contemporary societies, the state is not simply one of the forms of specific situations of the exercise of power - even if it is the most important - but that, in a certain way, all other forms of power relation must refer to it. But this is not because they are derived from it; rather, it is because power relations have come more and more under state control...power relations have been progressively governmentalized, that is to say, elaborated, rationalized, and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions. (Foucault, 2000, p. 345)

For Foucault (1990), biopower, is a technology of power, which is a way of managing people as a group as part of the State's exercise of power. The distinctive quality of this political technology is that it allows for the control of entire populations. This is thus essential to the emergence of the modern nation-state, and the intersections with capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism. Biopower signifies having power over other bodies, "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations" (Foucault, 1990, p. 140).

Foucault's conception of power largely rests on the notion that power is both productive and repressive. In *Truth and Power*, Foucault (2000) asserts:

... that the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. In defining the effects of power as repression, one identifies a purely juridical conception of such power, one identifies power with a law that says no - power is taken, above all, as carrying the force of a prohibition. ...I believe that this is a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power, one that has been curiously

widespread. If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (p. 120)

Foucault (1990) affirms that different forms of subjectivity are produced through existing power relations. He argues for the imbrication of power with knowledge, such that all knowledge is the result of the effect of power struggles. He argues that resistance is always present within power relations as "where there is power there is resistance".<sup>31</sup> He explains that by using resistance to expose power relations, we are able to investigate the points of application and methods of power. Just as there are multiple relations of power, there is also a "plurality of resistances"<sup>32</sup>. This plurality may express itself in discourses of resistance, which can counteract discourses of power. "Discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1990, p. 101). Discourse refers to organized systems of knowledge that make possible what can be spoken about and how one may speak about it. Discourse is the site of power struggles; hence, it is also the site of continuous contestation and resistance in the exchange of power.

From Foucault's analysis of power relations, I argue that power relations also manifest themselves within and across loci of power such as institutions and organizations. By examining power within institutions we witness its crystallization into law and policy. Power as law and policy is part of a process of institutionalization which reinforces, sustains, and polices effects upon other institutions, communities, and individuals. For example, when a single mother decides to apply for welfare in British Columbia, she must follow a series of procedures and apply at the Employment and Assistance Office - a centre of power. This centre of power reproduces its policies, laws, and discourses by invoking and deploying simultaneous intersecting power relations across multiple loci of power. Such power relations erupt requiring constant negotiation and reinforcement as well as strategies of resistance.

We can therefore view systems of power such as capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy or the State or its institutions, as centres or loci of power. This allows us to see how we engage in discursive practices and formations within specific constructs of power systems, political climates, and historical moments. Furthermore, it is important to see power in its specificity because it enables us to analyze

how multiple and simultaneous systems of power interact to produce specific experiences of exclusion as well as resistance. For example, it only becomes possible to lobby for changes to welfare policies when we focus on a specific locus of power and its policies of exclusion. Hence, the dilemma arises where power - as fluid and relational in its multiplicity - appears to become strategically and momentarily fixed in the specific locus of power in order to lobby for changes to law and policy. Yet, this fixity is flawed and imagined because the act of lobbying itself is relational requiring interactions of power relations across institutions, groups and individuals.

I would like to also illustrate two shortcomings in Foucault's theorization of power. First, he falls short of an intersectional framework of power relations. Feminist theorists propose that a more nuanced theoretical model of power involves intersectionality, which is politically focused and highly context-specific, with an alertness to the links between groups of women without falling into false generalizations (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Mohanty, 2003). Hence, intersectionality constructs "the category of women" in "a variety of political contexts that often exist simultaneously and overlaid on top of one another" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 32). Intersectionality also carefully acknowledges the contradictions as well as the commonalities in women's experiences across and within time, geographies, and locations. Feminist scholars realize the importance of examining the interconnections between systems of oppression and domination and how these intersect to produce specific experiences of marginalization.

Second, Foucault ignores the specificity of imperialist epistemic violence and its intersections with capitalism and patriarchy. Western power as colonial imperial power has largely invoked the power to enter or control other countries at will which has resulted in the production of a range of knowledges about Other cultures. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) as well as Mohanty (2003) both assert that such knowledge enables and legitimates the deployment of Western power in those Other countries.<sup>33</sup> Foucault falls into the trap of many First World scholars by re-inscribing imperialism from the restrictive standpoint of the West. Hence, Foucault's work omits the larger and broader narratives of imperialism.

In contrast, Mohanty's (2003) *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* exposes the construction of the West as the unacknowledged subject/norm and the "Third World" as an artificially homogenized object/Other. Foucault's analysis does not take into account

current connections between First and Third World power relations. Similarly, Western feminists have denied women in the Third World discursive subjectivity and status as active agents in the world. Mohanty (2003) points to the false binary oppositions that have been utilized to conceptualize and represent Third World women as uneducated, illiterate, poor and powerless while crystallizing Western feminists as the reference point (educated, literate, in control). Western feminists remain transparent in this process and their presence and power is unnamed and unstated. Mohanty explains that Western feminists have predominantly seen colonialism as a mostly physical practice which involves political, economic, and social systems of overt domination. Hence, the power of social relations as constructed by the West produced the effects which deprived Third World women of their historical and political agency in Western feminist discourse. Therefore, this type of analysis homogenizes and systematizes the experiences of different groups of women while erasing all marginal and resistant modes of women's experiences (Mohanty, 2003).

### **Power as Archival**

I explore a different conception of power, *power as archival*, by focusing on archives as subject and active rather than passive sources. A critical examination of the power of the archive exposes the voices that have counted in its construction as an official, sanctioned, and authorized text of history. This is particularly important for this research as it relies on archives as key sources of data and knowledge. By exposing how archival materials are collected, stored, catalogued, and made (in)accessible, reflexive researchers identify the gaps, exclusions, and silences that organize the official archive. It is important to study the archive both as object and subject so that we are better able to understand how systems of power and power relations are sustained and contested. Additionally, historical researchers must engage in reflexivity by questioning the ways that their subjectivities, situated locations, and theoretical/conceptual frameworks influence the questions asked, the analysis, and the interpretation of data.

Jacques Derrida (1995) formulates a theory of the archive that examines the relationship between truth, knowledge and authority. He explains "mal d'archive" as both a fever to save the archive and simultaneously a fever to destroy the archive. The irrepressible desire for the archive to return to its origin and wholeness haunts the archivist in the form of "archive fever". The moment it is remembered, reproduced, and reclassified, it is the death of the original archive and the destruction

of its totality. According to Foucault (1972), the archive (a discursive structure), “is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events” (p. 129). He also recognizes that the archive cannot be described in its totality, because it “emerges in fragments, regions and levels...with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates us from it” (p. 130).

Derrida (1995) allows for an in-depth understanding of the roles of *arkheion* (site/home) and *archons* (guardians of official documents). The *archons* have the power and competence to interpret the archives which become law. The *arkheion* is ultimately where the archives take place and dwell marking the institutional trajectory from private to public. Derrida explains that the act of archiving is itself *archival violence* with the archive always working against itself. The archivist has the constant desire to be the first to discover the archive, who then reads, interprets, and classifies it. Hence the archivist is constructing and creating truth and knowledge, yet it can only ever be a portion of the truth.<sup>34</sup> According to Derrida (1995), archives are active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, and confirmed. By extension, memory is not something found or collected in archives, but something that is made, and continually re-made.

Ann Laura Stoler (2002) emphasizes the need for scholars to view archives not merely as sites of knowledge retrieval but also as sites of knowledge production. She looks to archives as epistemological experiments rather than as sources and specifically as cross-sections of contested knowledge. Stoler suggests that it is imperative that we critically reflect on “the making of documents and how we choose to use them” as the place of contestation regarding whose history is being archived (p. 90). She emphasizes the power of colonial archives which are constructed as trustworthy and reliable while being infused with political agendas and historical repetition.

Colonial archives are embedded with histories which reproduce the power of the nation-state. They bring the conditions of what could be written, what warranted repetition and what competencies were rewarded in archival writing. Hence, by exposing the power and control of colonial states and their archives, we are able to see what was concealed, revealed and reproduced. Stoler (2002) suggests it is critical to study documents against their grain and this begins by explicitly reading “for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission, and mistake - *along the archival grain*” (p. 100).

When conducting archival analysis, the historical researcher must strive to locate new kinds of resources as well as engage in different ways of reading. Derrida (1995) and Hodder (2003) argue that meaning does not reside in a text but in the writing and reading of it. Therefore, as the text is re-read in different contexts, it is giving/given new meaning which may be sometimes contradictory and always socially embedded. Hence, no original or true meaning of a text exists outside its specific historical contexts. Foucault (1972) also contributes to this discussion by clarifying that discourse not only has a meaning or a truth, but a specific history within its own historicity, which is related to a whole set of various historicities.

## **Nation-Building and Colonial Anxieties**

*History has shown us and continues to show us how much work goes into the making of homes and nations as well as the labour involved in reproducing them which is also very much attached to women's work.*<sup>35</sup>

How is the Canadian nation invented and imagined? Benedict Anderson (1991) defines the nation as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear from them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). For Anderson, nationalism and nationhood are cultural artifacts invoking their own particular way of being imagined. According to Ahmed (2000), Anderson recognizes that the nation's boundaries are not only geographical or geo-political but also discursive. Therefore, the nation is actively produced and constructed "as places and communities in which 'a people' might belong" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 98). Furthermore, Ahmed argues that we must understand the nation simultaneously as imaginary and real - "the nation as both fantasy and material effect" (p. 98).

We need to examine how the invention of the nation as a bounded space requires the production of a *national identity* which can be *claimed* by the individual ('I am ...') through reference to the apparent transparency and coherence of the nation itself. The *investment* of the individual in being or having a nation suggests that the discourse of nationhood operates on both a psychic and social level. The individual, who encounters others in daily life, comes to identify as not only *having* but *being* a nationality, through referring to public symbols and expressions which themselves tell stories of what it means to be that nationality (the fleshing out of the 'national character'), and also through identifying with other individuals with whom such stories can be shared. (Ahmed, 2000, p. 98)

As a nation, Canada, is contradictory and contested. Its colonial construction can only exist with the continuing dispossession of Indigenous Peoples. The nation is able to imagine its community of those who truly belong by the constant dispossession of those who do not belong to the nation.

Bannerji (2000) explains that discourses of national belonging involve "certain ideas regarding skin colour, history, language (English/French), and other cultural signifiers - all of which may be subsumed under the ideological category 'white'" (p. 64). Europeanness is represented as whiteness which translated into Canadianness. Furthermore, embedded in this construction of Canada is a particular notion of nation and state formation. Bannerji criticizes Anderson's concept of imagined communities because he does not examine the contradictions and tensions which may exist in the imagined community, nor does he question the type of imagination at work. Ahmed (2000) also refines this concept:

The production of the nation involves not only image and myth-making - the telling of 'official' stories of origin - but also the everyday negotiations of what it means 'to be' that nation(ality). The production of the nation involves processes of self-identification in which the nation comes to be realised as belonging to the individual (the construction of the 'we' as utterable by the individual). (p. 98)

Linda Carty's (1999) scholarship on the construction of Empire and the creation of the Other also offers an understanding of such discourses of nation-building. Carty explains that the Other emerged as a "stratification based on skin colour and exemplified through England's positioning of its inhabitants in relation to those of the colonies, particularly in relation to the Africans" (p. 36-37). She asserts that "by the late 18th century England one of the smallest countries in Europe would 'own' and 'rule' most of the world" (Carty, 1999, p. 36). England's mission to civilize Indigenous and Third World Peoples of its colonies through colonial encounters contributed to the social construction of the Other (Carty, 1999; Devereux, 1999; Valverde, 1992).<sup>36</sup> "Constructing the Other would give legitimacy to the belief in white superiority and its 'civilizing' mission" (Carty, 1999, p. 36). Discourses of the uncivilized, heathens, savages, and pagans run parallel to those discourses of racialization and Christianity. The merging of discourses of inferiority were reproduced within the colonial empire. Hence, the nation and nationalist is formed, imagined and sustained through colonial anxieties and encounters with the stranger as the Other.

Ahmed's (2000) ontology of strangers, as articulated in *Strange Encounters*, provides the theoretical framework for analyzing the presence and encountering of strangers in constructing the dominant "I" or "we" within national, social movement and organizational discourses. The making of the stranger is ultimately about the making of the self and how one embodies the self in relation to encounters and contact with strangers. It is through this theoretical understanding that she argues,

"there are techniques that allow us to differentiate between those who are strangers and those who belong in a given space" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 22). Ahmed analyzes how the stranger is recognized as stranger prior to its appearance as a body identified as not belonging and out of place. She examines how the dominant subject of the nation ensures that the boundaries are maintained and enforced in order to keep the stranger out. If the stranger appears to cross the line or come to close, fear accumulates demanding that the stranger be expelled in order to secure imagined purity and spatial formation.

We can consider how nations are invented as familiar spaces, as spaces of belonging, through being defined against others who are recognised, or known again, as strange and hence strangers. In some sense, the stranger appears as a figure, as a way of containing that which the nation is not, and hence as a way of allowing the nation to be. (Ahmed, 2000, p.97)

By already recognizing the stranger as not belonging and out of place, the demarcation and enforcement of boundaries crystallizes the place we inhabit as home (Ahmed, 2000). Such boundaries are to be maintained and enforced in order to ensure that those we recognize as strangers and who have been determined as not belonging do not contaminate or threaten property, space and person (Ahmed, 2000). Ultimately Ahmed affirms that, "recognising strangers is here embedded in a discourse of survival: it is a question of how to survive the proximity of strangers who are already figurable, *who have already taken shape*, in the everyday encounters we have with others" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 22).

Thobani (2007) makes a similar point in discussing the "fabrications of nationhood". She writes:

The figure of the national subject is a much venerated one, exalted above all others as the embodiment of the quintessential characteristics of the nation, carrier of its values, ethics and civilizational mores. In the trope of the citizen, this subject is universally deemed the legitimate heir to the rights and entitlements proffered by the state". (pp. 3-4)

Through the subject's nationality, the subject commands respect as the "locus of state power" which can be interpreted as "legitimiser of state authority" (Thobani, 2007, p. 4). Yet, the Other or outsider is constructed as the stranger who wants what nationals have. This then is perceived as a threat to the nation, hence invoking national anxieties. Grand narratives of the nation as reproduced by its rightful subjects are not only in constant making, they are also reinforced and policed especially within historical periods of uncertainty and anxiety. Thobani argues that "there prevails in Canada a master narrative of the nation which takes as its point of departure the essentially law-abiding and

enterprising character of its nationals, who are presented (for the most part) as responsible citizens, compassionate, caring, and committed to the values of diversity and multiculturalism" (2007, p. 4).

Ahmed (2000) and Thobani (2007) emphasize the reinforcement of the making of the nation as embedded in the grand national narrative regarding the great hardship and adversity in founding the nation. The stranger/Other is both the real and imaginary threat to this historical grand narrative hence needing the reinforcement to ensure that their nationalist entitlements and collective welfare as a nation would not be threatened, undermined and stolen. Furthermore, subjects of the nation have found it profitable and beneficial to construct themselves as vulnerable to outsiders. Indigenous populations and immigrants are constituted within this national imagery as demanding of special treatment as well as contaminating national spaces.

Thobani (2009) also reminds us that generous representations of the nation's Others also exist, but only on condition that their distinctive racialized experiences (and political claims) are cheerfully relinquished in their bid to claim a new hyphenated 'Canadian' identity as beneficiary of the nation's largesse" (p. 83).

Master narratives of Canadian nationhood define the national's character relationally. The national is law-abiding where the outsider is susceptible to lawlessness; the nation is compassionate where the outsider has a tendency to resort to deceit to gain access to valuable resources; the nation is tolerant of cultural diversity where the outsider is intolerant, placing loyalty to ties of kin and clan above all else; and more recently, the nation is supportive of gender equality where the outsider is irremediably patriarchal. Exalted through such narrations, which are inscribed into the juridical order and shape state policies and practices, the national subject is not only existentially but also institutionally and systematically defined in direct relation to the outsider. Such exaltations function as a form of ontological and existential capital that can be claimed by national subjects in their relations with the Indian, the immigrant and the refugee. (Thobani, 2007, p. 3)

Hence, glorified through such grand narratives is the continual investments in discourses of the exalted national subject. This includes identifying those deserving of different claims and entitlements granted by the nation.

Thobani's (2007) theoretical framework of exaltation contributes to a more in-depth articulation of how national subjects become exalted, preferred and differently valued above all Others. Most importantly for this dissertation, this framework provides a model of how national subjects come to see themselves as more worthy of certain entitlements. Thobani (2009) argues:

Rather than simply denoting 'natural' human qualities, exaltation as a technique of power politicizes these characteristics, defining the national community as a whole as possessive of these, regardless of the actual attributes of individual members. It elevates the human status of this political - and politicized - subject as civilized and worthy subject, hence deserving of

certain rights and entitlements, and as capable of exercising these rights with the appropriate measure of responsibility. Yet, even as exaltation elevates, it simultaneously 'naturalizes' these qualities as essential aspects of the human nature of national subjects, as intrinsic to the superior order of their humanity. (p. 87)

One can apply Thobani's theoretical framework of exaltation and nation-building within the women's movement and feminist organizations. This research demonstrates how dominant subjects are constructed and construct themselves within an elevated status as the *rightful feminists of the nation*, and as belonging to national spaces. National spaces also include the women's movements and social justice organizations, where feminists of the nation consider themselves to be more deserving and worthy of certain entitlements and rights. The worthiness of a national subject is reproduced and reinforced in real material ways, such as economic and social entitlements including employment and security benefits as well as ready access to spaces and material that traditionally has been out of reach for Other feminists. Such discourses of exaltation become naturalized, almost appearing as the natural reward of the exalted feminists who embody exceptional human qualities as national subjects.

The process of exaltation produces the *goodness* of the national subject, enabling specific national formations in the form of culture, values, and ideologies within feminist spaces of organizing. As a result, national practices and discourses are not only (re)produced and sustained outside social movements but rather are also actively invoked, sustained and challenged within feminist spaces of organizing. These are the precise moments in which the workings of power relations within and across national sites come to be practiced and realized as the material and discursive moments of bonding with the nation. The immediate relation of complicity emerges and aligns itself with nation-building discourses. Here, exaltation as a technique of power is most visible. What happens when the stranger enters or forces her way into white feminist spaces of organizing? This dissertation takes us through the history of an organization as it constructs the stranger as a site of danger - *stranger danger* - and later as a site of diversity (Ahmed, 2000).

Also useful to conceptualizing nation-building is Hage's (2000) theorizing of belonging to the nation and national accumulated capital. According to Hage, there are two possibilities of belonging to the nation: *passive belonging* and *governmental belonging*. Passive belonging is "the nationalist who believes him or herself to 'belong to a nation' in the sense of being part of it, means that he or she expects to have the right to benefit from the nation's resources, to 'fit into it' or 'feel at home' within it" (Hage, 2000, p. 45). Governmental belonging is "the belief that one has the right over the

nation, involves the belief in one's possession of the right to contribute (even if only by having a *legitimate* opinion with regard to the internal and external politics of the nation) to its management such that it remains 'one's home'" (Hage, 2000, p. 46).

Hage (2000) explains that citizenship is the primary formal marker of national belonging, "the act of taking on citizenship has also been termed 'naturalisation', implying a process of acculturation, of belonging to a national cultural community" (p. 49). Some academics equate citizenship with national belonging but Hage disagrees. He argues that all categories describing dominant groups as "referring to cultural possessions which allow their holders to stake certain claims of governmental belonging relative to the weight of the capital in his or her possession" (p. 56). Hage recognizes that the value of each capital is "constantly fluctuating, depending on various historical conjunctures as well as the internal struggle within the field of national power" (p. 57).

Hage (2000) defines the useful concept of "the field of national power" which he asserts is the "field of Whiteness" (p. 57). He explains that Whiteness is not a fixed category but rather "an everchanging, composite cultural historical construct" (p. 58). This construct originated in opposition to Blackness and Brownness, fabrications of colonial relations, where "White has become the ideal of being the bearer of 'Western' civilization....Whiteness is itself a fantasy position and a field of accumulating Whiteness" (p. 58). Accordingly, Hage argues that 'Third World-looking people' are then classified "with very low national capital and who are invariably constructed as a 'problem' of some sort within all White-dominated societies" (p. 59).

It is through this process of cultural accumulation of Whiteness as capital that governmental belonging produces the claim to belong over those with less White capital accumulation. For Canada, this field of Whiteness produces and facilitates the claim of legitimate White Canadianness. This field of national power is further complicated when "this dynamic of accumulation reaches its limitations...when it comes face to face with those whose richness in national capital does not come from a struggle to accumulate and 'be like' White Australians, but who appear 'naturally' White Australians'" (p.61).<sup>37</sup> How one accumulates such capital is an important determinant of its national recognition and legitimacy. Therefore, "no matter how much national capital a 'Third World-looking' migrant accumulates, the fact that he or she has acquired it, rather than being born with it, devalues

what he or she possesses" (Hage, 2000, p. 62) in comparison to the 'naturally' White Canadian national subject.

Thobani (2007; 2009), Ahmed (2000; 2010), Hage (2000) and Moreton-Robinson (2003) all argue that race and racialization are central to processes of nation formation and building. The nation as a colonial settler state invents the 'Indian' as a "non-civilized political entity", where the European subject as civilized is exalted over the Indigenous (Thobani, 2009, p. 92). Thobani (2007) explains:

In the foundational moment of Canadian nationhood, the British and French were cast as the true subjects of the colony, while the Indian was expelled as the enemy outsider. Constituted as 'preferred races' within the bureaucratic apparatus of the settler state, the settlement activities of these true subjects accomplished the violent dispossession of Aboriginal populations - a dispossession that was duly constituted and preserved as 'lawful' to this day. (p. 13)

By legislating racism of the racialized Other/"Indian", through the Indian Act<sup>38</sup>, the nation and those implicated in nation-building become complicit in the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples and lands. It is through this ongoing process of dispossession that Indigenous identities and subjectivities have been constructed. Indeed, Thobani (2007; 2009) emphasizes the power of the colonial nation to determine the Other's identity which is legislated, bureaucratized and crystallized into law.

The question of Native identity thus remains deeply tied to the question of who defines this identity, and who has the power to authorize this identity as 'authentic' and hence worth of nurturance. Arrogating the power to determine which Native persons were/are 'Indian' and which were/are to be denied that status, their legal classification into 'Indian', 'Metis', 'half-breed', 'non-status' etc., established and consolidated a calamitous hierarchy of 'Indian-ness' among them. Lawrence points out that such legislated codifications disrupted and distorted "older indigenous ways of identifying the self in relation not only to collective identity, but to the land", and that connection to a land-base remains crucial, even if increasingly tenuous, to Native identity and subject formation....<sup>39</sup> (Thobani, 2009, p. 93)

The nation and the national subject not only constructs and regulates the 'Indian' Other but also the figure of the non-western, non-white immigrant stranger. Consequently, discourses of belonging at home are reinforced within the nation, as the national subject ensures that the stranger is seen to be out of place. Such strange encounters can be further translated as sites of danger but also sites of diversity. Ahmed (2000) discusses the moments when the stranger is welcomed and embraced yet remains a stranger due to the self-fulfilling anxieties of nationals and nation-builders.

When analyzing national formation and the reproduction of nation-building discourses within Canada, we come to understand that those who call Canada home are inextricably connected to who has possession, and that such possession is carefully guarded by White Canadians. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2003) demonstrates how the British Empire constructed *its* home across the globe by

conquest and the act of possession by claiming "the land under the legal fiction of Terra Nullius - land belonging to no one - and systematically dispossessed, murdered, raped and incarcerated the original owners..." (p. 24). She also points out that every aspect of Indigenous Peoples' lives was controlled by White people sanctioned by the very system of law that enabled dispossession. "The non-Indigenous sense of belonging is inextricably tied to their original theft: through the fiction of Terra Nullius the [British] migrant has been able to claim the right to live in our land. This right is one of the fundamental benefits white British migrants derived from dispossession" (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, p. 25).

It is important here to differentiate between colonial nation-building discourses and Indigenous constructions of *nationhood*. Moreton-Robinson (2003) articulates that the formation of nationhood for Indigenous Peoples is a sense of belonging that originated from "an ontological relationship to country derived from the Dreaming, which provides the precedents for what is believed to have occurred in the beginning in the original form of social living created by ancestral beings which are immortal" (p. 32).<sup>40</sup> The ancestral beings established the Aboriginal ways of life which implemented a moral code within social institutions. It is understood that their ancestral spirits gave birth to humans and therefore share a common life force which emphasizes the unity of humans with the earth and not their separation. Hence for Indigenous Peoples, nationhood represents the ontological relationship of the intersections of ancestral beings, humans and land as a form of embodiment. Indigenous Peoples derive their sense of belonging to the land through and from their descendents and reincarnation of ancestral beings.

Ahmed et al. (2003) persuade us to question how our movement may take place through the fixing of the bodies of others or when staying put exists only through the displacement of Others. Hence this dissertation makes the case that the study of home, belonging and entitlement cannot be adequately theorized outside the spatial relations of power. We come to understand that the privilege of mobility can also be a force of violence for Others who are forced into homelessness, exile or forced migration; hence the familial home can be a site of alienation and exclusion.

The founding of homelands and places of belonging can entail the displacement of others from their homes. It can also involve the spoliation of the homes of those who nevertheless remain "in place", as is so evident in the migration of European settlers that has historically entailed the desecration of indigenous peoples' homelands. (Ahmed et al., 2003, p. 6)

Racialized Others who have traditionally been excluded from Canada and constructed as non-preferred races both through legislated exclusion and systemic discourses of inferiority, began migrating to Canada in increasing numbers since the 1970s due to the shortage of labour. Thobani (2009) is critical of both the processes which Othered racialized immigrants arriving in Canada in search of a better home and economic advancement, while also affirming that immigrants are also implicated in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous Peoples. She writes that, "the more [immigrants] sought their own inclusion within the nation through access to the disciplinary regime of citizenship, the more invested they have become in the nation's erasure of its originary violence and its fantasies of progress and prosperity" (Thobani, 2009, p. 95). Thobani further explains that, "while the suffering of the immigrant cannot be minimized, neither can the recognition that these immigrants participate in (and benefit from) the ongoing cultural and material domination of Aboriginal peoples" (p. 96).

This dissertation also finds itself entangled in such colonial histories and relations of complicity regarding Indigenous dispossession, immigrant citizenship and the making/unmaking of home. Thobani (2009) urges critical feminist scholars to carefully examine the specific roles performed by non-Indigenous communities in sustaining the colonial project. With this careful consideration, non-Indigenous individuals and communities can begin to better articulate how our complicity has predominately denied us healthy relations with Indigenous Peoples. It is most important that those who have been traditionally constructed as strangers outside of the nation, and who are now welcomed into the nation, but still as strangers, begin to envision new possibilities of relationship building with Indigenous communities. This requires a constant remembering that Canada is founded and continues to be built through the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous Peoples and theft of land and resources.<sup>41</sup>

### **Women as Nation-Building Agents**

*When feminists of colour talk about gender, colonialism, and imperialism...we implicitly acknowledge the impact of Empire on the depth of the meaning of gender in this context. (Carty, 1999, p. 35)*

What is the nation's relationship to women? What are the ways that women affect and are affected by nation-building practices and processes? Because women are differently positioned in relation to the State and the nation, therefore no unitary category of women can exist. The most fundamental problem with nationalist discourse is that it casts women as symbolic markers and policy

objects, not as active political subjects. The rituals of nation-building demand that bodies, women's bodies, be invoked to perform such discourses in order to reinforce and transmit to the next generation ensuring the ongoing Imperial legacy. Hence we may ask, what are the multiple roles performed by women subjects of the nation?<sup>42</sup> Women as *mothers of the nation* played and continue to play an active and fundamental role in nation-building practices and processes. In particular women subjects of the nation contribute to the myth of the homogeneous nation while also constructing claims of essentialized outsiders. Such constructions brought forth the struggle for the authentic national identity which produced hierarchies not only amongst outsider groups but also insider groups. Yet, other discourses also contested this homogeneous or united nation. As nation-building discourses are reproduced, transmitted and contested, they define who belongs to the nation while disciplining those that do not. However, tensions between women national subjects have always existed between those who conform and those who resist the nation's grand narrative.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis' (1989) *Woman-Nation-State* contests the notion of women nationals as passive subjects and identify five major ways in which women have been actively implicated in nation-building and national projects. These include women as: biological reproducers of the members of the national collectivities; reproducers of the boundaries of national groups; active transmitters and producers of the national culture; symbolic signifiers of national difference; and active participants in national identity struggles (p. 7). It is important to keep in mind that different historical context constructed these roles differently across time. This model provides the possibility of examining how women participate in nation-building discourses through different roles simultaneously, partially or separately.

In particular for the purpose of this dissertation, white women's role as nation-builders and participants in nationalist practices of white supremacy in Canada can be identified in two ways, first, as biological reproducers of the white nationalist subject; second, as symbolic and ideological reproducers and transmitters of national culture and of difference. By conceptualizing the roles that white women engaged in to sustain and reinforce nation-building discourses, the power relations amongst differently positioned women within the Canadian nation becomes more evident and an important contribution to this research.

Devereux (1999) and Valverde (1992) analyze white women's investment in national and empire building through discourses of race regeneration, social purity, and imperial renewal. First Wave feminism materialized from emerging imperial anxieties regarding the racial and moral collapse of the Empire and the Anglo-Saxon race. As *mothers of the race*, imperial feminists claimed their duty to ensure not only the reproduction of the 'race' but also the sustaining of morality against anything that threatened the stability of the Empire.<sup>43</sup> Devereux (1999) emphasizes that:

The image of the imperial mother producing and raising healthy children as she also worked valiantly to make the nation and the Empire as socially and morally hygienic as her own home quickly became the hallmark of Anglo-Saxon feminism and the basis of white feminists' claims to social and political power. (p. 178)

Hence Imperial feminists demonstrated their commitment to the civilizing mission not only through childbearing duties but also by caring for the race as a whole in the pursuit of progress.<sup>44</sup> For example, Nellie McClung (1915) states:

The woman movement, which has been scoffed and jeered at and misunderstood most of all by the people whom it is destined to help, is a spiritual revival of the best instincts of womanhood - the instinct to serve and save the race...the world needs the work and help of women, and the women must work, if the race will survive. (pp. 100-101)

Valverde (1992) argues that imperial feminists believed that 'the race' could only advance through progress which was embedded in white women's freedom and liberation. White women's enfranchisement was key to this progress which exemplified their status as hardworking Empire builders in the colonies while contributing to keeping Others from achieving similar voting rights.<sup>45</sup>

The colonial nation of Canada remains forever fearful of being overpopulated by different racial or ethnic groups, or as Ahmed (2000) explains, the fear of strangers in one's home. The presence of undesirables and strangers translated into danger, terrorists, fear and the need to protect one's nation and home. This protection requires the intersection of reproduction, nation and family. Historically immigration policies as well as controlling the reproductive capacity and activity through tactics such as sterilization and birth control campaigns of particular women of specific class, sexuality, religion, race and ability has been used as a strategy to limit the number of people born within these specific groups. This is further discussed in Chapter 4 regarding the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the social purity movement which focused on concerns of young Indigenous women's sexuality and reproduction. Therefore within the Canadian nation, there is an active

encouragement of population growth amongst nationalist subjects who legitimately belong to the nation.

In a later work by Yuval-Davis (1996), she explains that the intersection of nationalist and racist ideologies often produce discourses of "blood and belonging" (p. 17). Such discourses reflect the joining and belonging to the national collectivity as well as exclusion for those who do not comply. Additionally she explains the importance of "common origin" which results in "common destiny" as a crucial factor in constituting the nation within the hierarchies of desirability regarding the origin and culture which lay the foundation for nation-building discourses including immigration and prenatal policies. In brief, the future of the nation is seen to depend on its continuous growth either through immigration or reproductive powers of women who are called upon to have children. It is these nationalists children who then enter the role of workers, settlers and soldiers with a particular sense of entitlement, authority and righteousness nationally and globally.

Secondly, linked to the role of biological producers, is the role of the white nationalist women subjects in teaching and transferring the cultural and ideological traditions of white dominance, entitlement and culture.<sup>46</sup> They are constructed as *cultural carriers* and are seen as the main socializers of small children, as mothers, caretakers, and teachers. Most importantly they are often required to transmit symbols of dominance and supremacy as well as ways of interacting with the outsider, Other, and stranger to the nation. Female white national subjects also teach about the Other, and about difference - who belongs, who is a stranger and who is to be feared. They are implicated in the symbolic and ideological production of difference. White subjects are taught about boundaries and borders in relation to the stranger entering the nation or national home, as well as contact and touch with the stranger. Discourses of domesticity and purity enter within the realm of white female bodies' responsibilities in the reproduction of power relations with the Other.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) remind us that it is important to see the contradictory positioning of women in relation to the nation, as both and simultaneously constituted by the nation but also actively contesting nationalist processes. Additionally, based on the model above, it is also meaningful to recognize that women actively participate in the reproduction and modification of their roles while also actively invoking power relations with women who are differently positioned than them. It must be recognized that women affect and are affected by national processes in different

ways while critically examining how one reproduces and contests dominant/hegemonic national formations. As women become more possessed as subjects of the nation, their citizenship entitlements also increase and they become active participants as nation(al) builders.

As articulated above, the very same nation-building discourses of white supremacy which socially constructed the Other are also defining woman and gender within the nation as determined by white middle class women. Carty (1999) explains, "unearned white privilege - the product of pillage during the creation of empire - becomes the standard by which all else is judged (p 35). Carty's essay critically examines the imperial context from which Euro-Canadian feminism emerged in relation to the Empire's legacy.<sup>47</sup> She discusses that the belief in one's inherent superiority in relation to whiteness was not limited to British men, but was also invoked by "women from the United Kingdom who went to the colonies, either on their own or as wives of colonial administrators, took it as their mission-indeed, their burden-to save the unfortunate women of these colonies" (1999, p. 37). This nation-building project taken up by white British women deeply impacted and continues to shape their understanding of their place in the world and their relationships with current and past British colonies and occupied territories. Carty's analysis not only presents white women's complicity in supporting and nurturing the building of Empire but also identifies them as reproducing the power relations of Empire building. Carty asserts, "they were full, if not equal, participants in the creation of white supremacy" (p. 37).

As demonstrated above, white women played a foundational and pivotal role in sustaining the racist relations of power that were implemented by male colonial administrators. British women of the colonies were complicit in reproducing the policies and practices of Imperial administrators, many "took up very active roles in promoting imperialism and its elitist ideology of the 'natural' security of the 'British race' and its subsequent *entitlement* [emphasis added] to dominate others" (p. 38). Carty disappointedly explains the positioning of British women as aligning themselves with men of the Empire and the security of the British race which also "kept them from imagining any other relationship with colonized women" (p. 38). Furthermore, while white British women protested against inequality between men and women, they simultaneously reproduced imperialist notions of superiority and inferiority which further translated in white supremacy in relation to entitlement, ownership and privileges. "History shows us how white women embarked on a journey to challenge

patriarchal oppression while capitalizing on their white privilege and further positioning them as being superior to racialized women" (Carty, 1999, p. 41).

Having carefully examined the theorization of nation-building through the work of Thobani, Ahmed, Hage, Moreton-Robinson, Carty, Devereux, Valverde, and Anthias and Yuval-Davis, we see that historically imperialist discourses have not only legitimized racialization discourses of the Other as inferior but also of the white subject as superior. As a result, we also examined not only the complicity of white women in sustaining the nation-building project but also as active agents within the national project. Such active participation has secured specific social and political entitlements for white women national subjects while also engaging in the power to include or exclude Others from citizenship entitlements. In particular, as women and feminists within Canada lobby and challenge the State for increased equality and social services, they have predominately done so within the discourses of accumulated national capital. Such accumulated national capital contributed towards discourses of national entitlement and belonging, as discussed by Hage (2000). Thobani (2007) further explains:

The welfare state encapsulates much more than tangible social services and programs. It's policies and programs also 'redistribute status, rights and life opportunities.' Gordon (1994) has also discussed the importance of the 'feeling of entitlement' women experienced through their access to social programs. This 'feeling of entitlement,' and its symbolic and material inclusion of women in nationhood, would be immensely inflated in these women's encounters with racialized Others. As I discuss below, such strange encounters constituted excluded Others as individually unworthy of entitlements and their families as deficient. Moreover, social citizenship deepen the meaning of 'belonging' to the national community, strengthening the historically entrenched commitment of national subjects to protect it from the encroachment of undeserving Others. (p. 118)

The relationship between the nationalist Canadian family, entitlement and belonging to the nation was further reinforced through social programs of the welfare state. The nationalist Canadian family is seen as worthy of state entitlement and therefore exalted and foundational to the nation. Such a framework is important to this dissertation, as it contributes to the understanding of how differently positioned women within a feminist organization understand their entitlement, or lack of, as well as their experiences of (un)belonging not only within the nation, but also within the women's movement.

## **Social Movements**

In order to understand how social movements within the nation reproduce or subvert nationalist discourses of power relations, it is useful to discuss the making of social movements.

Historically and presently social movements come alive and come to exist across time and space, within and outside geographical and political borders. Social movements come about for multiple reasons and from multiple sources. Social movements around the world have used a variety of social change tactics to bring about enormous social changes, influencing public opinion and government policies. The definition for social movement is diverse and shifting but generally it can be defined as “a persistent and organized effort on the part of a relatively large number of people either to bring about or to resist social change” (Defronzo, 2007, p. 7). Conway (2005) brings forth a more complex understanding of social movements and their intersections temporally and spatially, she states:

All social movements and their knowledges are embedded in historically and geographically specific contexts. All are 'placed' or 'situated' in time-space, and they need to be understood where they take place. Social movements arise out of specific geographies; they are formed by and enact specific spatialities; and they produce new 'geographies' of resistance. (p. 35)

Social movements require collective action based on common purposes and social solidarity in challenging some elements of the social structure. They are voluntary collectivities that people support in order to effect changes in society and bring about a more just world. Social movements contain social movement organizations, the carrier organizations that continuously attempt to coordinate and mobilize supporters. According to Staggenbourg (2008) a social movement organization is "a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of the social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals" (p. 147).

Social movements are invested in contesting hegemonic power relations and their instrumental political effects. They are not unitary as they are made up of multiple motivations, relations and orientations, and their origins and outcomes are equally heterogeneous. Social movements also overlap with each other and they learn from each other. At different historical time periods, social movements can converge, erupt and become visible either as single movements or as interactive movements. According to Alvarez and Escobar (1992):

To refer to social movements in terms of 'collective identities' represents a new trend and a new way of thinking. Social action is understood as a product of complex social processes in which structure and agency interact in manifold ways and in which actors produce meanings, negotiate and make decisions. (p. 4)

Therefore, this suggests that collective identities become the structural preconditions for movement mobilization and further shape social movement strategies and capacities. Additionally, collective identities emerge and are actively constructed while also interacting with and being shaped by

multiple social forces (Conway, 2004). It is precisely this collective identity that must be investigated in relation to how entitlements and ownership are developed within social movements. Hence, it is important to question the relationship between organizational identity formation and social movements. How does an organization such as Vancouver Status of Women engage in its identity formation as everyday cultural practice?

Social movements can provide the historical understandings of the present struggles by illustrating the conflictual and essentialist challenges embedded within them across time. Contestations and ruptures within social movements are essential because they open up new areas of inquiry and knowledge by promoting new political and intellectual development within movements. Conway (2004) emphasizes:

New conceptions of power and the political provoked serious theoretical challenges. Notions of the personal as political and the introduction of gender, race and sexuality as terrains of social struggle and liberation are imbricated with expanding understandings of power beyond the 'public' domain and beyond political economy. (p. 23)

Hence it is necessary to recognize the theoretical moments that challenge movements as historical conjunctures demanding nuanced theoretical frameworks of organizing for social change.

It is useful to apply an intersectional framework to the understanding of social movements. Intersectionality within social movements recognizes the contradictory and conflictual social processes of the politics of social movements. Individuals and communities that participate in social movements are not subject to any single identity-formation process at any one time. By recognizing that processes are multiple, overlapping, hybridized, and discontinuous, we come to further understand that such processes are always effects of power. These effects of power include the hegemonic power relations of the State and nation as well as those within social movements and social justice organizations.

Movement participants' presence and participation produce and transform the practices of the movement itself. As Conway (2004) states, "a movement is a social process that is constantly emergent and that escapes the best-laid plans of those who would manage it" and that "politically committed people, however, do act intentionally to broaden the base and power of their actions" (p. 32). As feminists produce alternative interpretations of the State's relationship to women, it has been problematic to only understand this as always contesting hegemonic messages while not investigating when social movements have reproduced nationalist discourses and practices of exclusion and

dispossession. Lastly, social movements contribute significantly to the formation of their participants' subjectivities. As this research shows, feminists' understanding of their place in the world in relation to VSW and the women's movement were consistently challenged throughout their participation in the women's movement as well as other social justice movements. As the researcher, I was able to witness the telling of such narratives and the transforming of their subjectivity as social change agents. They disclosed their comforts, fears, struggles, negotiations, sadness, and learnings which were profoundly affective and effective upon their bodies and subjectivities.

### **"The" Women's Movement and Feminist Organizations in Canada: Contesting Hegemonic Feminism**

Feminist organizations in North America are political entities primarily focusing on advocating for women's rights and equality for all women. Feminist organizations are diverse, organic, fluid, complex, and constantly changing across historical, geographical, political, economic, and social landscapes. Furthermore, they also intersect not only with other women's organizations and the larger women's movement but also with other social movements including peace/antiwar, Indigenous, anti-imperialists, socialists, and students' rights movements. Therefore, feminist organizations find themselves responding constantly to both internal and external strengths and challenges while interacting with the complexities of their organizational life cycles.

The concept *hegemonic feminism* refers to the dominance of white Western, "north" or "First World" assumptions about what it means to be a feminist and what women need to be liberated. It is informative to further discuss the emergence of this concept as a deployment and effect of power relations that also remains ingrained with feminist spaces. Hegemonic feminism was most often grounded in Second Wave Liberal feminist paradigms and de-emphasizes race, class and other intersecting positionalities. Chela Sandoval (2000) illustrates how hegemonic feminist scholars constructed typologies of feminism that "have fast become the official stories by which the white women's movement understands itself and its interventions in history" (p. 80). Through time, feminists (particularly racialized feminists) who have historically experienced exclusions by and within the mainstream women's movement and feminist organizations, demanded a more inclusive movement with a stronger intersectional feminist analysis. Hence, the women's movement witnessed increasing

challenges, tensions, and contradictions due to its historical investment in white hegemonic feminist discourses.

Feminist organizations are distinct organizations because of their ideologies and values deriving from feminism. Feminism has traditionally been defined as the belief in the political, social, legal and economic equality of all women. According to Adamson et al. (1998) and Mizrahi (2007), feminist values primarily focus on equal rights and opportunity for women while recognizing the goal of empowerment. I refer to Mizrahi's (2007) feminist organizational principles as a framework to highlight the unique character of feminist organizations. Specific values and ideologies have traditionally been adopted by feminist organizations which make them distinct from other organizations. These include the interconnectedness of problems and solutions while recognizing personal problems have political, cultural, and historical causes and solutions. Feminist organizations value creating a more democratic and egalitarian society by engaging in the ideologies of the *personal is political* and *sisterhood is global*. Additional values and principles which make organizations feminist include the commitment to consensus, cooperation, collaboration, and coalition building, while striving to enhance recognition and respect for diversity and differences (Mizrahi, 2007).

Yet, within these broad parameters of commonality across diverse currents of feminism, are extensive differences in agenda, goal, and political strategy. For example, differences emerge in regards to what visions constitute women's liberation, in understanding the roots of women's oppression, in setting priorities, and/or in identifying constituencies and allies. It is precisely not only differences but also exclusions and omissions which give rise to other forms of marginal, alternative and oppositional feminist consciousness (Ang, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Sandoval, 2004).

Sandoval (2004) challenges hegemonic feminism's pretense of the homogeneous experience of 'woman' by advocating for a *differential consciousness* which recognizes new and fluid, varying categories of locations and positionalities. In particular, differential consciousness represents "the variant, emerging out of correlations, intensities, junctures, crises" (p. 89). The United States' hegemonic feminism's history of racist exclusionary practices marks the experiences of the Third World women's shifts towards new feminist paradigms. Differential mode of oppositional consciousness reflects a mobility which transforms rigid borders to porous borders of weaving between and among oppositional ideologies.

With the primary vision of achieving equality with white men, hegemonic feminism reinforces and sustains white heterosexual middle-class women's entitlements and equality at the expense of *Other* women and groups (Lee & Cardinal, 1998; Sandoval, 2004). Lee and Cardinal (1998) argue that English/Anglo Canadian nationalism has largely mediated the mainstream women's movement that has remained grounded in neo-conservative national narratives. These hegemonic nationalizing narratives crystallize a national feminist agenda, which marginalize certain issues and groups of people who do not belong to the imagined community. Furthermore, hegemonic feminism solidifies gender as the ultimate oppression and the only relevant entry point of analysis. It also refuses to engage in a feminist intersectional analysis of power relations by deemphasizing the interconnections and interactions amongst systems of power.

Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack (1998) explain how hegemonic feminism has only reinforced the *race to innocence* while ensuring the practice of competing marginalities. They refer to the race to innocence as *the* process through which a woman comes to believe that her own claim of subordination is the most urgent and that she is unimplicated in the subordination of Other women. The race to innocence depends on the idea that the systems of domination regarding race, gender, age, sexuality, citizenship, and class are separate, which leaves the systems of privilege and subordination intact. Therefore, in order to disengage with the race to innocence, one must examine how multiple systems of power operate simultaneously and how they interact with each other. Furthermore, it is imperative to recognize and understand how these systems structure women hierarchically to condition our responses to each other. Feminists' complicity in maintaining and reinforcing systems of power are often witnessed as painful and destructive moments in feminist politics.

Feminist theorists Lewis (1996), McCall (2005) and Meekosha (2006) emphasize the importance of intersectionality as a feminist framework and methodology because it reflects the interlocking and intersectional realities of women's lives.<sup>48</sup> By employing multi-pronged, multi-dimensional analyses and knowledge systems, intersectional frameworks allow us to challenge notions of binary thinking and essentialism. These feminist scholars have deeply contributed to the women's movement in North America as well as to feminist organizations by exposing hegemonic feminism's problematic, exclusive, and essentialized notions of woman, womanhood, women's experience, equality, as well as the

construction of the women's movement as *the* home for all women. These essentialized constructions largely derive from two specific and powerful ideologies of the early women's movement and hegemonic feminism: the personal is political and sisterhood is global. I would like to critically examine these two foundational ideologies of hegemonic feminism which continue to be contested by feminists engaging with an intersectional analysis both within the women's movement and feminist organizations in North America.

### **Contesting the Personal is Political and Sisterhood is Global**

The personal is political and sisterhood is global are foundational ideologies rooted within North American feminist organizations in the 1960s and 1970s that further distinguished feminist organizations from other organizations. I argue that although these ideologies have contributed and strengthened certain aspects of feminist organizations, they are also precisely the crystallizing values of hegemonic feminism which continue to haunt feminist organizations to the present day in North America.

These two ideologies of the women's movement formed a powerful ideological core/nucleus reflecting hegemonic feminism within feminist organizations. It should not be underestimated how the ideologies of the personal is political and sisterhood is global, interacted with patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism to solidify powerful temporal and spatial discourses of entitlement, power, innocence and complicity which has shaped the character of feminist organizations. In particular, Adamson et al. (1988), Lewis (1996), Mohanty (2003), and Srivastava (2006) have identified and challenged the limitations of the personal is political and sisterhood is global as distinct ideologies of feminist organizations.

Although, the personal is political highlights the connection between women's individual experiences to the wider political contexts, it does so to the exclusion of Other women or rather at the privileging of hegemonic feminism (Sandoval, 2004). The personal is political is rooted in the personal experience; therefore, the "woman's" experience was viewed as the only authentic guide to understanding and organizing around oppression (Adamson et al., 1988; Sandoval, 2004).<sup>49</sup> In particular, consciousness-raising groups were an organizational expression of the personal is political which focused on bringing women "together regularly in small groups to talk about their personal experiences and feelings" (Adamson et al., 1988, p. 202).

According to Adamson et al. (1988) “in the early years of the women's liberation movement the emphasis was on the similarities - a shared sisterhood - rather than the differences in politics” (p. 61). Sisterhood as an ideology contributed to the women’s movement by its mobilizing effect to uncover and react to the discrimination that women faced because of their sex. The idea of sisterhood asserted that womanhood itself formed the basis that united all women; it acknowledged that there is a common character to women's experiences and therefore a fundamental bond. Hence, it is precisely this “essentialized” bond or notion of sisterhood which robs women of their intersectional specificity, historicity, and locationality (Arat-Koc, 2005; Carty, 1999; hooks, 1981; Lugones, 1992). Carty (1999) notes:

Third World women find their multiple subjectivities stroked out by the pens of white feminists...[and] cast to the periphery of Western (also known as liberal) feminist theory, where they are positioned as a monolith, pitied as passive, dismissed as tradition-bound...the feminist movement became co-opted by middle-class, white women who opposed capitalism's further privatization of the family, privatization that relegated them to domestic labour in the household. Their liberal agenda, devoid of an analysis of race and class, marks white, Western feminism to this day. (pp. 41-42)

Women experiencing exclusion from the women’s movement began to question “which women?”, “whose personal?” and “whose experience?”.<sup>50</sup> The rhetoric of sisterhood during the 1980s and 1990s began to be challenged as the movement recognized and began to articulate the differences and contradictions within the movement. Collins (1993) states that “white feminists routinely point with confidence to their oppression as women but resist seeing how much their white skin privileges them” (p. 25) In particular, as discussed by Adamson et al. (1988) and Sandoval (2004), racialized feminists began to challenge white hegemonic feminism’s omissions, exclusions, and silences regarding their concerns, issues, and struggles in relation to essentialized notions of *the personal is political* and sisterhood. Through these two ideologies, hegemonic feminism ensures the creation of greater power differences amongst women. Hence, women who benefit largely from hegemonic feminism and its narrow and exclusive struggle, gain certain entitlements and privileges at the expense of excluding Other women” (Adamson et al., 1988; Fellows and Razack, 1998).

Srivastava (2006) explains the concept of the personal is political as largely focusing on feminist theories of emotion, care and therapy, as well as consciousness-raising practices. In many feminist organizations, the disclosure of personal experiences and emotions are central, expected, and rewarded. Srivastava (2006) refers to such disclosure as the *let's talk* approach and argues that it

produces tightly controlled spaces for expression of power relations. Hence, expressions of the personal is political within feminist organizations can suppress knowledge and feelings of exclusion which deflect attempts at organizational change.

Srivastava (2006) suggests a "rethinking not only of the practices of emotion in organization but also the historical relations of power that prompted emotional resistance to discussions of race" (p. 55). Most importantly, the dangers of the personal is political is the shift towards the personal and away from the political, while forming a historical framework for the production of knowledge about the Self and the Other. Srivastava (2006) further affirms that "not every emotion, everyone's pain, is freely expressed" (p.76), because the *let's talk* approach assumes equal speaking positions and that all women involved would be hearing and speaking on the same terms. Hence, when assuming equal space for sharing, relations of power are not acknowledged within the personal is political methods of engagement.

Anti-racist feminist scholars, Ang (2003) and Mohanty (2003), explicitly challenge and criticize notions of global sisterhood and its attempts to create a women's movement as *the home* uniting all women. Sisterhood's inability to accommodate different sets of power relations continues to be prevalent in feminist organizations which reinforce hegemonic feminism's ideologies of exclusivity. Mohanty (2003) criticizes the claim for universal sisterhood, as it produces dangerous assumptions about women "as a cross-culturally singular, homogeneous group with the same interests, perspectives, and goals and similar experiences" (p. 110). According to Mohanty (2003), sisterhood is global situates all women outside contemporary world history which further erases the effects of contemporary imperialism upon the lives of all women. Therefore, it becomes critical to situate women within the specificity of their historical and current lived experience politically, economically, and socially as this informs us of not only the similarities and differences but also the strengths and struggles amongst the category of 'women'.

Mohanty (2003) argues for the *temporality of struggle* which disrupts and challenges the logic of linearity and confinements of European modernity, including hegemonic feminism, which has crystallized individuals as ahistorical and homogenous. The temporality of struggle is the "process of reterritorialization through struggle and [that] allows for a paradoxical continuity of self, mapping and transforming one's political location" (p. 122).<sup>51</sup> The nonsynchronous temporality recognizes the self

as discontinuous/fragmented, and demands to be historicized before it can be generalized into the collective vision. Similarly, Ang (2003) argues for a *politics of partiality* which affirms that the goal can never be entirely focused on achieving a common ground but rather towards creating a *feminism* based on partiality. Therefore, she rejects the politics of inclusion and the notion of feminism as the universal home. Her argument for a politics of partiality is helpful in recognizing the limits of hegemonic feminism while critically bringing to the forefront difference without desiring a universalized feminism.

By critically examining these two ideologies of the women's movement, the personal is political and sisterhood is global, I demonstrate not only their inability to engage with difference and power relations across the category of woman but also their investments in reinforcing and sustaining dominance. For example, dominant forms of feminism arise when women's organizations engage in lobbying as a unified group in order to shift regressive policy changes. Such policy areas as well as the lobbying tactics (re)centre white hegemonic feminist strategies and issues leaving out or silencing the experiences and voices of Other women marginalized both within and outside feminist organizations. Therefore, I propose that intersectional feminist frameworks, principles, analyses, and methods are more relevant to current debates and discourses within feminist organizations and movements. Furthermore, intersectionality provides the site of engagement within mainstream women's movement and feminist organizations in Canada to interrupt dominant ideologies of hegemonic feminism.

I would like to conclude this section with Turpel-Lafond's (1997) critical deconstruction of the concept of equality as instigated within the mainstream women's movement.<sup>52</sup> She challenges feminists to rethink power, privileges, and entitlements built within this concept of equality as "sameness". Turpel-Lafond (1997) states:

I do not see it as worthwhile and worthy to aspire to, or desire, equal opportunity with white men, or with the system that they have created. The aspirations of white men in the dominant society are simply not our aspirations. We do not want to inherit their objectives and positions or to adopt their world view. To be perfectly frank, I cannot figure out why non-aboriginal women would want to do this either. (p. 72)

Turpel-Lafond exposes the gap of white hegemonic women's ignorance and finds their concept of equality (sameness) to be insufficient for Indigenous women's struggles and identities and further affirms equality (sameness) to be an inappropriate starting point. Hence, I assert that the lesson learnt is for feminist organizations to have the strength and courage to differentiate between

solidarity and sameness with the understanding that one does not need to eradicate differences in order to create solidarity. Turpel-Lafond contributions, along with Ang's politics of partiality and Mohanty's temporality of struggle, challenge feminists to envision alternative methods/forms/processes to create meaningful feminist organizations without centering whiteness or investing in hegemonic feminism. I demonstrate that it is not development or progress which transforms feminist organizations, but rather the historical moments of interruptions and chaos.

## **Intersectional Feminist Frameworks**

This research employs an intersectional feminist theoretical framework within its language, writing, methodology, and analysis, with a particular focus on critical race feminism<sup>53</sup>. Razack, Smith and Thobani (2010) explain:

Critical race feminism, like critical race theory, more broadly interrogates questions about race and gender through a critical-emancipatory lens, posing fundamental questions about the persistence, if not magnification, of race and the "colour line" in the twenty-first century; about racialized, gendered relations in an ostensibly race- and gender-neutral liberal state; and about the ways in which these interlink with continuing coloniality and Indigenous dispossession in the settler state. (p. 9-10)

CRIAW's (2006) publication, *Intersectional Feminist Frameworks: An Emerging Vision*, presents a critical reflection on the failing of gender-based analysis and calls for analyses that reflect the interlocking and intersectional realities of women's lives. Intersectional feminist frameworks will be used to study how the RCSW era engaged in processes of exclusion, nation-building, and racialization. By employing multi-pronged, multi-dimensional analyses and knowledge systems, intersectional frameworks allow us to challenge notions of binary thinking and essentialism. Furthermore, an intersectional analysis engages with discourses, identities, experiences and systems domination/oppression as fluid, changing, negotiated, historical, locational, situational and diverse (CRIAW, 2006). Most importantly, this theoretical framework rejects the notion that there is only one entry point of analysis - gender. Rather, there are multiple points of entry of analysis, which interact. By recognizing that multiple identities simultaneously interact with each other to construct the experiences of women and their historical lived realities, we bring a deeper consciousness to discourses of sexuality, ability, race, class, citizenship, age, and nation formation.

The first reference of the concept of intersectionality is when Sojourner Truth in 1851 delivers a speech at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio and questions:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery....Ain't I a woman?<sup>54</sup>

This quote by Sojourner Truth explicates her intersectional experience of race, gender, class, sexuality, labour, chattel slavery, geographic location, family status and legal status. In 1974, one of the first organizations to articulate intersectionality in its mandate was the Combahee River Collective.<sup>55</sup> They recognized Black women's struggle as interlocking oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality. The Collective's Black Feminist Statement declares:

We are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face. (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982, p. 13)

Intersectionality as an analysis was further strengthened in the late 1970s and in the early 1980s with the works of bell hooks (1981) and Audre Lorde (1984) which theorized the impact of multiple oppressions and social relations interacting upon racialized bodies. Additionally, socialist feminism contributed to discourses of intersectionality during Second Wave feminism by analyzing women's oppression based on class and gender categories. Unlike liberal feminists who see the social and economic system as fundamentally acceptable and argue for equal opportunity, socialist feminists challenge the power relations of that system and argue that equality of opportunity can never be attained in Canadian society as long as there are fundamental differences in wealth, privilege and power. According to Mandell (2004), the goals of socialist feminism are threefold: to advocate for social conditions that allow for women's economic independence, to expose and contest the devaluation of women's unpaid labour in the home, and to challenge pay inequities between men and women. Additionally Adamson et al. (1988) explain how socialist feminism influenced Canadian electoral politics (ie. the New Democratic Party) as well as trade-union movements.

By the early 1990s, the conceptualization of intersectionality developed by Patricia Hill Collins (1993; 2000) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) challenged and further demonstrated the limitations of treating gender as a singular analytical category and entry point of analysis. Collins (2000) defines intersectionality as an "analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality,

ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape Black women's experiences and, in turn, are shaped by Black women" (p. 299).<sup>56</sup> As demonstrated above, intersectionality largely derives from racialized feminists (Indigenous women and women of colour) who directly contested hegemonic feminism's investments in essentialism and exclusion. The contributions of intersectionality centres the interaction between diverse positions of marginality and dominance as social processes while exposing how these processes become invoked and deployed within and across power relations.

By the mid 2000, intersecting social categories no longer only include race, gender, and class but also other subject positions and experiences which operate relationally to each other. Therefore these categories do not stand on their own, but rather gain meaning and power by interacting, reinforcing, and contesting while also referencing each other. Intersectionality constructs the category of women in "a variety of political contexts that often exist simultaneously and overlaid on top of one another" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 32). Intersectionality also carefully acknowledges the contradictions as well as the commonalities in women's experiences across time, geographies, and locations. Hence, an intersectionality framework examines the interconnections between systems of oppression and domination and how these interact to produce specific experiences for the marginalized and dominant. This exposes the interactions of colonialism, patriarchy and capitalism and how such interactions are invoked, reinforced and contested. Hence, as demonstrated above feminist theorists emphasize the importance of intersectionality as a feminist framework and methodology because it reflects the interlocking and intersectional realities of women's lives.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I articulated multiple conceptions of power with a particular focus on power as relational and as archival which exhibit themselves across and within the spatial, locational, and temporal discursive practices and formations. Specific power (relations) are invoked and deployed at particular junctures and interactions throughout history producing effects of power. This requires a deep engagement in studying how knowledge is created, sustained, and dismantled while recognizing the subjective self in research. Self-reflexive researchers who acknowledge power as producing, repressing, and enabling knowledge, discourses, and authority, are better able to recognize power

relations as intersectional. It is this intersectional recognition which makes visible the specificity of experiences of differently positioned subjects.

By drawing on Derrida (1995), Foucault (1990), and Stoler (2002), I have discussed the power of the archive as knowledge, authority, and law. I imply that feminist historical researchers must read the archive against/along its grain as contested knowledge (Stoler, 2002). Foucault's contributions regarding the archive allows the historical researcher to reflect on how she exists in relation to the institution of archives within an organization and further question if she can speak to it and about it? Who am I to dive into these discursive practices, these established statements and events? How do these archives survive and undergo my interpretation, formation, manipulation and transformation of the statements - *my touch?* Thobani's (2007) theory of exaltation, Hage's (2000) conceptualization of national capital accumulation and Ahmed's (2000) ontology of strange encounters provide the theoretical foundation and consideration for this study of power relations amongst intersecting positioning of women within nation-building discourses of entitlement and belonging.

By problematizing the liberal feminist paradigm throughout the life cycle of a feminist organization, this research builds on the scholarship of 'differential consciousness' within organizational studies.<sup>57</sup> Sandoval (2004) challenges hegemonic feminism's pretense of the homogeneous experience of 'woman' by advocating for a differential consciousness which recognizes new and fluid, varying categories of locations and positionalities. Other feminists scholars also refer to this unique perspective as *multiple/differential/oppositional consciousness* (Sandoval, 2000; King, 1988), *mestiza* and *borderlands* (Anzaldúa, 1987); *a bridge* (Rushin, 1981), *a crossroads* (Rojas, 1989), and *interstitial feminism* (Pérez, 1999). Hurtado (1996) identifies this particular oppositional consciousness as, "*shifting consciousness ... the ability of many women of colour to shift from one group's perception of social reality to another and at times, to be able simultaneously to perceive multiple social realities without losing their sense of self-coherence*" (p. 384). Ang (2003) refers to this oppositional consciousness as politics of partiality and Mohanty (2003) identifies it as temporality of struggle. These oppositional discourses shift us beyond the dominant liberal paradigm while exposing the experience of simultaneously belonging and not belonging which has facilitated marginalized women, "to be members of a particular group (of colour, women) and at the same time stand apart from it as the 'outsider within'" (Holvino, 2008, p. 4).

- <sup>28</sup> Smith (1987) explains that power is exercised through multiple sources such as texts and organizations. The relations of ruling are rationally organized claiming objectivity and universality where the gender subtext has been made invisible. Smith (1987) proposes that in this patriarchal relation of ruling, "women are excluded from the practices of power within these textually mediated relations of ruling" (p. 4). Smith's work has been criticized for essentializing the everyday experience of women without acknowledging differences amongst women in relation to power.
- <sup>29</sup> Van Dijk (2008) explains that "social power is a property of the relationship between groups, classes or other social forms, or between persons as social members. At an elementary but fundamental level of analysis, social power relationships are characteristically manifested in interaction. Thus we say that group A (or its members) has power over group B (or its members) when the real or potential actions of A exercise social control over B. Since the notion of action itself involves the notion of (cognitive) control by agents, the social control over B by the action of A induces a limitation of the self-control of B. In other words, the exercise of power by A results in the limitation of B's social freedom of action" (p. 29).
- <sup>30</sup> Foucault (1990) rejects the *repressive hypothesis* which claims that sex has been consistently repressed and he exposes how the West convinced itself that sex was repressed with the influence of the Victorian Era. Foucault suggests that a powerful link exists between discourse and the production (rather than repression) of sexuality.
- <sup>31</sup> Foucault, 1990, p. 37.
- <sup>32</sup> Foucault, 1990, p. 96.
- <sup>33</sup> Imperialism's enormous craving for forms of knowledge - scientific, historical, geographical, linguistic, literary, artistic, anthropological - derives partly from the Enlightenment period.
- <sup>34</sup> According to Derrida (1995) "archive comes from the Greek - *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house (private house, family house) that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited... they are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect speak the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law" (p. 2).
- <sup>35</sup> Ahmed et al., 2003, p. 5.
- <sup>36</sup> In particular, white British women reproduced essentialist constructions of Indigenous women as needing rescuing from their uncivilizing and backward cultures. It therefore became the mission of British women to save the 'native' women of its colonies.
- <sup>37</sup> Hage's (2000) book, *White Nation*, focuses on Australia and is extremely useful for this dissertation because it exemplifies similar histories with Canada as colonial settler societies.
- <sup>38</sup> Dispossession of Indigenous Peoples in Canada was legislated through the Indian Act. The Indian Act as a legislative tool for assimilation created vastly reduced "reserve" lands which do not reflect the traditional tribal territories of the Indigenous nations. It also implemented the Band Council system which replaced and undermined the authority of traditional tribal governments. Further, the Indian Act continues to define who is an "Indian" within the nation.
- <sup>39</sup> See Lawrence, 2004, p. 1.
- <sup>40</sup> According to Moreton-Robinson (2003) "during the Dreaming, ancestral beings created the land and life and they are tied to particular tracks of country. Knowledge and beliefs tied to the Dreaming inform the present and future. Within this system of beliefs there is scope for interpretation and change by individuals through dreams and their lived experiences. The ancestral beings created animals, plants, humans and the physiographic features of the country associated with them.... They met others of their kind; they created and left the world of humans through being metamorphosed as stone or some other form, disappearing into the territory of another group or into the sky, ground or water. In doing so they leave behind tangible evidence of their presence on earth" (pp. 31-32).
- <sup>41</sup> Thobani (2009) additionally states, "constituting the only 'good' immigrant as the supplicant to the nation is the strategy currently operating to accomplish their complicity" (pp. 103-104).
- <sup>42</sup> According to the Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989), "women's link to the state is complex... they are acted upon as members of collectivities, institutions or grouping, and as participants in the social forces that give the state its given political projects in any particular social and historical context... [yet] on the other hand, they are a special focus of state concerns as a social category with a specific role (particularly human reproduction)." (p. 6).
- <sup>43</sup> "This 'new' woman is the figure that came to be known as 'the mother of the race'. She was not only to be a biological mother, not to be limited to her own private, domestic sphere, but was to exercise her maternal skills upon the race at large. She demanded education, the vote, and a hand in the running of nation and empire, not for the New Woman's putatively self-serving ends, but for the good of 'the race'" (Devereux, 1999, p. 178).
- <sup>44</sup> White British women were seen as the "crusaders for the Empire" and further "served as the maternal counterparts of British patriarchs. Together with their men, they carried out the exploitation and subordination of resources and people of the colonies" (Carty, 1999, p. 37).
- <sup>45</sup> Imperialist feminists were constructed as "the promise of the healthy and hardworking Anglo-Saxon offspring they will produce in Canada" (Devereux, 1999, p. 183).
- <sup>46</sup> Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) explain that, "women do not only teach and transfer the cultural and ideological traditions of ethnic and national groups...very often they constitute their actual symbolic figuration. The nation as a loved woman in danger or as a mother who lost her sons in battle is a frequent part of the particular nationalist discourse in national liberation struggles or other forms of national conflicts when men are called to fight 'for the sake of our women and children' or to defend their honour at home" (p. 9-10).
- <sup>47</sup> Carty (1999) affirms "it is an old story, but well worth repeating, because so much in feminist theory today, so much in postmodernism, merely attempts to dismiss as 'essentialist' any discussion of the connections between the social construction of knowledge and the identities and locations of those framing the discourse" (p. 35).
- <sup>48</sup> Lewis (1996) illustrates Black women social workers' voices as an example of multivocality or simultaneity of discourse within their specific occupational workplace. She demonstrates the complexities and intersections which arise for Black women social workers as they navigate their lived experiences and positionalities under the supervision of whiteness. McCall (2005) introduces the concept of intersectionality as "the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formation" (p.1771). Meekosha (2006) argues for an intercategory examination between racialized groups, disability groups and gender groups within the colonial and neocolonial Australian context.

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<sup>49</sup> According to Lugones (1992), sisterhood reinforces essentialist notions of woman, she further notes that, sisterhood is unattainable “given that sisterhood is an egalitarian relationship and the relationship between White/Anglo women and women of color is far from being an egalitarian one” (p. 407).

<sup>50</sup> Adamson et al. (1988) refers to Hazel Carby’s article *White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood*, which states, “of white feminists we must ask, what exactly do you mean when you say ‘we?’” (p. 19).

<sup>51</sup> Mohanty’s (2003) *temporality of struggle* can be connected to Sandoval’s (2004) *differential consciousness* and Ang’s (2003) *politics of partiality*, as they all speak to the partial and specificity of women’s experiences and engagement with social change. What is most powerful about Mohanty’s analysis is that she brings to the forefront the groundedness of our specific, locational, historical, and intersectional engagement within and across feminist, anti-imperialists and anti-oppressive collectives and movements which anchor each one of us differently.

<sup>52</sup> Turpel-Lafond (1997) explores the relationship between Indigenous women and the Canadian State by challenging the foundation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. She affirms that this definition of “equality” as “sameness” should not be assumed to transcend all communities, especially Indigenous communities.

<sup>53</sup> According to Razack, Smith, and Thobani (2010) “critical race feminist interventions have more explicitly engaged the experiences of Indigenous people within the Canadian settler state and Indigenous women within feminism; the challenges posed by the settler state for women of colour and Indigenous women; and the possibilities and limits of an anti-colonial praxis within a settler state. Within this constellation, race, like gender, is understood as a social construction that “orders and constrains,” as well as interlocks with other vectors of power and oppression” (p. 9).

<sup>54</sup> Truth (1851) retrieved online at [www.forsyth.k12.ga.us](http://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us) on June 19th, 2011.

<sup>55</sup> According to Thompson (2002), the Combahee River Collective was based in Boston and “was named after the river where Harriet Tubman led an insurgent action that freed 750 slaves. The Combahee River Collective not only led the way for crucial anti-racist activism in Boston through the decade, but it also provided a blueprint for Black feminism that still stands a quarter of a century later” (p. 340).

<sup>56</sup> Collins (1993) argues that by not engaging in an interlocking understanding of oppression in power, “each group identifies the type of oppression with which it feels most comfortable as being fundamental and classifies all other types of being of lesser importance” (p. 25). In doing this, certain forms of oppression are placed on a hierarchical level that “locks us all in a dangerous dance of competing for attention, resources and theoretical supremacy” (p. 26). Hence, in the process, not only is the experiences and histories of Others marginalized and excluded but knowledge itself is denied, omitted or misrepresented. This erasure reproduces the legitimization of certain types of knowledge over others and becomes a form of power (relations).

<sup>57</sup> US hegemonic feminism’s history of racist exclusionary practices marks the bitterness and experiences of the Third World women’s shifts towards new feminist paradigms. Differential mode of oppositional consciousness reflects a mobility which transforms rigid borders to porous borders of weaving ‘between and among’ oppositional ideologies.

## Chapter 3: Research Methods

This chapter begins by providing a review of the literature on feminist researcher dilemmas and reflexivity by discussing power as difference in the research process. I then introduce the research methods used for this qualitative case study, including participant recruitment, the interview process, and participant demographics. Analysis of the data using intersectional feminist textual and discourse analyses is also discussed. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the research methods, and critical feminist researcher reflections.

### Power Relations in Feminist Research: Negotiating Researcher Dilemmas

I would like to begin this chapter by focusing on the power relations within feminist research where *power as difference* emerges demanding researcher reflexivity. Researcher reflexivity refers to the researcher's awareness of the self in the research process as she critically observes, interprets and constructs discourses. Ultimately, researcher reflexivity is about the responsible use of power. I primarily draw on the works of Jayati Lal (1999), Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Michelle Yaiser (2004), and Diane Wolf (1996) to highlight power differences based on our positionalities as researchers in relation to participants, including the dilemmas and negotiations of insider/outsider status. It is critical to engage in self reflexivity in order to achieve an intersectional feminist anti-colonial inquiry.

During the research process, power differences emerge in relation to positionality, researcher-participant relations, and interpretative power. Wolf (1996) investigates the ways in which power differences and control are maintained, perpetuated, created and re-created during research. She explains that power gets invoked within three inter-related dimensions. First, power differences surface due to the different positionalities of the researcher and researched. Second, power is exerted during the research process when defining the research relationship which often reflects an unequal exchange. Third, power is also deployed during the post fieldwork period when engaging in interpretation, writing and representing.

Lal (1999) and Wolf (1999), as well as Sangster (1994) evaluate the process of entering the field as difficult and challenging due to our positionalities across gender, race, class and other social locations. They stress that researchers should not take for granted their commonalities with their subjects/participants and affirm that often differences outweigh the similarities. They also discuss

the insider-outsider complexities and affirm that as researchers we are often neither an insider nor an outsider but rather both simultaneously. Yet, as Collins (1999) and Twine (2000) explain, there are also advantages to being (partly) an outsider. Collins (1999) argues that an “outsider within” status allows for greater objectivity and the ability to see what an insider may not.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, this specific location is a significant source of knowledge bringing diverse ways of knowing back into the research process.

The insider and outsider positionalities are not static but rather fluid, complex, and in need of constant negotiations. Additionally, the reflexive researcher recognizes the importance of intersectional analysis with an emphasis on how our multiple and simultaneous experiences and locations can be invoked differently and interactively within specific contexts, events, and interactions. Lal (1999) explores her multiple positionings during fieldwork and realizes that she is partly an insider due to ethnic and racial similarities with the participants, yet sees herself also as an outsider due to differences along class, language, and other privileges.<sup>59</sup> Lal problematizes the *authentic insider* and the *return of the native*; she argues that we are constantly negotiating and occupying multiple and fluid locations. She challenges *epistemic privilege* as it essentializes *insiders* while reducing them to homogeneous entities, hence constructing not only the monolithic insider but outsider as well.

Lal (1999) further explains that identity is not a useful site for the exploration of one's positioning into the research. Lal urges researchers to consider the hybrid self which arises from the dis/locations of mixed or multiple identities. She also cautions the researcher not to fetishize hybridity so that it does not become a new site of epistemic privilege. The reflexive researcher must always strive to disrupt the boundaries between Self and Other, while ensuring that reflexivity does not become an end in itself. Lal (1999) argues that the researcher should constantly “work the hyphens between Self and Other” rather than reproduce the binary tensions between us and them (p. 117).

Feminist researchers highlight the benefits of insider status and close proximity to the research and research participants (Katila & Merilainen, 2002; Kennedy & Davis, 1996). According to Katila and Merilainen (2002), advantages of insider when studying organizations include: accessible entry; familiarity with organizational culture/rules; and access to discussions, resources, archives, and

history. The insider researcher is already more knowledgeable of organizational contexts, histories, relationships, and struggles and therefore produces highly contextualized stories and in-depth analyses. Furthermore, the researcher who is an insider or places herself in the research is better able to locate the discourses in a larger cultural and socio-historical context, while being reflexive of the self as both subject and object of research.<sup>60</sup>

When we do not recognize diversity and differences of experiences and realities, we engage in essentializing by reducing groups to an essential idea, hence failing to incorporate the complexity of group experience (Haraway, 1988; Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Mohanty, 2003; Wolf, 1999). Therefore, the complex system of cultural, social, political and historical differences is denied and binary articulations are reinforced, hence ignoring and denying differences. The reflexive researcher must challenge the notion of the positivist objective observer and reject the common assumption that there is a single social world and physical reality to be discovered. Feminist researchers should engage with the notion that there are multiple truths, realities, and discourses that are complex and multi-dimensional, which expose the many ways in which discursive conditions affect women's lives.

Hesse-Biber and Yaiser (2004) emphasize both the historical and social possibilities of differences and their basis in power relations. These include acknowledging differences as contextually, socially, relationally and historically specific. Feminist researchers have strengthened their understanding that both researcher and participants bring with them social histories of race, class, gender, sexuality, age and other power associated differences that impact their interaction. Therefore, it is important to be conscious of the misuse of power during the research process. Power relations are complex and contradictory interactions that shape what can be uncovered in the research process. It is crucial to integrate difference throughout the entire research process while engaging in reflexivity.

In addition, by acknowledging that subjects of knowledge are heterogeneous, we are better able to understand why their narratives produce knowledge that are contradictory, incoherent, and inconsistent (Lal, 1999; Sangster, 1994). Devault (1999) and Sangster (1994) engage in reflexivity and abandon the romanticized *one true story* by explaining the diversity of women's voices impacted by specific cultural discourses. Sangster (1994) reveals that such contradictory and fragmented

consciousness are shaped by complex influences and cultural codes which further shape the participant's interpretation of experience in a dialectical manner.

The consciousness of our own locations, our subjectivities, and the narratives we construct about the research we engage in, is a key component of feminist research because these affect the ways we negotiate social interactions involved in research. Therefore, I argue that as difficult as it may be, it is important to bring our subjectivities into the work that we engage in. Because the power of the researcher to determine what is and what is not significant in interview transcripts is real; we must start from the personal and indicate the ways in which our locations and identities as researchers inform and shape the research process. Our fragmented identities are important sources of feminist insight and therefore efforts should be made to understand how we inform the research process (Harding, 2004).

Researcher reflexivity allows for the rejection of notions of discovering the objective truth in the research and instead recognizes the subjective and multiple realities of each interview and each interview subject/participant. A reflexive researcher not only confirms where the subject/participant is positioned in terms of class, sexuality, ethnicity, gender, age, citizenship, ability and their intersections, but also considers where they, as researchers are positioned in relation to their subject/participant while negotiating insider/outsider dilemmas. Therefore, positionality can be understood to refer to the self reflexive acknowledgement by the researcher of her location in complex relations of power. This is ultimately the researcher's analytical standpoint.

Several feminist scholars discuss feminist dilemmas, contradictions, and challenges in fieldwork (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Kirsh, 1999; Lal, 1999; Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Wolf, 1996). These dilemmas which revolve around power, impact our integrity, ethics, and work as researchers. Kirsh (1999) discusses the ways institutional and individual power shape participant-researcher relations. In particular, she examines important aspects which promote ethical research, these include authority, identity, and inequality inherent in such relations.<sup>61</sup>

Some feminist researchers encourage collaboration with participants in the development of research questions, the design of research studies, and the interpretation of data (Kirsh, 1999; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). They propose interactive, collaborative, and less hierarchical feminist research as an approach that produces better and more detailed empirical data. Moments of discomfort and

tension that arise during interviews can be seen as moments of great value because they encourage us to be more reflective, self-critical, and sensitive in our interactions with participants. These dilemmas often arise when participants reveal confidential information, or wish to withdraw claims they have made, or feel misunderstood by the researcher. Fieldwork confronts the multiple contradictions and instigates approaching projects with a deep political awareness and consciousness. Wolf (1996) advises on the importance of recognizing, accepting, and working through/with the imperfections of feminist fieldwork as it brings about knowledge that is contextual, inclusive, experiential, involved and socially relevant.

Feminist researchers advocate listening attentively and actively while being open enough to generating new questions from the participants' stories and asking for clarification or elaboration (Anderson & Jack, 1991; Devault, 1999). Therefore, the reflexive researcher must capture the moments and document experiences that lie outside the boundaries of acceptability. Additionally, researchers must also listen to themselves in the interview process by trusting their feelings, confusions, and tensions. Anderson and Jack (1991) urge researchers to be alert to their own areas of confusion, or of too great a certainty about what the participant is saying because these are important areas needing further probing.

As recommended by feminist authors, recognizing and documenting the “hums” and “ahs” or pauses as important talk as well as the sighs, laughter and crying are critical moments of data which have traditionally been ignored or been seen as irrelevant and creating ambiguity (Anderson & Jack, 1991; DeVault, 1999). When engaging in interpretation, as critical feminist researchers, we must take into account nonverbal occurrences as additional clues to the feelings and emotional state of participants. In particular, when analyzing the transcript, it is meaningful to pay close attention to the inconsistencies and contradictions in the talks/stories of the participants. We must listen for the hesitations, gaps and silences, nervous laughter, and moments of self-censoring.

Oral histories invoke the act of remembering in a dynamic way and are mediated by the nature and context of remembering. Errante (2004) and Sangster (1994) explain that memory is not simply an exercise of recalling since there are several ways of remembering and different reasons why we may or may not want to remember. Sangster (1994), concludes that “when people talk about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a little, exaggerate, become confused, get things wrong. Yet, they are

revealing truths” (p. 1). Therefore, for Sangster, it could very well be that all autobiographical memories are true but it is the responsibility of the interpreter to discover in which sense and for what purpose while reflecting on ethical ways to interpret women’s lives and experiences.

The researcher who interviews has the power to interpret/narrate *data* and also publish such findings. The researcher can use *data* to confirm one’s own assumptions and theoretical/analytical frameworks. As researchers we strive to be reflexive of the fact that we are in privileged positions to read, tell, re-work narratives, and select from them what suits our own purposes. Kirsh (1999) asks, “how do we explain the lives of others without violating their reality?” (p. 45). She discusses the dilemmas of interpreting other people’s experiences and the process of transforming lived experience into research data. Such politics of representation and interpretation particularly arise when research expectations and interpretations differ between the researcher/participant or when conflicting values and ideologies exist.

Borland (1991) highlights the dilemma of interpreting participants’ experiences and the assumptions, as well as responsibilities, associated with interpretive power and authority. Borland explains that as performance context changes, we discover new audiences; we renegotiate our sense of selves and therefore our narratives also change. This interpretive conflict reveals differences in values; Borland considered herself a feminist while her grandmother (participant) did not see herself in the same way. Borland’s work brings to light important questions: how to interpret the experiences of research participants when their analytic framework, their values, and their view of the world differ sharply from ours. It is important for the researcher to give the participant interpretive respect without relinquishing researcher responsibilities to provide the analytical interpretation of the participant’s experience.<sup>62</sup>

The feminist scholars discussed in this section contribute to research methodology by highlighting the insider dilemmas, strengths, and cautions while encouraging a dialectic process. The scholars persuade researchers to always take into account the social position of those who generate the information while developing new or more precise interpretive frameworks. Hence, the critical and difficult task for the researcher is to produce a feminist analysis of the interview data which goes beyond the experience of the researched while still granting the participants their subjectivity. The next section discusses the research methods used for this dissertation.

## Research Methods

This qualitative case study examines the complexities of counter hegemonic and hegemonic power relations as they are produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts within VSW. I draw on the work of Robert Stake (1995; 2003) on qualitative case studies to present VSW's historical positioning and relational workings of power. Stake (1995) explains that the "case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). This allows for the qualitative case study researcher to present a greater understanding of VSW while capturing the complexities and examining in detail the interactions within this single case. Stake (2003) states that "a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry" where the object of study "is a specific, unique, bounded system" (p. 136).

According to Stake (2003), an *intrinsic case study* is a study where "the researcher engages in a more in-depth understanding of a particular case, where the case itself is of interest" (p. 136), whereas an *instrumental case study* goes beyond the case and contributes to larger concerns and issues. This case study, on VSW, is an instrumental case study, as this research examines the history of Vancouver Status of Women while focusing on the invocation, deployment and effects of power within larger discourses of the nation. As a qualitative case researcher, I engage in an in-depth study of VSW by drawing on VSW's historical background as well its positioning as a site of power relations and colonial encounters within larger State and national context with the goal of advancing and contributing to specific scholarships.

Two types of qualitative methods were used to collect data for this qualitative case study. The first is archival research, including documentary and archival sources, and the second is in-depth interviews with participants. Through feminist archival research and in-depth face to face interviews, I engaged in a comprehensive study of one feminist organization, the Vancouver Status of Women (VSW) and explored its organizational historical engagement with power relations since its inception in 1971 through to 2008. I collected data from participants and archives by focusing on the word *power* and the discourses associated with it. By asking the questions regarding the invocation and deployment of power, I gathered data on how one defines and sees power in organizations and its

effects. I attempted to follow power through the archives and narratives by studying how power gets taken up and who or what it gets attached to.

### **Archival Research**

Archival research involved locating primary documents and engaging in archival/text-based research. Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of British Columbia (RBSC UBC) in Vancouver, BC has a breadth of materials on Vancouver Status of Women since its inception in 1971 to 1983.<sup>63</sup> In addition, I had access to VSW's own archives and documents (VSW Archives) both on site and in its archival storage off site. An agreement was signed between VSW and the researcher to ensure proper conduct and access to organizational documents and archives, while establishing the relationship between VSW and the researcher.

Archival research included textual analysis of organizational meeting minutes, policies, annual reports, funding reports, bylaws, newsletters, publications, briefs, correspondence, newspaper articles, photos and other relevant documentation. In particular, organizational meeting minutes included Executive/Board/Coordinating Collective, staff meeting, *Kinesis* Editorial Board minutes, as well as other relevant committee minutes (such as the Personnel Committee). Every attempt was made to locate and identify archival materials which revealed interruptions and reproduction of power relations. Additional print and video archives were used for Chapter 4 on The Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), RCSW Briefs were accessed from the UBC Law Library, newspaper articles and photographs were found at the SFU Library. Video RCSW Brief presentations were accessed on the CBC Digital Archives website.<sup>64</sup>

I would like to take a moment here and briefly describe the conditions of the VSW's organizational archives. The VSW archives stored at Rare Books and Special Collections at UBC were carefully classified and easily accessible with the use of the corresponding inventory. Accessing these archives was facilitated by the assistance of library staff and technology, and a comfortable working environment. As for the VSW materials stored in the VSW archival storage off-site and those on-site, they were minimally organized requiring significantly more time to identify key documents. Clearly the VSW materials in boxes at the rented off-site storage had been stored there without an archiving process of classification. They also required climbing a steep ladder and accessing a very small cold and dark area. The conditions of these archives clearly reflected the historical lack of resources and

funds of non-profit organizations in categorizing and archiving their organizational materials. Hence, it should not be assumed when engaging in archival research that the necessary archives are easily accessible. Additionally, this presents an important methodological consideration suggesting that differently positioned organizations have differently organized archives.

By interpreting these texts using an intersectional feminist textual analysis, the researcher brought forth multiple realities of VSW's organizational culture across its trajectory. By analyzing the above archives, I demonstrated how they deployed power relations as documents which circulated within VSW. I attempted to also follow certain policies such as the Affirmative Action Policy in its making and how it was deployed. Ahmed, Hunter, Kilic, Swan, & Turner (2006) recognize the analysis of texts "as 'things' that circulate alongside other things within organisations, which in turn shapes the boundaries or edges of institutional spaces" (p. 27). For example, meeting minutes are not neutral documents and cannot capture *the* reality of the organization at the time it was written and approved. In actuality, meeting minutes often reflect the minute taker's reality of how she understood the events rather than the entire group's reality. Hence, it is important to consider meeting minutes as recorded by differently positioned minute takers based on their experiences of inhabiting VSW.

### **In-Depth Expert Interviews**

Interviews with participants were conducted from May 2009 to August 2010 at a site of the participant's choice. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 31 past and current Coordinating Collective/Board members and staff of VSW regarding their experiences of power within the organization. Using a cross-sectional design<sup>65</sup> to interview different cohorts within the organization's eras, I explored VSW's capacity to contest power relations and examined the implementation of policies that responded to power relations. All the participants were asked to reflect upon their experience in relation to power within the organization as well as how they understood the more macro relations intersecting with the organization vis-à-vis the women's movement and the nation. Participants' narratives described how they experienced and inhabited VSW differently due to their multiple histories and social locations.

## Participant Recruitment

Respondents were identified, contacted and recruited through key organizational records and contacts, snowball procedures, and names found in organizational documents (such as annual reports, financial records and meeting minutes). Snowball sampling was very useful for this research as already interviewed participants suggested and encouraged potential participants. Participants responded to the initial Letter of Contact via e-mail or mail (see Appendix A.1). Many of the participants were very much self reflective of their involvement as politicized feminists within the organization and were willing to be critical of both theirs and others' complicity in reproducing power relations that resulted in exclusion and oppression.

The process of selecting and recruiting participants ensured representation from a diversity of experiences which provided different windows onto the institutional relations shaping power within VSW. Research participants were selected to reflect the continuum of the organization's history from 1971 to 2008. Every attempt was made to ensure that participants were included from the four eras of the organization as discussed in Chapter 1 while creating a balance of board members and staff participants (see Figure 3.1). It is important to note that, the staff and board members that were interviewed were more likely chosen if they had been with the organization for more than one year, this suggests that they had sufficient or adequate knowledge of the organization's culture.

Additionally, the women interviewed also reflected across race, age, class, sexuality, migration history, and life histories (see Table 3.1). Initially, the focus was on interviewing permanent staff alone but as I engaged in archival research, I found that prior to 1992, all permanent positions with the most organizational entitlements were held by a diversity of white women.<sup>66</sup> Specifically, I found that racialized women only entered the organization as part-time/contract staff, especially through Unemployment Insurance Top Up Grants (UI Top Up).<sup>67</sup> The presence of Indigenous staff was almost nil (whether it be permanent or contract/part-time) until the mid-2000. It became clear that Indigenous women remained marginally involved within the organization over the years but most predominantly prior to 2000. This brought to the forefront the weaknesses of the selection criteria for interview participants. Hence, this challenged the research recruitment and selection criteria as the research progressed.

It was critical to interview part-time/contract staff if racialized women were to be included in this research during the earlier eras where they remained in the periphery of VSW leadership positions. The research criteria for selection shifted in order to bring the experiences and voices of women who had traditionally been excluded from full-time position in the organization. Indigenous women only began to occupy permanent full-time positions in the organization in the mid-1990s. Additionally, it was central to demonstrate Indigenous women's<sup>68</sup> experiences by also including those who participated in the organization in other capacities, such as those hired on short-term contracts or as consultants. Of the 31 interviews, four women identified as Indigenous: Anemki Wedom, Sammy, Delixueiya, and ITTC<sup>69</sup>. Every attempt was made to identify and invite additional Indigenous women who were associated with the organization in some way to participate in the research.

### **Interview Process**

The interviews ranged from one hour to four hours and I conducted all the interviews personally. All the participants were interviewed individually at a time and at a location suitable to them. Every interview was face-to-face and the majority (81%) of interviews took place within the Vancouver Lower Mainland in British Columbia. Of the 31 participants, ten chose to be interviewed in their homes, and the remainder chose alternative spaces such as their workplace, the researcher's home, a restaurant or a neighbourhood house.

The interviews did not begin until each participant understood and signed the Consent Form which was emailed or mailed along with the Consent Letter to them prior to the interview (see Appendix A.2).<sup>70</sup> The Consent Form also included consent to audio-record the interview. I specifically let the participants know when I was beginning the interview and that I was turning the digital audio-recorder on. I informed them that they could obtain a copy of the digitally recorded interview if requested, and many did request for a copy which was provided to them after all transcription was complete. Each participant provided the researcher with a pseudonym of their choice, which was used immediately during the interview.

Interviews began by describing the purpose of the research and the procedures for making participants anonymous in the analysis of the data. Questions were asked in an open ended manner where the first question primarily focused on historicizing the participants by asking them to describe and provide information on the year they were born, where they were born, family relations,

migration histories and other identifying social locations. See Appendix A.3 for the Interview Schedule. By sharing with the participants information on the research, I found that the participants knowledge of the general direction of the researcher's interests provided more in-depth responses.

Attempts were made to ensure that the participant's chosen pseudonym was used throughout the interview in order to avoid recording their real name. As the interviews proceeded, the questions were slightly adjusted to bring more in-depth experiences and relevance. I asked questions in regards to their understanding of the following concepts and terms: *global sisterhood*, *the personal is political*, *power*, *inclusion*, *entitlement*, and *organizational culture and policies*. While digitally audio recording each interview, I took minimal notes to ensure eye contact and carefully listened to the participants. From the moment the interview was downloaded onto my password secure protected computer, each interview was allocated a code. Hence from this point forward, I maintained confidentiality and anonymity through the use of numerical coding and pseudonyms.

I received support in the transcription of the interviews by way of transcribers, who also agreed to maintain confidentiality by signing a confidentiality document. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained in this process as the transcribers were only exposed to pseudonyms and codes associated with the participants, and not the participants' real names. Additionally, I met with the transcribers several times during the transcription process to debrief and discuss any issues that arose for them, while reasserting confidentiality. Transcript member checks for trustworthiness took place by sending the raw transcript via email and mail to participants who then were invited to review the transcript for accuracy. Confidentiality of the data was maintained by ensuring that all personal identifiers were removed<sup>71</sup> unless the interview participant chose to keep the personal identifier as it informed their narrative.

During the interviews, the participants clearly articulated discourses which contributed to the *making* and *unmaking* of power relations within VSW, the women's movement, and the nation. Specifically, they defined power or power relations as they had experienced it in their everyday relations within the organization. Definitions were not provided to the participants and therefore formal definitions for power, inclusion and entitlement did not influence the participants' articulation. By focusing on the *how* of power relations, this allowed for the participants to engage with this concept in an active way as something they performed or contested rather than an abstract process.

Hence, power and power relations as well as experiences of entitlement, belonging and home were discussed in the everyday work setting rather than using theoretical and abstract definitions.

During the interviews I requested for descriptions detailing the practices and activities of the organization in responding to conflict, tensions and difficult moments where power relations surfaced. I remained clear with the participants that the focus of this study was on the organizational culture of VSW and not on individual women in VSW. The interviews provided diverse, similar and different aspects of how power relations are organized within multiple sites of interaction. Each participant provided a partial view into this world, and as the researcher I attempted to put together an intersectional analysis to expose the power relations and their relationships across and within the sites (VSW, women's movements, and nation) and time (VSW eras).

## **Data Analysis**

Once the transcription was completed, all interviews were imported to the qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA. MAXQDA provided a relevant classification system to help organize not only interview data but also research articles notes, memos, archival notes, and other relevant documents. I read through each interview and began to develop a coding system while allocating and matching segments of interviews with the relevant code using MAXQDA. Themes were coded by identifying chunks of data into general themes and sub-themes as they relate to the overall research questions and emerging discourses. The code system was revisited several times throughout the coding process - codes were added, amalgamated, broken down, and deleted while interpreting the data set (see Appendix A.4 for the final code system).

After the coding had taken place, each chunk of data of a particular code was then downloaded into coded segments for further analysis. I analyzed the women's narratives according to the key questions of this study and emerging themes. The first piece of coding and analysis took place around the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and VSW's emergence. Secondly, coding and analyses was applied to emerging themes of home, power, entitlement and belonging. Third and lastly, organizational processes and policies which attempted to equalize power were also coded and analyzed. Coded segments also became potential quotes to illustrate themes in the four analysis Chapters, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Textual and discourse analyses engaging with an intersectional feminist framework was used to analyze the data of interlocking identities and experiences of the participants. An intersectional feminist framework approaches research using multi-pronged and multi-dimensional analyses, while acknowledging that intersecting power relations shape our locations in society. Such a framework seeks to provide the tools to theoretically and methodologically explore the negotiated, locational, historical, political, interacting, and fluid realities of marginalized women's experiences within one feminist organization.

Feminist discourse analysis<sup>72</sup> acknowledges that institutions and social context play a determining role in the development, maintenance, and circulation of discourses. Discourses are primarily organized around practices of inclusion and exclusion where discourses are fluid and conflictual. Therefore, feminist discourse analysis allows the researcher to determine which discourses are operating when and how and in what configurations with the acknowledgement that all knowledge is determined by a combination of social, institutional and discursive pressures. The researcher exposes the multiple construction of meaning as they circulate and understand knowledge as a system of statements or procedures being produced, regulated, distributed, circulated and operated. Hesitations, long pauses, and "ahs", "hums", laughter, and sadness, as well as inconsistencies and contradictions, were analyzed through an intersectional critical race feminist discourse analysis. By listening for the hesitations, gaps and silences, as well as partial and filtered accounts, I was able to probe respectfully for emerging discourses of power, belonging, inclusion, nation, home and entitlement.

Participants spoke at length about their childhood, journey into feminism, and into VSW and the women's movement. They shared about the places where they had lived as children and adults, when and where they migrated, and articulated important events and people that contributed to their understanding of power, oppression, entitlement, privilege and justice. The participants demonstrated rapport and trust with the researcher by discussing their struggles and difficult experiences which brought forth a process of historicizing the subject. Their narratives further suggested why and how they responded to power relations within VSW. As they shared their stories, the intersections between home, belonging, entitlement, power, nation, as well as exclusions due to homophobia, racism, classism, and single parenthood in the everyday world became discursively

visible. This also provided the analytical space to explore the translocal relations of power within and across multiple sites, including VSW, the women's movement and the larger nation-state shaping their organizational experiences.

## **Positioning the Participants**

This section of the chapter addresses the demographics and multiple/simultaneous identities of the participants interviewed for this study. Their identities, histories and experiences positioned them differently as politicized women who engaged in feminist organizing across time. Their narratives spoke of their perceptions, understandings, contemplations, negotiations and responses to experiences of inclusion and exclusion within VSW and how they understood power working within VSW.

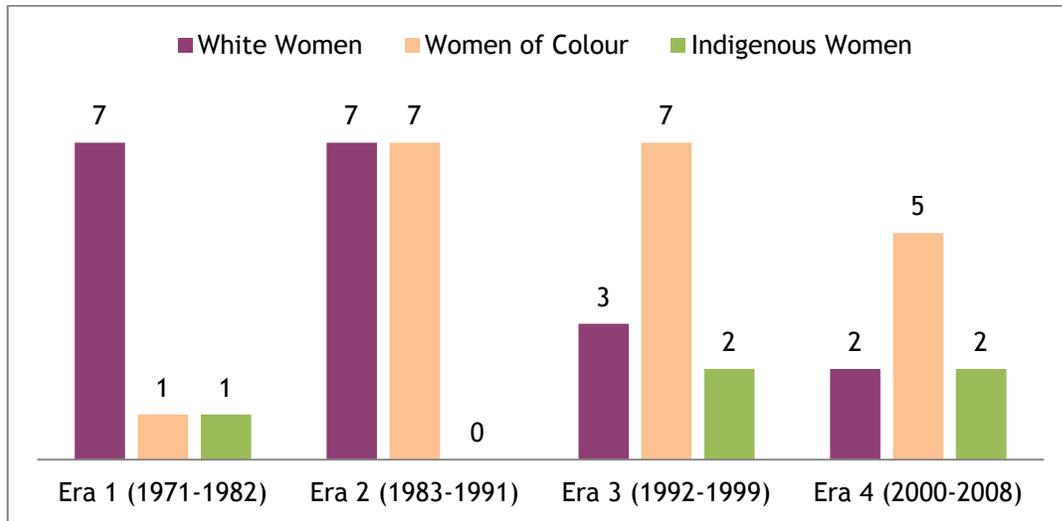
Many of the participants disclosed that the interview was an important moment in their life as it provided long-awaited debriefing of unresolved conflictual power relations and dilemmas that have continued to trouble them over the years. Some participants also explained that the interview had encouraged them to engage in reconciliation processes regarding unresolved issues with other women they had worked with at VSW. For others, the interview produced difficult and painful experiences of conflict and exclusion, while also experiencing moments of happiness, pleasure, excitement and gratitude. Through the interview they also came to a place of deeper understanding of their roles and actions, as well as how they inhabited multiple sites across the organization, the women's movement and the larger nation state. They spoke to the hegemonic structures within society and the nation which the organization contested, and also reproduced. I found the participants to be extremely honest when probed to discuss difficult experiences of exclusions or having been complicit in the exclusion of Others. But most importantly they reflected back on their lessons learnt and how tremendously grateful they were for such lessons that they carried into other spaces of organizing.

### **Participant Demographics**

In writing this dissertation, I do not detail the biographies of each individual woman interviewed, as a way to strive to protect their identities and maintain confidentiality. As a researcher, it was important for me to ensure that each woman interviewed told her story from birth or childhood, as this historicized who they were, their social relations to the nation-state and globally, as well as why they deployed and responded to power as they did. This information was not

completely shared in this dissertation, but it was very much part of my feminist intersectional analysis of ensuring that the participants' words and narratives were contextualized within their specific, locational and fluid social relations. Therefore, much of their life journey lies within me and constructs my feminist intersectional analysis of how power was erupted, negotiated and responded to by an organization made up of these individual bodies across time within the larger context of nation.

**Figure 3.1: Research Participants' Representation by VSW Eras by Race**

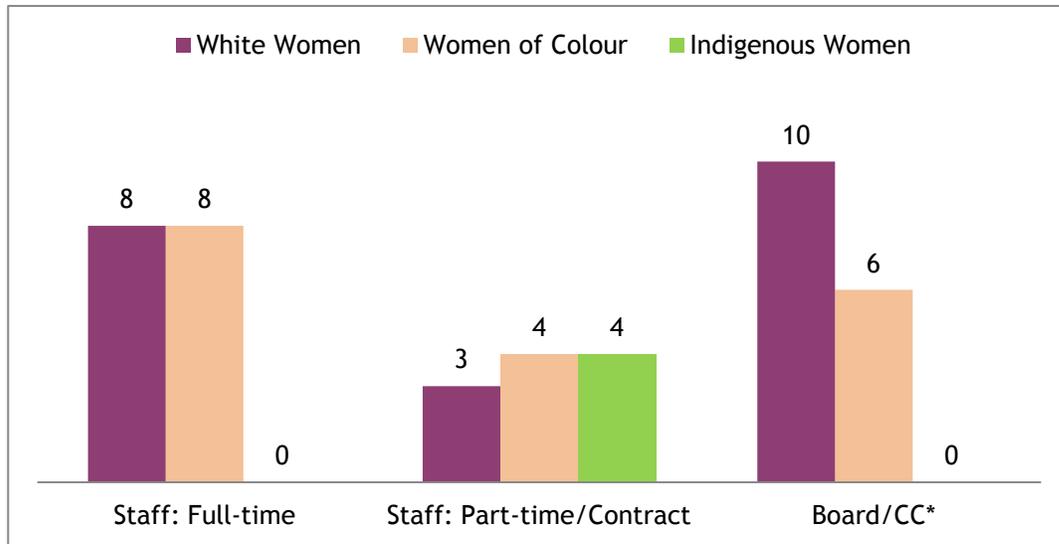


Note. Research participants were involved in different capacities across the VSW eras and therefore the above Figure reflects multiple involvement by one participant. Additionally, this Figure is not an indication of all staff and board members involved with VSW from 1971-2008.

I provide a summary of the participants' demographics situating them while respectfully bringing their histories as needed and when needed to the forefront. As presented in Figure 3.1 and 3.2, the study represented women involved in multiple capacities across the four VSW eras. I have presented the data by race and organizational involvement in order to illustrate the participants across the eras. As indicated in Figure 3.1, nine participants were involved in the organization during the first era (1971-1982); 14 during the second era (1983-1991); 12 during the third era (1992-1999); and nine participants discussed their experience during the fourth era (2000-2008). Based on the research sample, the presence of white women decreases by the third and fourth eras. Figure 3.2 illustrates three different types of involvements. The research demonstrates white women and women of colour as equally bringing experiences of being a full time staff. Of all the participants, Indigenous women and women of colour had more experience being a part-time/contract staff than white women. Eleven participants' reflected multiple capacities across the three categories of involvement as full time staff, part time/contract staff, and as Board or Coordinating Collective

members, and therefore their experiences were included across the eras. For example, these 11 participants entered the organization in one capacity, such as staff, and then shifted towards another capacity (i.e. Board member) during the same or another era. It was very common for staff to later join the Board or Coordinating Collective and vice-versa. It should also be noted that I did not interview any Indigenous board or Coordinating Collective members.

**Figure 3.2: Research Participants' Involvement in VSW by Race**



Note. Participants held multiple status within the organization across multiple eras.  
\* Coordinating Collective

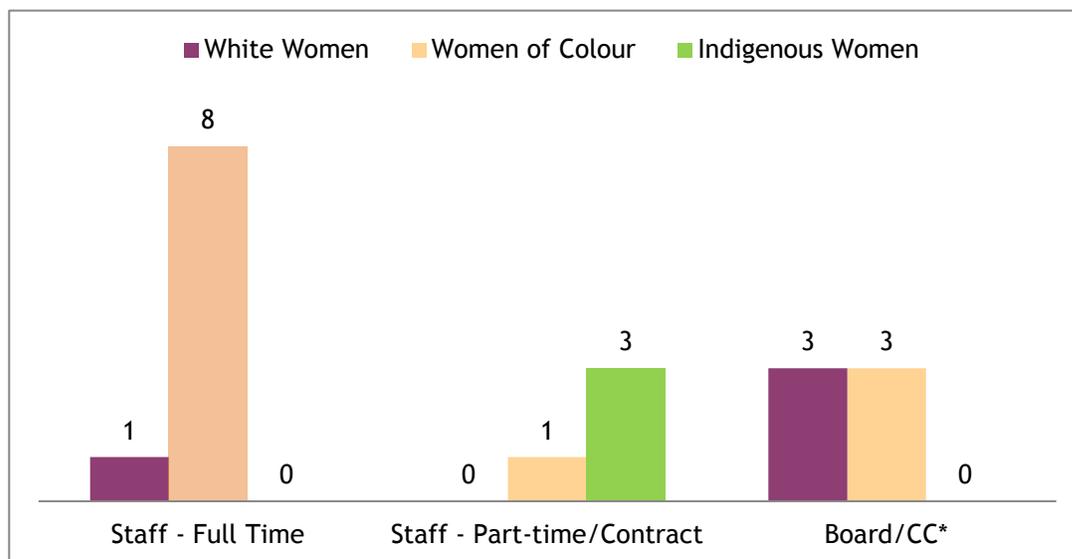
Of the 31 participants interviewed, 13 were white women, 14 were women of colour, and 4 were Indigenous women. Because women of colour and Indigenous women only began to hold permanent full-time positions post 1992 when the Affirmative Action Policy was implemented, this is also reflected in the demographics of the interview participants (See Figure 3.3 and 3.4). Based on the research sample and prior to the Affirmative Action Policy, there were four women of colour and only one Indigenous woman in the capacity of part-time/contract staff.<sup>73</sup> During the post Affirmative Action Policy eras (VSW third and fourth eras), there were four Indigenous women interviewed who held part time/contract positions that were marginal and precarious. Eight women of colour participants held full-time positions during the third and fourth VSW eras. Four white feminists participants were interviewed who were involved with VSW during these post affirmative action eras, three participated in VSW solely as Coordinating Collective members and one was the last white woman hired in a VSW permanent staff position.

**Figure 3.3: Research Participants' Involvement in VSW by Race Pre-Affirmative Action Policy (1971-1991)**



Note. Participants held multiple status within the organization across multiple eras.  
\* Coordinating Collective

**Figure 3.4: Research Participants' Involvement in VSW by Race Post-Affirmative Action Policy (1992-2008)**



Note. Participants held multiple status within the organization across multiple eras.  
\* Coordinating Collective

Other useful demographics (see Table 3.1) of this research exhibit the multiple social locations of the participants which are intertwined within the organization, the women's movement and nation-state. Forty-five percent identified as lesbians and the remainder identified as heterosexual. Of the 14 lesbian participants, 9 were racialized women and they also reflected the majority of racialized

women interviewed (n=14). Amongst the participants there was great variety in age ranging from 24 to 82 years old at the time of interview, where 42% of participants were between 40 to 56 years old. Additionally, other demographics were also very diverse such as, class (middle/upper to working-class and low income), education (elementary school education to graduate university degree), and migration history (Indigenous, white settler migrant, and diaspora racialized migrant).

**Table 3.1: Research Participant Demographics**

Participant Demographics	Indigenous Women n=4	Women of Colour n=14	White Women n=13	Total n=31
<b>VSW Involvement*</b>				
Staff - permanent/Full time	0	8	8	16
Staff - part - time, contract	4	4	3	11
Board or CC members	0	6	10	16
<b>Class or Socio-Economic Status<sup>74</sup> (n=31)</b>				
Middle-Class	0	8	10	19
Working Class	3	4	1	8
Low-Income	1	2	2	5
<b>Highest Level of Education at time of Interview (n=31)</b>				
Elementary School			1	1
High School completion				0
College Post Secondary Degree	2	1		3
Undergraduate University Degree	1	7	5	13
Graduate University Degree	1	6	7	14
<b>Age at time of Interview (n=31)</b>				
24-39 years old	0	4	1	5
40-56 years old	3	7	3	13
57-65 years old	0	2	7	9
66-82 years old	1	1	2	4
<b>Migration History (n=31)</b>				
Immigrated to Canada	0	11	2	13
Born in Canada	4	2	12	18

\*Note. Participants held multiple status within the organization across multiple eras.

The participants also differed greatly in their stories of how they came to enter the Canadian women's movement and other social justice organizing in Canada. For some women who grew up in Canada they came into their feminist identity and values by organizing in social justice movements such as socialist, antiracist, or Marxist organizing. Many of the racialized women who immigrated at a later age, arrived in Canada having already participated and organized within social justice movements in other parts of the world, such as Third World solidarity organizing. Interestingly, their stories tell us that their organizing outside of the Canadian women's movement has predominantly been silenced and left out of the larger historical narratives of the Canadian women's movements.

Their narratives explain how the Canadian mainstream women's movement constructed them as *becoming* a feminist only by entering the Canadian women's movement. This resulted in privileging and legitimating Canadian dominant nationalist organizing and dismissing Third World or 'Other' Worlds organizing and politics.

## **Strengths and Limitations of Research Methods**

This section of the chapter focuses on a self reflexive exercise of methodology. Here I examine the pitfalls and strengths of studying an organization which is very much partially embedded in my history and I, in part of VSW's history. I identify how my positionalities within and outside the organization brings to the forefront questions of power, objectivity, manipulation, ethics, and future relations. And most importantly, I articulate the dilemmas of negotiating my insider positionality while recognizing that the interview process and the data deriving from it is produced dialogically where both the researcher and the participant are active agents in constructing research knowledge.

### **Factors Facilitating and Strengthening the Study**

#### **The Intersectionality of Research Methods**

The intersectionality of the archival and interview research methods contributed significantly to the emergence of in-depth and precise data. The strength of the data from the archives interacted not only with the interview narratives, but also the researcher's insider positionality. Such interaction of research methods produced thorough data and content which increased credibility that otherwise would not have been possible. Additionally, archival documents were an important source for selecting potential participants while providing detailed information of events, interactions, policies and processes that were implemented to respond to or reproduce power relations. Furthermore, I consistently witnessed the archive documents coming alive during interviews and vice-versa.

The critical engagement with archives as an insider brought breadth and depth when analyzing power relations deployed as classism, racism, homophobia, and ableism. When I began this research, I was aware that I would cross paths with documents and archives which were written and classified by me. This insider positionality was produced through the multiple and simultaneous intersections of researcher, author, archivist, subject, object, informant and organizational member. Such intersections allow for the examination of the researcher's experiences and identities bringing forth a very unique researcher objectivity.

As an insider researcher I had not expected pivotal moments of when *the archive meets the researcher* within VSW's organizational trajectory; for example, reading Coordinating Collective meeting minutes regarding the hiring of Benita Bunjun as the *Kinesis* Restructuring Facilitator in 2000. This humbling process contributes to my understanding of how I came to enter this organization particularly in such a position which required my skills as mediator to resolve organizational conflicts. Until that point, I had not really articulated that my entry point into VSW began due to power relations and conflict. Reading through the archives of that period, including minutes, reports, resignations, hirings, strategic planning notes, I began to deepen the landscape of my entrance into VSW. As researcher, I recognized the emerging fundamental discourses of *self as living archive and archivist* which interacted with researcher-participant dialogic engagement to bring a unique depth to the research data and analysis.

#### **Multiple Intersecting Insider Positions**

An additional strength of the research includes bringing an insider position to the research while also highlighting the dilemmas of the insider researcher studying an organization where the researcher has been heavily involved (Lal, 1999; Wolf, 1996). This insider position of having worked at VSW in various capacities as the *Kinesis* Restructuring Facilitator, Administrator/Fundraiser, Project Coordinator, and Coordinating Committee member, meant that the researcher had significant knowledge of the organization's history and culture as well as relationships with various members, donors, and organizations in community. This knowledge of organizational history and culture translated into knowledge of federal, provincial and municipal funding relationships as well as policy shifts to funding and women's issues. The insider position also contributed to building strong rapport and trust which largely derived from the researcher's knowledge of VSW's history and particular events in its history in Canada.

Being an insider not only to the organization but also within the women's movement greatly facilitated access to potential participants as well as participants agreeing to be interviewed. Many of the participants had already established a relationship of trust with the researcher through past political organizing within the women's movement. This insider position played out not only politically as discussed above but also due to the researcher's intersecting social locations, including experiences as a racialized queer feminist of colour. It is likely that such experiences and multiple identities did

influence other racialized lesbians and white lesbians to participate in this research. Additionally, my participation and how I am constructed within the feminist community also influenced those who contributed and those who did not. This potential sense of shared experience and history enabled participants to immediately contribute more deeply with less hesitation. Participants did not hesitate to dive into difficult and complex spaces of knowledge as they knew that the researcher had read the archives/meeting minutes/annual report and was at a time part of the organization.

This qualitative case study of VSW can be construed as a limitation because it can be argued that the findings are not transferable to other organizations and institutions. Although many of the narratives were specific to VSW, participants also drew on other organizing within social movements in and outside Canada, including other feminist, anti-racist or lesbian/queer organizing spaces. Therefore, I argue that it is not necessarily a limitation because the participants' narratives represented organizing at multiple sites of social change and not only of VSW. They demonstrate their involvement across diverse and simultaneous sites of organizing and therefore analyses and knowledge deriving from this research can be transferred to multiple feminist / social change sites of organizing. The participants explained that their organizing across sites brought an understanding of how power relations were constructed, invoked, deployed responded to, and reinforced similarly and differently in other organizations and institutions.

The themes and discourses that were generated within this research can therefore be transferred to other feminist organizational sites because many women's organizations within mainstream women's movement remain spaces dominated by white feminists. Struggles of power in relation to race, sexuality, class, ability, citizenship, age, organizational memory, education, and organizational position are similarly invoked across all organizational sites. Additionally, there are strengths that emerge within case studies providing not only the knowledge that is specific which historicizes a particular organizational site but also contributes knowledge to other areas of scholarship. As a case study, this may not be reflective of what happened in other organizations but this research on VSW articulates this unique site of feminist organizing and the making of feminist history embedded in Canada as a nation.

## Factors Limiting the Study

This study had several limitations. One methodological limitation which arose involves the politics of memory and of remembering. Many of the women I wanted to interview had now passed away, such as Rosemary Brown, or were not available due to health reasons. Those involved in the first organizational era in the 1970s who are alive today were in their late 70s or early 80s. Sangster (1994) explains the ethical dilemmas and complexities of historical memory, where memory itself needs to be the subject of study. Therefore, some participants' memory of the specific events was acknowledged and negotiated as fluid and situated considering one's past, current, and future perception or construction of the subjective self. Therefore, as the researcher, I took into account how women explained, rationalized and made sense of power relations within VSW across temporal realities of memory.

Many participants remembered many events in detail, and others had clearly blocked out certain events and situations for different reasons including trauma, sadness, conflictual sentiments, and health. One participant, in particular, upon first contact had remembered many incidents and her history of VSW. During the second contact when scheduling the interview, she no longer remembered who I was, and remembered only a few details about VSW. By the time we have the interview, she no longer recalled details about VSW. Another participant had gone through tremendous trauma and loss during her time within VSW and when I interviewed her, she minimally recalled VSW. Hence, archives became important tools used by the researcher to awaken organizational memory. I found myself drawing on documents from the archives to trigger the memory of many of the participants which then brought forth a wider breadth of in-depth data.

The second methodological limitation involves the researcher's historical involvement as insider since 1999 with VSW. Because the women's movement in BC has often associated me with VSW and vice versa, it was imperative to clearly communicate that the research including the theoretical and methodological conclusions are the researcher's alone and not VSW's. This distinction is important for ensuring accountability, transparency, and respect. Other insider/outsider dilemmas included the researcher's ability to negotiate current or future tensions within the larger women's movement and VSW while engaging in this particular research.

It may be that some of the participants that I interviewed who had worked with me were not necessarily comfortable with answering some of the questions due to the relationship between themselves and the researcher in relation to power. This may have also played out regarding potential participants who chose not to be interviewed by the researcher due to similar power relations. For example, women who had been hired, trained, and mentored by the researcher may have felt obligated or possibly could have also withheld information as a response to the power dynamics between the researcher and the participants. In particular, there continue to be women who were/are part of the organization and who rely on the researcher as their primary employment reference. Additionally, I interviewed women who throughout their work history in the organization had also been evaluated by the researcher. Hence it must be recognized that the researcher held different levels of power within the organization. This realization deepened and furthered my understanding of why there were not sufficient Indigenous women participants particularly among those who I had worked with.

#### **Indigenous Research Participants and Researcher Colonial Dilemmas**

The lack of Indigenous women participants in this research is the third methodological limitation. One significant barrier in this study is the lack of narratives from Indigenous staff in permanent full-time positions. The majority of Indigenous women were hired and involved with the organization in leadership positions during the fourth VSW era in the mid-2000s. This was also the same era while I was a staff and Coordinating Collective member active in recruiting, hiring, training, and mentoring staff. My role was embedded with power which strived to facilitate Indigenous women's leadership role in VSW. Yet, such organizational power became an impediment in terms of Indigenous women's participation, especially those from the fourth era.

Clearly, power dynamics between myself and Indigenous women were reproduced and were further replicated during this research project because of their absence. I attempted to locate and request interviews from 8 Indigenous women and 50% were available. I needed to further investigate and unpack the power relations at play. It is possible that such a research was not relevant to them at this particular time in their lives and struggles. Overall, it speaks to the organization's as well as the researcher's positionalities in regards to Indigenous relations and nationalist colonial discourses. This

is a significant and disappointing gap both within the organization and the research. But why and how does this relate and interconnect with the research questions?

During the first era of the organization, there was only one Indigenous woman and she was one of the founding Board members of VSW, she remained on the Executive until 1974.<sup>75</sup> In addition, Delixueiya, one of the participants in this research was involved in some capacity with VSW during the early 1970s as a member of the Indian Homemakers Association. Vancouver Status of Women's first Indigenous staff was hired in 1987-1988 as a part time staff Grant Worker to research and organize around free trade and its economic, political, social and cultural impact on women.<sup>76</sup> She was hired again in 1993-1994 as Program Coordinator, now in a permanent position with full benefits under the Affirmative Action Policy. She then exited VSW in 1996, her position was replaced by the second Indigenous woman to be hired in a permanent position also under the Affirmative Action Policy.

The researcher attempted to recruit and interview Indigenous women she had worked with since 2000, particularly in the mid-2000. This was a very difficult process due to the inherent power relationships not only between the researcher and Indigenous women but also within the organization and the ongoing reproduction of hegemonic national discourses of nation-building in relation to Indigenous bodies, lands, and resources. The researcher had been involved with numerous hirings of Indigenous women from 2000 to 2008. The relationships that existed prior to the hirings as well as the relationships that developed during their employment within VSW impacted their participation in this research.

I began to reframe the research by further articulating that what may be more relevant to Indigenous women was not necessarily VSW but rather the colonial dispossession of Indigenous Peoples. I reflected on and invested in developing a better understanding of how feminist anti-racist organizing have been complicit in making Indigenous bodies invisible while also articulating the complicity in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and their histories. This realization for the researcher was deeply discomforting but ultimately was the push that was needed to examine the absence, silence and exclusion of Indigenous women not only within Vancouver Status of Women but also the larger women's movement.

By applying intersectional critical race feminist discourse analyses to the interviews and archives of this organization, I was able to draw on the works of numerous Indigenous and racialized

scholars who speak to this discomfort. In particular this brought me to a space of seeing the intersections of the nation-building process which continues upon the territories, lands, and bodies of Indigenous populations in Canada. But most importantly it brought forth the failures and complicity of not only feminists theorists/activists but also anti-racist theorists/activists in reproducing colonial relationships and anxieties with Indigenous bodies.

I became critical of such questions as: *who am I to hire, discipline, fire, and mediate Indigenous bodies in organizational social justice spaces?*<sup>77</sup> Often as a younger English/French speaking queer woman of colour, I stepped into these spaces because others had turned their backs. This research analysis has allowed me to better understand why Indigenous women particularly those that I had a relationship with were dismissive of being interviewed for this research on VSW. I attempt to articulate the reasons with the full understanding of the multiplicity of reasons but ultimately they all journey in the same stream of colonial power relations, struggles, and anxieties with/in the larger nation state. That moment of realization of anti-racist and postcolonial failures was the breaking point, a breaking of my spirit and heart.

Lawrence and Dua's (2005) writing on anti-racist feminism provides a critical stance, holding responsible social justice theorists and activists, including those within feminist movements and/or anti-racist movements, for our lack of capacity to centre Indigenous presence, knowledge, histories and resistance. They also demonstrate how this lack of capacity then intersects with our own production of knowledge, histories, resistance and presence vis-à-vis colonial encounters that took place and continue to take place within the hegemonic nation of Canada. The hegemonic nation of Canada is distinctively separate and opposite to Indigenous nationhood as discussed by Lawrence and Dua.

Thobani (2007; 2009) also highlights the complicity of immigrants and diaspora subjects who crave for home on Indigenous land. Here, foremost the construction of home is and remains violent on colonized/colonizing lands. This violence is further exasperated by differently situated immigrants and settlers. Lawrence and Dua draw on one example of anti-racist activists who demand and engage in discourses of "open the borders". Such a statement is loaded with every possible colonial encounter and has been and continues to be uncritical of the complexities and complicities regarding the theft of Indigenous lands. Immigrants like myself crave for *a home here, a home here* that has never been

allowed to be a home for the Indigenous population who historically have been *here*. By home I mean not only the feelings of home but also the concretizing of home in relation to space, property, symbols, entitlements and citizenship. Ultimately I come to the following question: how has this organization reproduced the same colonial relationships that have been consistently and continuously reinforced by discourses of the nation?

I also became overtly aware of additional power that continues to play out even after our bodies had already exited the organization such as my role in providing job references for many of the Indigenous women. I also understood that it may be that for some of the women, they did not want to jeopardize this complex relationship with multiple effects, including their livelihood. Additionally, due to effects of dispossession and colonization such as poverty, health concerns, employment discrimination and single-(grand)motherhood, that many Indigenous women's priority was economic survival. Several Indigenous women I worked with were providing the living wage to support not only themselves but their families and their extended families, as grandmothers and as mothers. What was I asking of Indigenous women as researcher, friend, past co-worker/Coordinating Collective member? And why? Can I ensure that this research does not replicate and reproduce power relations that have traditionally marked Indigenous bodies outside the frame of where we live and where we call home?

For many non-Indigenous women who worked in the organization, many described their involvement in the organization not primarily for economic reasons but rather for their commitments to the feminist movement or to a feminist organization. I am not saying that Indigenous women were not committed to feminist or social justice organizing in women's organizations, but rather what I am saying is that their priorities and livelihood as well as doing social justice organizing always intersected. It was something that was very real, and always very present, which I witnessed.

### **Critical Feminist Researcher Reflections**

As an insider to this research, I found myself learning and discovering the trajectory of Vancouver Status of Women's organizational culture and specific events which had not been known to me and others prior to such conversations. The experience of the participants differed based on their intersectional locations and backgrounds and experiences. This information was critical to formulating the *dialogic character* (Bakhtin, 1981) of the interviews, particularly because the narratives were produced through participant-researcher interaction, in collaboration. My history and presence within

the organization as well as the extensive archival research, provided the avenues for unique interactions between myself and the participants. Such interactions provided the foundation to facilitate and nurture the drawing out of information that would not necessarily have surfaced.

A unique dialogue was created between two insider subjects of VSW; myself and each participant involving power relations. I disclosed to each participant at the interview that my entry point into this research revolved around my own reflexivity regarding my navigation, abuse, and equalizing of power within VSW. It is through this dialogic character of interviews, that both the researcher's and participant's reflexivities interacted to produce a unique narrative. It is this critical establishment of rapport and dialogue, which first, reassured the participant that she was not the object of study but rather VSW, and second, that their contributions and presence at VSW was being acknowledged, valued and given the space in herstories. As a feminist researcher employing a self reflexive intersectional feminist discourse analysis, what was most appreciated was the fact that I cared to know and to learn from the participant. Furthermore, our histories as women, as feminists, as activists, and as agents of social change intersected at that moment in time to demonstrate our investments in VSW.

As researcher, I found myself being continuously constructed as *the knower of VSW* by the participants. Smith (1992) explains that the knower is active and that "she is at work; she is connected with particular other people in various ways....Activities, feelings, [and] experiences hook her into extended social relations linking activities to those of other people and in ways beyond her knowing" (p. 91). This is precisely my experience of the research process as both *insider* and *outsider within* because it highlights my interactions and the social relations that manifested. Smith (1992) further explains that knowers explore and explicate both what they do and not know in regards to the social relations within VSW's organizational trajectory. This involves my engagement with individual knowers who shaped and reshaped my own understanding during this research.

The humbling experience of the researcher to acknowledge when one's methodology is challenged regarding women differently positioned from the researcher was fundamental to a critical intersectional engagement in feminist research. By examining how my involvement in VSW interacts with the participants in specific and complex ways, I was better able to understand the materialization of relationships at play within the methodology of this research. Such power relations

were at play in the politics of contacting, recruiting, interviewing, interpreting and analyzing differently positioned feminists across race, class, sexuality, age and migration history. As Ahmed et al. (2006) state "not only is research 'located' in a specific history, institution and field, but so too are researchers....it is important to note that locations do not simply provide us with a ground. Where and how we are located is shaped by multiple categories, as well as histories of arrival" (p. 24).

As an insider as well as outsider researcher, it is necessary for me to reflect on the complexities and tensions which arise due to participant and researcher membership in the women's or social justice movements. Achebe (2002), Borland (1991) and Kennedy (1996) emphasize the need to situate one's self as researcher and identify our complex positionalities while being self-reflexive as we negotiate our insider/outsider implications. Wishart (1997) also advises the researcher to investigate the personal agendas at play both by participants and researchers, since historical representation is selective. As the researcher, I strived to be self-reflexive by acknowledging the interactive processes that came alive during an interview between the participant and myself in relation to our intersectional identities. My aim was to be reflexive by carefully articulating the tensions, anxieties, intersectionalities and complexities that pour out of the primary texts and the oral histories. As explained by Borland (1991) feminist researchers must engage in methodology discourses, which reflect on assumptions, misconceptions, successes/failures of the interview process, unexpected results during the interview. Therefore, it is critical to recognize that selectivity and subjectivity permeate the writing of historical narratives from the selection of facts to the combining of those facts into a story.

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<sup>58</sup> Collins (1999) explains that the marginality experienced by black women intellectuals plays a dual role and she refers to hooks' explanation that when we live on the edge and see the world from both locations of insider and outsider, we are able to understand both.

<sup>59</sup> Lal (1999) situates herself as a researcher-in-practice by addressing the multiple locations in the production of her identity as a Third World woman and as a United States-based graduate student returning *home* to India.

<sup>60</sup> Katila and Merilainen (2002) discuss their methodological choice of placing themselves in the centre of research and argue that this produces more informed and objective researchers.

<sup>61</sup> Kirsh (1999) highlights the following questions: can researchers understand and represent the experiences of others without misrepresenting, misappropriating, or distorting their realities? What are researchers' responsibilities toward their research participants and toward their readers?

<sup>62</sup> Borland (1991) evaluates the research process and suggests that she should have arranged for a second session with her grandmother to listen to the interview tapes and allow her grandmother to draw out the meanings in dialogue with Borland.

<sup>63</sup> The Rare Books and Special Collections at UBC (RBSC UBC) currently houses 60 boxes of VSW archival material.

<sup>64</sup> CBC Digital Archives on the RCSW can be accessed at [http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/rights\\_freedoms/topics/86-411/](http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/rights_freedoms/topics/86-411/).

<sup>65</sup> This cross-sectional design is retrospective as I collected data in the present yet I asked participants to recall events and experiences which took place at an earlier time in their lives. Hence the goal was for the researcher to analyze the recalled events.

<sup>66</sup> I acknowledge white women as differently positioned from each other.

<sup>67</sup> UI Top up Grants are discussed in Chapters 1 and 5.

<sup>68</sup> I acknowledge Indigenous women as differently positioned from each other.

<sup>69</sup> Indigenous to this Continent (ITTC).

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<sup>70</sup> For Letter of Consent & Consent Form see Appendix A.2.

<sup>71</sup> When in question, the researcher consulted with the participant regarding personal identifiers.

<sup>72</sup> See Lazar (2007) and Naples (2003) for more on feminist discourse analysis. Naples (2003) uses feminist discourse analysis "to reveal how the shifting patterns of gender, race, class, region, and other social structure forces, shape whose voices are represented and heard..." (p. 9). Lazar (2007) explains that feminist (critical) discourse analysis "aims to advance a rich and nuanced understanding of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining (hierarchically) gender social arrangements" (p. 141).

<sup>73</sup> One Indigenous staff was only hired to support her involvement with her Indigenous community work and not specifically for VSW.

<sup>74</sup> Complexity of class as it relates to what we were born into and how we grew up which is further mediated by our migration histories, sexuality, race, family status further complicate and shift our socio-economic survival or ability to thrive in a capitalist society.

<sup>75</sup> This past Board member was not available for an interview as she had passed away.

<sup>76</sup> A research publication was produced by the staff and she participated on behalf of VSW in Vancouver's Anti "Free" Trade Coalition which lobbied for changes at the federal level. (VSW Annual Report, 1987-1988).

<sup>77</sup> This is also reflective of my involvement and role at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre as a Personnel Committee member working with Indigenous staff.

## Chapter 4: The Making of The Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the Emergence of Vancouver Status of Women: Discourses on Nation-Building, Racialization, and Exclusion

*“What, exactly, is it [RCSW]? First of all, perhaps I should tell you what it is not. It is not a radical manifesto from Women’s Lib [Liberation]. It is much more than that”.<sup>78</sup>*

### The Royal Commission on the Status of Women

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (RCSW), embedded in liberal feminist ideology, is largely the landscape that influenced the (de)politicizing of the mainstream women's movement in Canada since the 1970s. Some women and their communities have benefited from this Commission, but we cannot deny that this Commission also engaged in essentialism and exclusion of the needs of women who are often constructed as "Other" (Arscott, 1996; St. Lewis, 1997; Turpel-Lafond, 1997). The thoughts and recommendations of the Commission predominately represented the needs and voices of white heterosexual Anglophone and Francophone<sup>79</sup> able-bodied middle-class women who were most visible in the Canadian women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Freeman, 2002). I argue that the RCSW is both a counter-hegemonic and a hegemonic record, as it challenges state legislated gender oppression while reinforcing processes of exclusion for marginalized groups of women, in particular racialized women across interlocking identities.

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women was set up on February 16, 1967 after decades of lobbying by 'women' across Canada and specifically due to the pressure experienced by the minority Liberal government from white Anglophone women (Calixte, Johnson & Motapanyane, 2005; Freeman, 2002). Seven Commissioners were appointed, five women and two men, to travel across Canada to hear the issues and concerns related to the political, economic, and legal status of women (see Figure 4.1).<sup>80</sup> For Canada, this would be the first Royal Commission in its history to have a woman Chair, the Ottawa journalist and broadcaster Florence Bird (Bird, 1997).<sup>81</sup> The Commission's mandate was to investigate and report on all matters pertaining to the status of women in Canada and to recommend what steps might be taken by the Federal government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society (RCSW, 1970).

**Figure 4.1: Members of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women**



Note: From left, standing, Prof. Jacques Henripin of Montréal; Prof. Jeanne Lapointe of Laval University; Lola Lange, Alberta farm unionist; Dr. John Humphrey, Montreal lawyer. Seated, from left, Miss Elsie MacGill, an engineer from Toronto; Mrs. Florence Bird, Ottawa journalist and Chair of the Commission. Judge Doris Ogilvie of Fredericton is not present. *The Montreal Star*, 10 June 1968.

The Commission called for presentations of briefs from individuals and organizations by using a brochure in English and French, which was circulated in mainstream supermarkets, libraries, associations, and the media across Canada. In April 1968, the Commissioners engaged in the task of setting up public hearings for the next 6 months in 14 cities across the country. The Commission received 468 briefs and 1,000 letters of opinion, and also heard from 890 witnesses for 37 days (Bird, 1997). On February 8, 1970 the 488-page RCSW Report was tabled in the House of Commons providing the government with 167 recommendations of which 122 were within federal jurisdiction and the remainder within provincial and territorial jurisdictions. The RCSW Report recommendations focused on the elimination of sexual inequality in Canada by specifically focusing on the following: equal pay for work of equal value, maternity leave, day care, birth control, family law, educational opportunities, access of women to managerial positions, part-time work, and pensions.

The RCSW Report identified the following key areas: the right to choose homemaking or paid

unemployment; the shared responsibility for child care among mothers, fathers, and society at large; the special treatment of women relating to their maternity; and the special treatment of women to help them overcome the adverse effects of discriminatory practices in Canadian society (RCSW, 1970). The Report's recommendations were based on fundamental liberal feminist principles which assumed that equality of opportunity for Canadian women was possible, desirable and necessary.<sup>82</sup> The RCSW played a major role in defining the 'status of women' as a legitimate social problem. It focused attention on women's grievances, recommended changes to eliminate sexual inequality by means of social policy, and sparked the formation of several women's groups to advocate for implementation of the recommendations. Vancouver Status of Women was one of such women's groups formed in 1971 with the specific mandate of ensuring that the recommendations of the Report were implemented.

In this chapter I critically analyze the *making* of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women *against the grain* in relation to discourses of nation-building, racialization and exclusion while situating the *birth* of Vancouver Status of Women' as emerging from the RCSW. By examining the Royal Commission as a colonial archive and site of contested knowledge, I engage in discourses of power relations that are inscribed within this archival document. The making of the Commission is the making of colonial knowledge as it produced and reproduced privileged social categories. My own historical and current positionality within the women's movement locally, provincially, and nationally allowed me to identify important historical and current tensions and anxieties of the social movements.

The emergence of VSW from the RCSW is the precise site which demonstrates the explicit complicity of privileged feminists' role in reproducing nation-building discourses of exclusions and racialization while simultaneously contesting specific discourses of marginalization as experienced by white women. By examining and interrogating the exclusions, essentialisms, and silences of the RCSW, we can deepen our understanding of how VSW became embedded within such ideologies and discourses during the first two decades. In particular, by applying an intersectional critical race feminist analysis to the voices and concerns of racialized women in the RCSW, this chapter illustrates how the RCSW embraced discourses of essentialism and false unity by erasing the positionalities of racialized women. Racialized women occupy multiple simultaneous locations across queerness, indigeneity, racialization, ethnicity/band/tribal membership, class, age, geography, "Indian" status,

citizenship status, birthplace, presence of children, motherhood, extended family, marital status, language, occupational status, employment status, education, and other specific experiences. I demonstrate later in this chapter that in actuality, when the racialized are constructed in the RCSW, it is only within limited points of entry - gender and race - and identity - “Indian” or “immigrant” (St. Lewis, 1997).

My entry point into this examination begins with the following questions: did the Royal Commission further marginalize the visibility, voices, and needs of racialized women in Canada? How do discourses of citizenship, belonging, and nation-building become constructed during the RCSW era of 1967 to 1971? What have been the implications for the mainstream women’s movement and specifically on an organization such as VSW? Did the RCSW contribute to deepening essentialism and impeding the recognition of difference, diversity, multiplicity, fluidity, and complexity amongst women in Canada? How much of the content and issues expressed in the briefs regarding Indigenous women and racialized immigrant women were expressed in recommendations to the State? Many of these questions are answered through archival research and interviews conducted within this research. The answers allow us to articulate how such responses became ingrained within VSW and its organizational culture, particularly during the first two decades.

When studying the RCSW, it is best to understand the archive by moving away from the “archive as-source to archive as-subject” (Stoler, 2002, p. 87). Hence, this chapter *reads* the RCSW era from 1967-1971 as not merely a site of knowledge retrieval but also to examine it as a site of knowledge production and contested knowledge. Further, such discourses must be contextualized within specific time, place, and space as they are “critical features of colonial politics and state power” (Stoler, 2002, p. 87). In particular, I question the making of colonial knowledge within this Report and how it upholds the foundation of colonial European white authority and supremacy. I propose to re-read these archives and engage in oral histories with women who lived during the era of the RCSW from 1967-1971.

What discursive processes come alive when Indigenous women and women of colour present their briefs to state-sponsored Commissioners? These state representatives act as colonial authorities determining recommendations that further translate into policy. This chapter identifies the possibilities that shaped what could be written, what warranted repetition, what competencies were

rewarded, what stories could not be told, and what could not be said. Selective forgetting and selective recollections are also present when writing a colonial archive such as the Royal Commission Report. Were there briefs and presentations classified as matters of state security or political subversion against the state? Did any of the briefs or hearings discuss issues of violence, police brutality, queer bashing, homophobia, harassment by the state via immigration, and other information considered 'out of place'? As I engage with this research, I analyze the social history of scientific truths that organize power relations which have been enjoyed and reserved for those considered nation-builders of the Canadian State, in particular heterosexual able-bodied middle-class white women who spoke French/English.

### **Political Landscape and Context**

The Royal Commission emerged under Prime Minister Lester Pearson's minority Liberal government with significant pressures from the liberal Anglophone white feminist movement, particularly in response to a campaign mounted by an ad hoc committee of 32 women's groups (Bird, 1997; Freeman, 2002). The campaign lasted 6 months and was led by Ontario activist Laura Sabia, then, the president of the Canadian Federation of University Women.<sup>83</sup> In 1968, Pearson resigned and on April 6, 1968, Pierre Trudeau became the next Prime Minister winning a majority government. During the 1960s, Canada's post-war economy thrived, and largely produced the landscape for white middle class women to lobby for women's economic rights to work outside of the home and to have equal opportunity. Internationally, women in many countries were lobbying the United Nations to organize the first women's conference, which took place in Mexico City in 1975.

The RCSW era also saw the beginning of revisions to the Indian Act of 1951 due to much lobbying by Indigenous organizations concerned with deplorable living conditions, unemployment, poor health, residential schools, treaty rights and land claims. Yet, the racist and sexist legislated discrimination against Indigenous women who married non-status men losing all their birthrights and band membership remained firmly intact. This legislation was only partly revised in 1985 by Bill C-31, 15 years after the RCSW's recommendation #59 which stated, "we recommend that the Indian Act be amended to allow an Indian woman upon marriage to a non-Indian to (a) retain her Indian status and (b) transmit Indian status to her children" (RCSW, 1970, p. 238).<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, Indigenous Peoples in Canada were only granted federal voting rights in 1960. During the 1960s and 1970s, the government

continued to work within a generic definition of the “Indian” assuming that white aspirations were the same for Indigenous Peoples, as for white subjects (Freeman, 2002; Turpel-Lafond, 1997). The late 1960s was the beginning process of phasing out residential schools, with the last one closing in 1983 in British Columbia. The colonial education system continued to reinforce the inferiority of the “Indian” and the superiority of the “white European” while particularly streaming Indigenous girls as discussed by Freeman (2002) into servitude/service occupations such as nurse’s aide, hairdresser, or domestic worker.

The Immigration Act of 1952 was in effect in the 1960s which emphasized restrictions of entry into the country based on nationality, ethnic group, occupation, class or geographical area of origin, as well as peculiar customs and habits (Abu-Laban, 1998). In addition, the Act could exclude those considered to be unsuitable to the climate, economics, and social characteristics of Canada, hence assuming the inability to “readily assimilate or assume the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship” (Abu-Laban, 1997, p. 73). In 1966, Prime Minister Pearson introduced the White Paper to propose increased immigration due to the shortage of skilled workers and the need to protect the nation’s economic interests by exploring new sources of well-qualified immigrants. Consequently, we witness the further interlocking economic determinants of immigration and employment policies by bringing forth the point system, which was introduced in 1967 (Abu-Laban, 1997).

Several factors influence the introduction of these national policies of the late 60s and early 70s. By situating these policies, we are better able to understand how they were State mechanisms responding to national anxieties. In particular, the mid-1960s reflected increased English-French conflict and tension. Eve Haque’s (2005) research examines the federal government’s attempt to create a national policy of unity based on multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. Specifically Haque examines the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism<sup>85</sup> (1963-1969) as a “national formulation for the racial ordering of difference and belonging through language” which further reproduces hierarchies of belonging and citizenship within discourses of the racialized Other (Haque, 2005, p. ii). She argues that the Official Languages Act of 1969 and the Multicultural Policy of 1971 are embedded in the “elision and erasure of substantive contestation from both Aboriginal communities and ‘Other ethnic groups’ while centering the ‘two founding races’, French and English” (p. ii). Most importantly these national policies ensured the erasure of Indigenous cultures and languages

that fall outside national discourses of legitimized language and culture. This racial erasure and exclusion of racialized groups in Canada through the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism took place simultaneously with the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

Additionally, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act has largely been constructed as a policy for tolerance, accommodation and acceptance. It is precisely these words which sustain the nation as imaginary, existing and remaining superior against Otherness. As Ahmed (2000) explains, "such political documents are important instances in the forming of the national imaginary: as they describe the nation, they actively produced," while constructing the *we* of the nation (p. 102). She explains that the 'we' does not eradicate cultural differences but rather emerges from it. Multiculturalism remains contested as a process and policy, while also requiring specific negotiations within the nation. It is a mechanism that is presented as revaluing marginalized cultures, by promoting differences which have traditionally not been accommodated within official discourses of nationhood (Gunew, 1994, p. 5).

Out of these Royal Commissions discussed above emerged a nationalistic model of citizenship participation. These concurrent Royal Commissions and legislative changes in the 1960s involving immigration, the Indian Act, multiculturalism, bilingualism, and the status of women interacted to reproduce national discourses of Othering, racialization, exclusion and essentialism. Most importantly, discourses of difference embedded in these national policies become signifiers of what enables the nation to be. I argue that these Royal Commissions as instigated by the nation reproduced a racialized hierarchy of not only belonging and citizenship rights but also of national entitlement.<sup>86</sup>

### **Royal Commissions as Nation-Building Colonial Projects**

While studying the RCSW era, it is critical to understand the role of Royal Commissions "as stories that states tell themselves" (Stoler, 2002, p. 103). As discussed earlier, the Royal Commission is considered to be a colonial archive that organized knowledge, rearranged categories and appointed state officials as creators of knowledge. The RCSW reflected colonial, patriarchal and capitalist anxieties - especially testimonies unsettling to the security of white and male privilege within discourses of the imagined community (Anderson, 1991). White middle-class heterosexual able-bodied women who lobbied for the RCSW were considered worthy of state interests and state expense (Stoler,

2002). Furthermore, such hegemonic discourses translated into state policies and justified state funding eligibility. According to Stoler (2002):

When nothing else works and no decision can be reached, appoint a commission was a favourite response of colonial authorities. But commissions were not just pauses in policy and tactics of delay. Like statistics, they help determine the character of social facts and produced new truths as they produced new social realities. They were responses to crisis that generated increased anxiety, substantiating the reality of that crisis itself. (p. 104)

Stoler (2002) further argues, “commissions in turn affirmed the state’s authority to make judgments about what was in society’s collective and moral good” (p. 106). How did the Royal Commission bring validation and credibility to what it had mapped in the Report while creating processes of inclusion and exclusion for the future? How did the Report present the social practices of Indigenous women and “immigrant” women, which further contributed to processes of racialization? In order to understand the RCSW as an archive, it is critical to understand the institutions that it served. To better comprehend how decisions are made and how colonial histories are written and sustained, one must ask significant questions such as - *what subjects were cross referenced, what parts were rewritten, and what quotations were cited?*

Lee and Cardinal’s (1998) research focuses on the effects of nationalism on the Canadian feminist movement, its political culture and strategies. They argue that English/Anglo Canadian nationalism has largely mediated the mainstream women’s movement which has remained grounded in neo-conservative national narratives. These hegemonic nationalizing narratives crystallize a national feminist agenda, that marginalizes certain issues and groups of people who do not belong to the *imagined community*. “The feminist movement is not situated outside Anglo-Canadian hegemony but, as a hegemonic project itself, is located within discourses and practices of hegemonic nationalism” (Lee & Cardinal, 1998, p. 217). The construction of a national voice for women brings forward the nationalizing desire to unify all women under a single Anglo-Canadian banner. This national voice for women is also represented during the era of the Royal Commission and translated into achieved gains for white, Anglophone, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied women who were seen as *belonging* to the national community. Privileged women were further granted entitlements at the expense of women who are in the margins or who stand outside the imagined national community.

## Discourses of Exclusion, Essentialism, and Racialization

The majority of the submissions and appearances to the Royal Commission were by white middle class women who brought forth concerns regarding equal pay, marital property, abortion, access to birth control, and the lack of childcare services. The emphasis on equal opportunity with white men by the liberal feminist movement did not challenge the historical, systemic and institutional intersectional structures of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism. Turpel-Lafond's (1997) article examines the Royal Commission's misrepresentation and essentializing of Indigenous women and their concerns and needs. She explains that 'equality' is not necessarily the most important or central organizing political or social concept in Indigenous communities.<sup>87</sup> Turpel-Lafond (1997) makes contributions to discourses of intersectionalities by explaining that complex interpretations and concerns cannot be analyzed only through gender as an isolated category. She brings to the forefront the interlocking nature of her experience as an Indigenous woman while critically challenging the notion of 'equality':

To look only to an objective of equality with men is clearly insufficient for First Nation women's struggles and continued identities because it cannot encompass our aspirations to become as distinct, albeit dynamic, cultures. I cannot separate my gender from my culture. I am not a woman at some times and a Cree at others. (Turpel-Lafond, 1997, p. 72)

The Royal Commission, according to Turpel-Lafond, was disappointing as it engaged in paternalistic attempts to 'help' Indigenous women in Canada while marginalizing the monolithic 'Indian'. She also points out that no Indigenous person sat as a Commissioner nor staffed any of the studies on Indigenous Peoples. Jacques Henripin, one of the Commissioners is acknowledged by Turpel-Lafond as one who was genuinely concerned with the conditions and situations of Indigenous women to the extent that he was capable of. In a separate submission Henripin suggested:

The privations endured by (First Nations) people in many areas - health, education, standards of living - are shocking. Undoubtedly, we all feel that every means should be taken to improve conditions for this neglected group of Canadians. However, the subject is outside the Commission's terms of reference. Furthermore, the Commission is not qualified to deal with the complex problems which arise when attempting to introduce social and economic changes in cultures which are so very different from ours. *Goodwill in these matters is often, and sometimes quite rightly, interpreted as a form of paternalism or as a more or less conscious attempt to destroy these cultures.* I very much fear that some of the recommendations (Nos. 90-97) advanced by the Commission in this section may have been drawn up a little too hastily. (Turpel-Lafond, 1997, p. 74)

Turpel-Lafond recognizes the worthiness of the Report but considers it to be inadequate as it was not able to seriously consider the concerns of Indigenous women in Canada.

In her book, *The Satellite Sex*, Freeman (2001) analyzes media constructions of several Indigenous women presenters to the Commissioners. One of the most powerful briefs, presented by the Alberta Native Women's Conference, shifted the discourse of white women's concern regarding equal pay and day care towards Indigenous women's concern regarding health care, education, poverty, residential schools, and housing. This particular brief made a strong demand affirming Indigenous women's right to self-determination and agency. The brief presenters discussed how:

They were tired of federal interferences in their lives and of seeing their families torn apart when their children were sent to residential schools away from their reserves/villages while having their language and heritage being stripped away from them...They asked for better living conditions on the reserves...for halfway houses in the city and specified that they should be run by 'Indian counselors... otherwise it will be just another do good program'. (Freeman, 2001, p. 194)

Another brief was presented by Mrs. Sam Lavallee (Mary Ann) to the Commission on May 3, 1968 (CBC Archives). Mary Ann Lavallee from the Cowessess Reserve speaks to the struggles and conditions of Indigenous women on reserve. This is the only clip by an Indigenous woman on the RCSW CBC Digital Archives website that is accessible for viewing by the general public. It is also apparent that this particular brief by an Indigenous woman was chosen to represent the one voice and struggle of Indigenous women during the RCSW era. It clearly demonstrates liberal discourse palatability and constructs the token generic voice of the 'Indian woman'. CBC reporter Ed Reid described Mary Ann Lavallee, from the Cowessess Reserve in Regina, as "the short Indian woman in the simple, purple dress" (CBC Digital Archives, RCSW).<sup>88</sup> Lavallee surprised the CBC reporter when Reid commented to her that 'it must have taken alot of work to write it' and she responded "no...I wrote it last night, I told the truth".<sup>89</sup> Reid describes Lavallee's speech as, "the most eloquent brief of the week...it as a fighting speech" and that "many women in the audience were in tears"<sup>90</sup>. I argue that Lavallee's speech embodied some of the liberal expressions that were familiar to the white women present at the hearing. Below is a section of her brief:

Ladies and gentlemen, what I will say concerns the people of the reserves but particularly the Indian women. As Canada lit a flame to light the way to her centennial year, may this brief presented to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women light a flame for native women, to light the way for her emancipation, a recognition and acceptance as an individual on her own merit. As an ally and partner for the struggle for human rights for the Indian and Eskimo and Metis. And last but not least it is secretly hoped that this brief and the moral support it can earn will help open the way for Indian man, to give to Indian woman the dignity and respect and recognition which is hers by virtue of birth, by virtue of being a wife and mother, and individual, and by virtue of 20th-century standards.<sup>91</sup>

At least two briefs by Indigenous women were presented to the Commissioners which focused on the exclusion of birthrights embedded in the Indian Act. A delegation of 30 Mohawk women argued that the Act revoked from them and their children treaty status if they married non-status men (see Figure 4.2). This group of women included Charlene Bourque, a 15 year old mixed-raced young woman, who was constructed by mainstream media "as a youthful advocate of Aboriginal pride" as well as an "Indian princess" (Freeman, 2001, p. 197). During the proceeding she wore a headband as did the other delegates, and they were described as "sporting headbands and feathers" (Freeman, p. 197). Again, demonstrated here is the reproduction of nationalist discourses of the 'Indian Other' as inferior or exotic.

**Figure 4.2: Mohawk Women Presenting Brief 245 to the Commission**



Note. Mohawk women addressing the Commission. *The Ottawa Citizen*, 3 October 1968.

Much of the hegemonic media discourses on the Indigenous women's presentations focused on mainstream societies' concerns of high birthrates of illegitimate children, living common-law, multiple partners, young girls quitting school, pregnancies, health concerns, and hygiene within the 'Indian' communities.<sup>92</sup> The era of the RCSW largely reflected earlier discourses of the nation's anxieties regarding sexual and moral behavior and the need to save young women from moral decline (Sacco, 2002; Sangster, 1996; Valverde, 1991). Young Indigenous girls were constructed as *out of sexual*

control and engaging in promiscuity. There was clearly an absence and silence in acknowledging the presence and reinforcement of legislated poverty and exclusion experience by Indigenous communities. Here, it is clear that the RCSW as a colonial project entailed reproducing liberal ideologies of the social purity movement and desires of the 1920s and 1930s to enforce moral regulation upon poor racialized communities.

In Bird's (1997) article, *Reminiscences of the Commission Chair*, she shares her recollection as Chair during the Commission public hearings. She recalls one of the presentations in Vancouver by 17-year-old students from Templeton High School, who she describes as "exceedingly eloquent" and who "presented a brief prepared by 35 different ethnic groups. They were speaking on behalf of their mothers, who were immigrants and could not speak English much" (Bird, p. 189). The two high school students, Loredana d'Elia and Alida Bianchi, were refugees from the Italian-speaking area of Yugoslavia (see Figure 4.3) (Freeman, 1991).<sup>93</sup> These students requested English-language classes and technical training for their immigrant mothers so that they may access employment.

**Figure 4.3: Templeton High School Students Presenting Brief 275**



Note. Italian-Canadian girls and teachers. *The Vancouver Sun*, 19 April 1968. B. Kent, photographer.

It is important to take note that the majority of immigrant women who entered Canada in the postwar years until the late 1960s were predominately preferred immigrants from Europe and the United States. There were also those that were less desirable and who were not considered *white* or who experienced a process of racialization differently from Anglo Canadians (and also immigrants of

colour). These included the following groups of immigrants: Ukrainians, Poles, Jewish, Italians, Greeks, Irish, Romanians, Hungarians, Czechs and Germans (Knowles, 2007). These immigrants experienced unique processes of racialization imposed by Anglo dominance embedded in the material and discursive formation of the nation.<sup>94</sup>

Bird (1997) recalls one of the young women's comments to the Commissioners:

An immigrant woman is like a bird in a cage. If you let it out, it would not be able to survive. Our mothers cannot read English, and if they go into a store they do not know what to buy, what cans or what packages, and they are afraid of being laughed at. They cannot read the street names, or understand how to pronounce them. Something should be done to teach them the language when they arrived in Canada because they are perfectly intelligent, but they have to stay in the home and they know nothing about the customs of this new country which is going to be their country. (p. 190)

The majority of the media coverage regarding this brief stereotyped immigrant mothers, regardless of racial background and experience as "peasant stock, timid, isolated, differential to their husbands and desperately in need of education and training" (Freeman, 2001, p. 151). It is also important to recognize that immigrant women of colour such as the Japanese, South Asian and Chinese were already present within Canada even though they experienced immigration restrictions until 1967. Their presence although limited was entirely excluded from the discourse of immigrant women within the Royal Commission.

Discourses on violence were also omitted in the Report and has been heavily critiqued by anti-violence feminists. Bird (1997) explains and justifies this omission by stating:

We did not, however, hear as much about violence as people do today because it was not a subject that was discussed as openly as it is now. I myself, at a private, confidential meeting, heard a shocking story about violence against Inuit women perpetrated by men working on the Dew Line. After I told the commissioners about this, they decided that they had some doubts whether our terms of reference would justify our undertaking the study of such a complicated legal and moral issue. (p. 194)

The above omission not only discusses the absence of violence within the Report but it also demonstrates the complexities of how Inuit women's experiences of violence became invisible, omitted and disregarded due being constructed as "a complicated legal and moral issue".

St. Lewis' (1997) article, *The Entire Women: Immigrant and Visible Minority Women*, discusses the racialization processes which have shaped the way 'immigrant and visible minority women' have been constructed by the State, as well as how they see themselves within the Canadian State. Scholars have discussed their deep concern for how racialized women who occupy multiple identities have been constructed as the generic monolithic 'immigrant woman' (Lee & Cardinal, 1998; Ng, 1996;

St. Lewis, 1997).<sup>95</sup> The generic *woman* is a myth, asserts St. Lewis, a myth that has restricted the feminist movement by prioritizing gender over and above any other issue facing the community. St. Lewis' observation of the RCSW Report is one of exclusion, essentialism and unbelonging for the racialized immigrant woman. In particular, St. Lewis (1991) explains that the Commission reduced 'immigrant' women's concerns to language barriers while constructing a homogeneous group of people with "tremendous integration problems" (p. 245). Racialized female bodies are perceived to be restricted and disadvantaged solely due to their English language abilities, which then translates into deficits not only in terms of cognitive capabilities but also in relation to Hage's (2000) accumulation of national capital within the nation. Hence, racialized immigrant women are perceived to be not only lacking of national capital but also as unable to accumulate national capital.

It is additionally relevant to acknowledge the RCSW as heterocentric since it omitted and silenced lesbian, gay, transgendered, bisexual, and intersexed experiences and concerns (Arscott, 1996). According to Arscott (1996), the silence around queer experiences and realities was because "sexuality was considered a private matter at the time" (p. 111). During the era of the RCSW the Criminal Code was revised in 1969 which no longer viewed acts committed by two consenting adults in private to be gross indecency, hence removing *homosexual* acts from the Criminal Code. Heteronormativity was not questioned by the Commissioners, who according to Arscott were pre-occupied with ensuring that the recommendations were palatable enough for the House of Commons. By 1970, when the report was tabled, the House of Commons was composed of 264 men and one woman (Arscott, 1996). While Arscott's critiques are an important, it also fails to acknowledge the intersectionality of queerness and racialization.

Therefore, there are several instances where the Commissioners find that *the terms of reference* of the RCSW would not allow them to bring forth particular concerns impacting some of the most marginalized women. As mentioned earlier when discussing Turpel-Lafond's paper, it was also decided by the Commissioners that concerns related to Indigenous women's rights were not in the terms of reference of the RCSW. Hence, we witness three specific cases of omissions, anxieties, and silences regarding the experiences of violence and exclusion in relation to the intersectional realities of Indigenous women and queer women.

The content and issues expressed in the briefs regarding Indigenous and women of colour immigrant's struggles were largely absent in the report and its recommendations to the State. For example, of the 167 recommendations, only 8 recommendations focused specifically on 'Indian/Eskimo women' in relation to language/training (Recommendation 92-97)<sup>96</sup>, 'Indian' women retaining Indian Status (Recommendation 106)<sup>97</sup>, and Friendship Centres (Recommendation 137)<sup>98</sup>. The three recommendations which focused on 'immigrant women' were limited to issues of settlement/language training (Recommendations 88 and 89)<sup>99</sup> and citizenship/immigration (Recommendation 143)<sup>100</sup>.

There were a total of 40 studies prepared for the Royal Commission, of which only 11 were published and circulated. The studies prepared on racialized women in Canada included: *Eskimo Women in the Keewatin Region* (Jean Bruce); *The Changing Role of Canadian Indian Women* (Jim Lotz); *The Status of the Indian and Métis Women of Manitoba* (Nan Shipley); *Immigration and Citizenship Legislation Affecting Women in Canada* (Keith Eaton); *Immigrant Women in Canada* (Edith Ferguson); *Women Immigrants in Canada* (Freda Hawkins). Yet, the above 6 studies reflecting the conditions and status of Indigenous and 'immigrant women' in Canada remain unpublished. This further provides evidence of racialized omissions and silences that were identified as one of the many priorities of the Royal Commission.<sup>101</sup>

Laura Sabia, as mentioned earlier, a white woman activist who actively lobbied for the RCSW shares her thoughts about the Royal Commission.<sup>102</sup> Sabia's CBC interview was broadcasted on March 28, 1967 where she affirmed that Royal Commissions are not necessarily the end all or that they produce the best recommendations but rather that it would be an "educative force" bringing about a level of education that was necessary in Canadian society regarding women's status. As Sabia challenged systemic sexist discrimination, she also engaged in racializing women as *white* and the Other as non-white when she compared the "negro" to women. Sabia stated, "...you know, we women have accepted things that has been said about us no Negro would have ever accepted".<sup>103</sup> Such a statement not only reinforces essentialist notions of the *monolithic* woman in the Royal Commission but also that *the* woman of the RCSW was not a racialized (Black) women but a white woman. Again, this oral archive may appear to be counter-hegemonic but when reading it against the grain it only

reinforces notions of grand narratives of nationhood, which exclude the racialized Other. Where do Black women fit within the woman of the RCSW?<sup>104</sup>

This chapter demonstrates how essentialism was further reinforced through the RCSW era and Report which has further permeated Canadian history by homogenizing or constructing the generic 'woman', or 'immigrant woman' or 'Indian' woman while reinforcing processes of exclusion. The RCSW attempts to represent certain groups at a precise historical moment while failing to represent the intersectionalities and complexities within and across group experiences. Lee and Cardinal (1998), Turpel-Lafond (1997), and St. Lewis (1997), all critically speak to the dangers of essentialism in construction discourses of unbelonging and outsider. Higginbotham (1992) explains that the construction of the universal woman by white feminists has failed to see "white women's own investment and complicity in the oppression of other groups of men and women" (p. 255). Hence, racialized women continue to experience the consequences resulting from uncritical thinking of the monolithic 'Indian/Native' or 'immigrant woman' experience. It is important to critically examine the interworkings of multiple identities and experiences in the construction of the racialized Other while examining how contexts and landscapes have also been racialized.

The theoretical concept of *grand/master narrative of nationhood* emerges when studying the RCSW as it is embedded with a vision of history in relation to progress and civilizing within hegemonic voices, hence the Eurocentric colonial perspective. Furthermore it engages with discourses of who are the rightful nation builders and citizens of the state. As Stanley (2002) discusses, grand narratives are the mechanisms to reinforce a sense of belonging to the nation while constructing an imagined community. This imagined community is a homogeneous and collective entity which must be preserved. Both Stanley (2000) and Yu (2002) explain that grand narratives have sustained and reproduced racial exclusion as it excludes the histories, voices and experiences of the racialized by constructing the binary of outsider/insider and belonging/unbelonging.

The RCSW contests certain ideologies of grand narratives, as the status of women would be considered private history contributing to the fragmentation of Canadian history and would appear to not be worthy as public history within the grand narrative of nationhood. Yet, as Lee and Cardinal (1998) argue that such projects also engage in the shaping of national consciousness. Discourses of nation-building are reinforced by presenting the needs and specifically catering to women who are

constructed as *nation-builders* and who fit into the national identity of the rightful *Canadian* woman. Within this articulation process emerge discourses and constructions of inclusion/exclusion, citizen/non-citizen, belonging/non-belonging, which have long term implications for women who do not fit into the generic definition of woman represented in the Commission Report. Therefore, the diversity, complexity, and multiplicity of racialized women's intersectional identities become erased, invisible, denied, and rejected.

The racialization process reinforced and negotiated within the RCSW era is a vital theoretical concept in understanding how Indigenous women and women of colour were racialized. Racialization encompasses processes where certain attributes such as skin colour, language, birthplace, geography, history and cultural practices are given social and political significance as markers of difference.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, it is a process where "populations are constructed, differentiated, inferiorized, and excluded" (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 6). Higginbotham (1992) explains, "race is a highly contested representation of relations of power between social categories by which individuals are identified and identify themselves" (p. 253). Hence, the nation's trajectory of constructing the racialized Other has concrete implications and meanings that have been sustained by ideological hegemonic state mechanisms. Discourses on race have often subsumed other sets of social relations and therefore blurring and disguising as well as suppressing and negating the complexity of racialization. Higginbotham (1992) discusses the importance of examining the intersectionality of racialization in relation to sexuality, class, ability, and gender, while recognizing racialization processes as unstable, negotiated, shifting, and at times strategically constructed and reconstructed.

### **The Emergence and Making of Vancouver Status of Women**

At the time when the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was tabled in the House of Commons, only one woman, Grace MacInnis sat in the House of Commons.<sup>106</sup> Grace MacInnis (Member of Parliament for Vancouver-Kingsway) writes a letter dated December 9, 1970 to individual women and groups across Canada, including women in Vancouver, explaining that the RCSW Report was tabled in Parliament on December 7, 1970. MacInnis writes that the Report was excellent and will deeply impact the position of Canadian women, such as the recommendation to implement daycare centres. In particular, MacInnis explained:

Many other recommendations could be extremely useful in helping women to achieve the position of equality with men which is essential in today's world. As the only woman Member

now in the House of Commons, I am deeply concerned that Parliament may fail to give this matter the priority it needs. Your help in getting action is essential. Many women's groups appear before the Commission and presented their views. A strong and sustained campaign by your own and other organizations is crucial now for the success of the Report. As a beginning I would suggest a 'write-in' campaign as soon as Parliament reconvenes about mid-January. Letters and petitions should flood the office of the Prime Minister, House of Commons, Ottawa, urging legislations on the Report this session. And if your Member of Parliament needs conversion to the recommendations (I do not!) a letter to him would be useful as well.<sup>107</sup>

Also in the letter, MacInnis suggests that lobby letters should urge for the creation of a specific Minister of the Cabinet to consider the Report in its entirety and assign the responsibility for legislative action to the appropriate government departments. She states that it is imperative, "to press for immediate action to secure a program of day care centres as the first step in a broader scheme of child care as recommended by the Commission".<sup>108</sup> Access to childcare services and the provision of childcare centres was the single item most often requested by Canadian women in their briefs to the Royal Commission. MacInnis concludes the letter by emphasizing "the absolute necessity of action now...otherwise there is grave danger of this fine Report slipping into one of those forgotten filing cabinet drawers".<sup>109</sup>

In a document titled "*The Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. What exactly is it?*" The writer articulates:

The Commission adopted four principles, which underline many of its recommendations. First, women should be free to choose whether or not to work outside their homes. Secondly, the care of children should be shared by the mother, the father and society. Unless this shared responsibility is acknowledged and assumed, women cannot be accorded true equality. The third principle recognizes the fact that it is still women who bear the children - and no Royal Commission can change that. It proposed then, that society has a responsibility for women because of pregnancy and childbirth. They believe that special treatment related to maternity will always be necessary. The fourth principle is that in certain areas women will for a short period require special treatment to overcome the adverse effects of discriminatory practices.<sup>110</sup>

When considering the making of the RCSW and the conception of Vancouver Status of Women, it is helpful to engage with the archival data as well as narratives of women participants of this research to better inform such an analysis. By early 1971, women across the country began to organize around the RCSW Report, including women in the city of Vancouver. Laura, an interview participant, recalled submitting a brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Laura attended the Unitarian Church where she found out about the RCSW, the Unitarian Church was also the site where she made friendships which taught her about social change. She specifically recalled receiving a letter from Laura Sabia letting women know that the RCSW Report will soon be released

and to encourage women to start a group and work on promoting the recommendations of the Report. Due to strong encouragement from particular women within the nation, such as MacInnis and Sabia, Vancouver organized the first conference on the RCSW Report within a month of the Report being tabled.

On January 30th 1971, the Conference on the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was held at Hycroft of the University Women's Club of Vancouver, with Florence Bird as the keynote speaker.<sup>111</sup> The first president of VSW (1971-1972) wrote about VSW's formation in a document that she prepared as a proposal to instigate an Ottawa Status of Women:

The conference, which was jointly sponsored by the University of B.C. Centre for Continuing Education at the University Women's Club of Vancouver, attracted 300 women from most major women's organizations in B.C. At the close of the conference, those in attendance voted unanimously to set up an organization to press the government, both federal and provincial, for action on the Status of Women Report. Our objectives are: (1) to promote action on the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada; (2) to foster public knowledge of the rights and status of women in Canada; (3) to facilitate communication between individuals and groups concerned about the status of women.<sup>112</sup>

Barbara, a research participant, remembered the conference of January 30, 1971 included delegates from "traditional women's groups, everyone that you could imagine, a lot of anti-poverty groups... and very vocal...Aboriginal women...this was the first time they were all brought together, on the very right we had representatives of church groups, political groups, various women's groups that raised money for this event, and then the more radical". Both Barbara and Flo, research participants, recalled the participation of Rose Charlie<sup>113</sup> from the Indian Homemakers Association, and Hattie Ferguson,<sup>114</sup> of the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club (also known as the Indian Centre and later the Aboriginal Friendship Society).

A copy of Florence Bird's speech as well as the conference proceedings of January 30th, 1971 was immediately circulated after the conference to women's organizations, particularly those who attended the conference.<sup>115</sup> The circulation of Bird's speech was intended to "provide organizations with a unified approach to the status of women of Vancouver".<sup>116</sup> In Bird's speech she explains that the Commission was requested by 32 women's organizations which represented roughly 2 million people, they had lobbied for this Commission to Prime Minister Pearson. She goes on to explain about the Royal Commission and states "a Royal Commission is given precise instructions by the Government about what it is supposed to do and our instructions were as follows: "to inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada and make recommendations to the Federal Government in order to

give women equal opportunities with men in every aspect on Canadian society”.<sup>117</sup> She explained that there were nine specific focus areas of the Commission that was requested by the government: political rights of women; present/potential role of women in Canadian labour force (especially barriers for married women); skills and education of women including retraining for married women to re-enter professional/skilled employment; laws/regulations of labour laws as applicable to women including employment/promotion; taxation, marriage and divorce, criminal law, immigration and citizenship.<sup>118</sup>

Based on Bird’s articulation of the RCSW, we better understand how VSW prioritized these issues for the next 10 years during VSW’s first era.<sup>119</sup> This was further reinforced and reproduced by funders and funder criteria which solidified liberal women’s ideologies in the movement that continue to be at play to this day. Bird also discusses the dominant liberal discourses of the Canadian/American housewife “...that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right and therefore we are committed to the principle...that there should be no differences” (p. 8). This would mean that men and women not only would have the same rights/freedoms but they would also share the same responsibilities, “you can’t have it both ways, you know. If you are going to have rights and freedoms, you also have responsibilities. There is no getting away from it” (p. 8-9). After Bird’s speech, a question and answer period followed. It does not appear that Bird spoke to concerns and issues from the Commission regarding Indigenous women, immigrant women, violence against women or lesbian/queer women.

Immigration and citizenship was also discussed in regards to the White Paper in the Conference proceedings “watch for white paper on immigration and citizenship currently before the federal cabinet; it may include some of the Royal Commission’s recommendations...the attitude that a man’s Canadian citizenship is more valuable than a woman’s should be eliminated”; and only one line stating that “discrimination against female Indians must be abolished”.<sup>120</sup> Interestingly, the discussion on Indian and immigrant women were minimal and further homogenized the generic Indian and immigrant woman while completely diversifying white women’s experiences of exclusion with the nation-state. Additionally, what appears to be ‘raced’ falls into this one category while what appears to be ‘white’ reinforces whiteness across categories.

Bird commented on group reports and stressed the need for everyone to read the RCSW

Report. Bird emphasized the importance “that people know the philosophy behind the recommendations and be versed in the arguments for the various proposals”.<sup>121</sup> During the afternoon of the Conference, resolutions were presented, discussed and brought to a vote. It was moved that the conference accept four Action Recommendations (164<sup>122</sup>, 165<sup>123</sup>, 166<sup>124</sup>, 167<sup>125</sup>) of the RCSW Report's Plan of Action which primarily focused on establishing the institutional mechanisms within governments to ensure accountability regarding the achievement of women's equality and human rights. It was also moved and passed that a telegram be sent to Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Bennett.<sup>126</sup> .

By the end of the conference on January 30, 1971, a Steering Committee was formed to “develop policy for action; coordinate action; involve women from all areas; and assist provincial and federal governments to implement the recommendations [and that] an ombudsman might investigate inequalities”.<sup>127</sup> The remainder of the Conference included discussions regarding suggestions/recommendations for the Steering Committee. Who should be invited to join the Steering Committee and how best to work together was discussed thoroughly. It was stressed that every attempt should be made to “represent the widest possible spectrum of groups - PTA [Parent-Teacher Associations], church and professional groups, welfare and poverty groups, unions and political organizations”.<sup>128</sup> Also noted:

Hopefully women can work together and support the causes of all women and not discriminate against groups like Women's lib on the basis of ideology or other differences. Several speakers said it was important....to reach out to other segments of society, for example, men's groups, because the change required is so fundamental that everyone must be involved.<sup>129</sup>

The Steering Committee was urged to mobilize broad public support via media, educational conferences, and seek support from political parties. Additionally, it was suggested that the public contribute ideas to the Steering Committee via an ombudsman. It was affirmed that this Steering Committee's aim was to unite BC women's groups to press for implementing the recommendations, and that “it should be ready to join with a national organization if one is formed”.<sup>130</sup>

Forty representatives from women's groups, anti-poverty groups, and political parties were invited to the follow up meeting on February 7, 1971, at the Vancouver Unitarian Church. At this first meeting women discussed the formation of the *Status of Women Action and Coordinating Council* (SWACC) as agreed at the conference and determined that its purpose was “(1) to coordinate and initiate study of the report; (2) to coordinate and initiate action for implementation of the

recommendations in the report".<sup>131</sup> Additionally, a temporary executive was elected which included a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and seven members at large. A document written by a President of VSW indicates:

The other women who were elected to the temporary executive that day were about evenly divided between middle-of-the-road working and club women and young activists. The conflicts that resulted from this mixture of people took several months to resolve, but I believe that this is a necessary part of the birth pangs which cannot be avoided if you want a group that is truly representative of all women.<sup>132</sup>

And there it was, the birth and emergence of Vancouver Status of Women. Initially, the organization was set up as the *Status of Women Action and Coordinating Council (SWACC)*, then changed to Status of Women Council (SOWC or SWC) and by July 1973 was registered as a non-profit society as *Vancouver Status of Women*.<sup>133</sup> Another follow-up meeting was organized on February 22, 1971, where it was decided that small action groups should be created and that they would meet on a regular basis. Each group would have an Action Group Coordinator and would focus on the following women's issues: daycare, family planning, equal employment opportunities, youth; working mothers and single mothers, consumer advertising, future of the family, self-education, strategy and action.

By March 11, 1971, the organization had a total of 83 members. The Ombudservice was fully in place with Rosemary Brown<sup>134</sup> as the first Ombudswoman which was initially a volunteer position. The Ombudswoman's Report of the March 11, 1971 Executive meeting minutes explained:

[The Ombudservice] works towards erasing inequities present in society presently affecting women, be they on a federal, provincial level or in the areas of business, academia [*sic*], etc... [and] towards gaining redress in cases of individual grievances and tie this in with the first function when possible. In all instances the individuals desire for privacy will be respected.<sup>135</sup>

Alice James, VSW second President describes the Ombudservice as "a watchdog on government. When women come in with complaints, there's usually some legal or civil service implication somewhere. We examined the legislation or legal issue closely, and act where we feel injustice exists" (*BC Affairs*, 1973, p. 17). The Ombudservice of VSW received phone calls daily relating to inequalities in the areas of employment, finances, citizenship and immigration, law and housing. The Ombudservice was seen as a mechanism for women to act on their own by lobbying for themselves as needed. It is clear that this service would then further translate into specific political action. One particular case demonstrating the Ombudservice implications by initiating action and change involves the radio station CJOR which engaged in sexist language while mocking women. VSW then urged advertisers to listen in and protest the program by writing complaints to the Canadian Radio-Television Commission

in Ottawa.<sup>136</sup>

By June 1971, the organization had begun to write its constitution and had elected a permanent executive "which included women from the University Women's Club, church groups, political parties, an anti-poverty group, a union executive, business and professional women with varied experience, a college professor, women's lib groups and four different races - white, black, Chinese and Canadian Indian".<sup>137</sup> Clearly serious attempts were made to ensure diverse representation of women across political organizing and race. Specifically, the Black woman referred to was Rosemary Brown as Ombudswoman, the Chinese woman was Carole Ann Soong responsible for education coordination and the Indigenous woman was Hattie Ferguson, responsible for program coordination.<sup>138</sup> The white women first elected on the executive included: Joan Wallace as President, Marianne Gilbert as Vice-President, Betsy Wood as Corresponding Secretary, Peggy Woods as Recording Secretary, Joyce Grey as Treasurer, Linda Rogers as Public Relations, Marilyn Dimeo as the Speakers Bureau, Phyllis Young as Finance, Marjorie Hartling as Membership, Ellen Whitaker for Newsletter, and Alice James for Research.<sup>139</sup>

As demonstrated above, VSW's initial mandate, purpose, and activities during its first era covering the first 10 years of its emergence, clearly came out of the RCSW and existed to ensure the implementation of the RCSW recommendations. These recommendations became the driving force for the organization in its first decade and it became a tangible purpose for applying for funding from the provincial and federal government.<sup>140</sup> A number of funding applications were submitted during those years to evaluate and assess the number of recommendations that had been implemented as a strategy to keep pressure on governments. For example, during Charlotte's interview, she recalled that VSW's first research project was funded by Secretary of State.<sup>141</sup> This research project, *Status, Anyone?*, was a survey of women's attitudes in Vancouver regarding women's issues as discussed in the RCSW. Charlotte emphasized that the research project grew directly out of the RCSW Report and was later published in a 12-page booklet, *Status, Anyone?*. Hence, the RCSW Report became the primary reason and focus of VSW's engagement with lobbying, public education and research on the issues identified in the Report. The entire organization's identity, purpose and ideology were absorbed within the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women Report and era.

Through this research I was able to interview six women who articulated their knowledge of the RCSW and the era in which it was embedded. These participants included Barbara, Laura, Flo, Charlotte, and Mary, who were middle-class educated women, and Sydney who identified as a working-class. Of the six women, one identified as a woman of colour, and one white woman identified as a lesbian. They had all received high levels of education at the university graduate level. Later cohorts of VSW who were interviewed did not recall any information on the history or making of RCSW except for how it was written into the mandate of Vancouver Status of Women.

When Barbara was asked about the RCSW, she responded:

I heard about the Royal Commission because I was a member of the University Women's Club...In each city that I was in, I joined the University Women's Club which was a good way to meet new people, when you're new to the city, and also to have certain intellectual conversation [*laughs*].

Barbara was a journalist, as was her mother, she graduated from the University of British Columbia and because of her relationship with print media, she had read about the RCSW in the newspaper, and recalled, "yeah, and I remember how the news media just ridiculed that Commission. Just awful". She explained that she was "a typical working mother that didn't have too much time. But one of my friends said they were having a hearing in our area of the city, and so she said let's go and hear it, so we went to the hearing".<sup>142</sup>

There are several intersecting sites which contribute to the making of VSW and the embedding of white liberal middle-class educated feminists' values and ideologies. As demonstrated through the archives and narratives, the intersecting sites are: The University Women's Club, UBC Continuing Studies, the Unitarian Church and the Liberal Party of Canada. These organizations can be seen as sites of challenging inequality as experienced by middle-class women who largely reflected women within the *mainstream liberation movement*. In particular, it is essential to recognize the heavy influence of the University Women's Club of Canada as well its Vancouver Branch which contributed to specific discourses of liberal feminist ideologies grounded in achieving and accumulating educational status. For example, Laura Sabia's position as the president of the Canadian University Women's Club as well as the participation of many of the founders of VSW as active members of the University Women's Club of Vancouver also intersects with the involvement of the University of British Columbia and the Unitarian Church as important contributing institutions in both the making of VSW and the nation.

Nation-building discourses rising from such institutional intersections highlight the processes of racialization including the lack of participation of Indigenous women and women of colour, and the lack of working-class/poor, queer, ability, citizenship, and immigrant struggles and analyses. By applying Hage's (2000) notion of accumulation of national capital and Thobani's (2007) theory of exaltation, I argue that the making of VSW was very much about the 'making of exaltation' and the accumulation of national capital for white middle-class women in regards to education and employment. Middle-class women of colour also benefited from this accumulation of national capital but differently. As Hage explains, there are those that are seen to *naturally* accumulate such national capital based on the *field of Whiteness* as national power. Yet, there are also those that only can accumulate national capital through processes of struggle and negotiations within the imagined *White fantasy* under the management of *natural* white national subjects. Hage (2000) explains:

...just as the dominant aim to naturalise the value of their capital, so they also attempt to naturalise their hold on it...While the naturalisation of the dominant capital works to undermine the legitimacy of any other aspiring capital, the naturalisation of the privileged hold the dominant group has on the dominant capital aims at creating symbolic barriers to its accumulation by the less capital-endowed groups...Regardless of how much national capital one accumulates, *how* one accumulates it will make an important difference to its capacity to be converted into national recognition and legitimacy". (p. 62)

Hence, I also argue that the accumulation of national capital further grants national entitlements and national belonging to white middle-class women while also creating the exalted national feminist of the nation.

To further advance Hage's framework of accumulation of nationalist capital and White fantasy, based on the narratives and archives of this research, I argue that middle-class white women and middle-class women of colour engaged in similar and distinct struggles towards White fantasy. Hage's analysis falls short of articulating Whiteness' in relation to gender, class, queerness, ability, and other social locations. In this particular case, differently positioned women struggled for women's equality, including white women, but nationalist discourses of imperialism dictate those that are entitled to legitimately accumulate such national capital. Thobani (2007) would agree that there is a distinct positioning of the white nationalist subject as exalted, granting such subjects not only (inter)national recognition and legitimacy, but also national entitlements which actively secure Whiteness with the nation and the State's institutions.

White middle-class heterosexual women's national institutions, such as the University Women's

Clubs, can therefore be described as institutions that struggled for women's rights, yet such struggles are founded on the accumulation of nationalist white entitlement. The RCSW Report was an important legitimizing national tool which affirmed liberal women's experiences of inequality in Canada and it provided organizations such as VSW the mechanisms to lobby for legislative changes and for national institutions to ensure such changes. Barbara explains that VSW was most preoccupied with getting laws changed, she recalled:

In the beginning we thought, oh we'll just do this for a few years...[*laughing*], and then we can go back to our regular activities [*laughing*]. We didn't know it was going to take a lifetime and more!. The focus is really on the Royal Commission Report, and its recommendations. We thought that was the place to start. And the two key recommendations that we worked on were getting an advisory council on the Status of Women and getting a Canadian Human Rights Act. See, all the provinces had passed Human Rights Act, but the Federal government hadn't. And most of the provincial ones weren't worth the paper they were written on.

Charlotte, another research participant, articulated the differences amongst the women involved in the early period of the organization based on their political ideologies which were stretched along the continuum of those that were more liberal and those that were more progressive. She also demonstrated how the Ombudservice impacted the organization by bringing forth and exposing the harsh realities of women's experiences. Charlotte explained:

Well it speaks to the difference between [women involved in VSW]...what I observed of the more liberal, political liberal women and other women from the University Women's Club. And a very fast...change when Rosemary came on board as the Ombudswoman...she brought, I believe, quite a different political angle to things. And as well, the Ombudservice, very quickly took VSW into the reality of women's lives-out of a Report [RCSW] and into the reality.

Charlotte further explained that although the RCSW Report did not speak to violence, VSW's Ombudservice exposed the overwhelming violence experienced by women, something the organization was not prepared for. Charlotte's continuing commitment to the RCSW is apparent when she responded to why the RCSW omitted the issue of violence against women:

Well it was-dealing with policy and legislation, it was dealing with what could be done in that particular field, so thinking back again to the Royal Commission Report and how it identified with or how...VSW identified with that, there was this sort of, I'll use the word *cohort* of women who really believed that all we needed to do was keep on getting legislation change, you know, keep on trying to change the laws and this kind of thing. And for sure, a lot of that work needed to be done.

The continuing discourse of justifying why some issues were included and why some were excluded becomes embedded in VSW's organizational culture. This is precisely what took place during the RCSW era, the state-sponsored Commissioners determined what would be included and what would not be included in the RCSW Report. Hence, a historical embedding of discourses of what was considered

legitimate, worthy, relevant and manageable was both invoked by the RCSW and VSW within liberal and nation-building aspirations.

### **RCSW Report Constructs VSW's Mandate as Legitimate**

A number of women interviewed discussed the Report's manifestations within the organization which I argue further embedded liberal nationalist ideologies within VSW. Charlotte identified the RCSW as "like milk toast", an all encompassing mechanism and strategic resource that pleased a large audience. As an organizer she would be invited on several speaking engagements or would often receive phone calls requesting information on women's issues. She emphasized that the RCSW Report was her primary apparatus to justify and validate the organization's actions, strategies and public education campaigns as it had been instigated and approved by a legitimate voice, the government of Canada. She explained:

The Royal Commission Report on the Status of Women, I got to hold it up and say: "This is government, this is approved, you know, and this document says that the care of the children is the responsibility of the mother and the father in the society, that was *revolutionary*. The care of the children was the *mother*, excuse me! Right? And that's something I would quote a lot when I'd say: "This is what the government actually says, these are the recommendations that we're working on." That really opened a lot of minds, doors in ordinary women. I considered myself to be a middle-class ordinary woman, so I was speaking to my sisters out there who hadn't yet been touched by the women's movement, so the Royal Commission Report was a really good way in for that kind of a discussion to occur.<sup>143</sup>

Another interview participant, Sydney, who joined the organization in 1975, reaffirmed that "the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was effectively as one of the staff members called it *our Bible*. Oh yeah, that was very important to us...it laid out every single point of concern that we could have, that we had at the moment". Hence, during the organization's first era, the RCSW was its "Bible" and "all encompassing apparatus" and the intersecting discourses surrounding this Report were also entrenched within the organization including its values, interactions, decisions, language, strategies, priorities, and responses. But most importantly, this process reproduced knowledge within the women's movement and this specific feminist organization which crystallized hegemonic nation-building discourses of essentialism, exclusion and racialization.

It is imperative to understand this initial era of Vancouver Status of Women because it helps us to further comprehend how we are continually haunted by liberal discourses of the nation. How these discourses then materialize and deploy themselves onto the bodies within such an organization as VSW must be examined. It is only through this process of analysis and articulation of the making of VSW

that we begin to consider how to engage in the process of unmaking nationalist spaces and discourses. Lovena, a racialized working-class lesbian who joined VSW as a full-time staff in 1999, further contributed to this analysis by expressing that VSW:

[VSW] is still living with the constraints of the origins of the organization. The constraints and the everyday struggle and the kinds of...the disjunction between where it started and where it is today. They're at odds. They're fighting again with each other, in the bodies of the women who are working [at VSW]."

As Lovena and I critically thought through how the RCSW era is continually being invoked within the organization of VSW, I added:

For me I continue to share with the women who came after me that we are part of the Royal Commission, we inherit that, we may not have agreed with parts of it or what happened, but it is part of our history and you have to learn to live with it, because then that's how you move from it. The distance gets further the moment we understand it and that it was part of trying to be in something mainstream...<sup>144</sup>

In 1975, VSW was a main organizer for the *Women Rally for Action* which took place in Victoria, British Columbia. Women Rally for Action was both a brief document presented to BC MLAs and a rally on March 22, 1976. On this particular day in March, hundreds of women from British Columbia converged in Victoria, it was described as "one of the most organized and large-scale action ever undertaken by the women's movement of B.C." (Women Rally for Action, p. iv).<sup>145</sup> One of the organizers, Sydney, highlighted the process of gathering women's issues across the province. What appeared to be a complete list of women's issues was contested during several community meetings.<sup>146</sup> Sydney disclosed how omissions were brought forth and the responses:

We have our great seminar and we're going through our issues that we've laid out [which] we got from every woman in the province. But I know this Native woman that I have brought in, because I've met her as a result of something else, I don't remember, and she's a great woman, and she stands up and says, '*you haven't talked about land claims*'. Well we never thought of that as a women's issue, but she is telling us that it is, so we don't know what to do, and we are huddled there as organizers... All right well, we'll have a meeting. And then another woman...stands up and says, '*there are no lesbian rights issues in this pamphlet!*' Well now we are panicked...so we said we'll have a meeting at the back there, and so we have a meeting in the back of the room with the Native woman and with [other woman], and so we immediately form a committee and we said, yes we've omitted them, but we've put them in and we add them to our stuff, and we get them into the lobbying. So we realized we just missed it.

This particular piece of Sydney's narrative highlights the process of not only constructing legitimate women's issues but also illegitimate issues that were not considered women's issues, such as *sexual orientation*. The dispossession of Indigenous women and theft of Indigenous lands were not seen as women's struggles, nor were lesbian issues. During the interview, Sydney explained:

The land claims was a surprise because we had violence against women, we had issues we thought would touch women from every culture, but we never thought land claims, which I *still* don't think is specifically a women's issue...but we let it go, but then the lesbian rights, definitely we missed it.

This further brings forth the complexity of adding issues as an attempt to be inclusive of all women across the province, but it did not necessarily signify that the BC women's movement was invested in the complex understanding which would validate such issues as women's issues. Such discourses of legitimization are further reproduced 34 years later during Sydney's interview when she explained that she *still* does not see land claims as a women's issue. This signifies to how deeply entrenched liberal colonial nation-building discourses are within the women's movement and the continuing inability to understand racialized women's histories and struggles as women's issues.

Sydney agreed that it was a complete oversight to have left out lesbian rights from the document and that this was definitely missed, and was therefore added as an addendum.<sup>147</sup> She discussed this in juxtaposition to land claims and engaged in what Fellows and Razack (1998) discuss as the race to innocence, where lesbian issues are seen as women's issues but not Indigenous women's experiences and struggles in relation to land claims. This illustrates the power of those who determine what is valid and legitimate based on their knowledge system and ideologies. This further dictated what would be the most important women's struggles worthy of lobbying and legislative changes. Unfortunately, lesbian issues were also constructed within whiteness and rarely considering racialized lesbians' experiences of exclusion. Sydney did state that everything possible was done to ensure even at the last minute that the omitted issues were included, "we didn't deny and argue, but we just had a meeting and got together and met with them and found it out and incorporated it in the lobbying".

Additional feedback trickled in from women across the province based on the omissions in the original distribution of the lobbying brief, the omitted issues included: transition houses, women in prison, women and mental health, health concerns for women, labour, and welfare. Feedback was received by the organizers and they included these issues in the form of Addenda which was later added in the reprinted brief lobby document, *Our Story* (Women Rally for Action, 1976). In *Our Story*, the organizing committee discussed how they integrated and responded to hundreds of women's feedback and suggestions for additions to the brief, they wrote:

...we decided to draw up an addendum to cover the issues we had previously neglected...On

March 21, 1976, all the lobbyists came together for a massive workshop to consolidate our knowledge on lobbying tactics. At the workshop, once more several issues were raised that had not been fully dealt with by the existing Brief and Addenda. That night seven more pages were drawn up... duplicated, and available for each lobby team by 8:00 a.m. the following morning, the day of the Rally.<sup>148</sup>

In particular, the *Native Indian Women of British Columbia* addendum that was added to the brief was submitted and written by the Indian Homemakers Association of BC. The addendum indicated that the Indian Homemakers Association recognized the living conditions of all women in the province and explicitly stated its solidarity with all women while recognizing the need to work together. It also discussed how Indigenous women have suffered in relation to poverty, discrimination, poor housing, medical services, nutrition, unemployment and education opportunities/advancement. It further stated:

We know that the new Minister of Labour and Indian Affairs...has commenced work on the Indian cut-off lands, but we have not been invited to meet with him concerning all of the other serious and urgent native Indian problems. We want a number of meetings with him so that he and the government will become aware and become ready to put forth policies and actions to make this 'Beautiful B.C.' a part of our feeling. British Columbia to most of the Indian people is a place of discrimination, poverty and injustice.<sup>149</sup>

Another example of exclusion of groups of women who have traditionally been left out of liberal feminist spaces and agendas is presented in Gene Errington's speech of October 29th, 2007. Gene Errington was Vancouver Status of Women's second Ombudswoman after Rosemary Brown. She joined the organization when she was recruited by Rosemary Brown, who had decided to run for the provincial nomination for a NDP riding. In her recent speech in 2007, Gene Errington explained the history of VSW and the RCSW:

It's the summer of 1971, a federal Royal Commission on the Status of Women had recently tabled it's huge report in Parliament with recommendations on almost every discriminatory aspect of women's lives. For the times it was a ground breaking event, a historical event - though it had a few major omissions. Bold and comprehensive on many issues from abortion to women in the military, the report left out a few things. For instance nothing was said about the extra problems of minority women, or of Lesbians, or of women with disabilities. *They just simply weren't on the radar in those days* [emphasis added], and for **their** particular issues (not being on the radar being one of them,) as well as others above and beyond those they shared with all of us, *they would have to start off on their own* [emphasis added] to bring attention to their problems, without even the kickstart of a federal government report.<sup>150</sup>

This is a powerful statement that articulates not only the exclusion of particular marginalized women and their struggles from VSW but also provides the justification for those whose issues were centred during the RCSW era. Such discourses of legitimization were further crystallized into VSW's mandate and priorities as a women's organization within the larger women's movement. Errington clearly

articulated that during the 1970s, certain issues were "not on the radar" and women impacted by such issues "would have to start off on their own". Hence signifying that Other women would have to organize outside the women's movement. Therefore, racialized women, lesbians, and women with disabilities needed to respond to their own struggles and take on their own battles. It is also worth noting here that the intersectional struggles of a racialized lesbian with a disability does not even enter the consciousness of such an era. What is important to question is why were these issues not on the radar and who had decided they would not be and why? Who is entitled to decide within the women's movement what is and what is not included and under what conditions? We can see the reproduction of similar omissions and exclusions from the Royal Commission on the Status Women taking place within VSW organizing and priorities during the first and second eras.

After reading Gene Errington's speech, I understood that in fact I am actually part of her history. I realize that my critiques of that particular era are precisely how such discourses of exclusion, racialization and belonging continue to be at play but most importantly that I am a continuation of their trajectory. As a past staff of the organization, I came to the realization that my participation, entitlement, and history with VSW makes me part of the Royal Commission legacy. I recall when training new staff and board members of VSW, I would clearly communicate that "we have inherited the history of Vancouver Status of Women, maybe we were not there in the early 1970s but it is still part of our history" (Bunjun, Fieldnotes). Therefore, we must own it, challenge it, and understand the making of it in relation to those that it served and those that it didn't across its organizational trajectory. This ultimately is the journey to embark on in order not to reproduce discourses of exclusion as constructed and reproduced by the nation.

Vancouver Status of Women also played a significant role in advocating for and supporting women's participation in electoral politics. By 1973, VSW was very involved in supporting and promoting women to make change through electoral political representation. Many of its members and executive members went on to run for different levels of government, including Rosemary Brown, Joan Wallace, and Phyllis Young. Laura, a research participant, discussed VSW's engagement with electoral politics in support of VSW members' campaigns during several provincial and federal elections in the early 1970s for both the Liberal and New Democrat Parties.

Some women who chose to run for provincial or federal election turned down the VSW's

endorsement. In a particular instance as discussed in the *BC Affairs* article, the candidate went on to lose the election. The candidate states that she understood that her loss was due to rejecting VSW's endorsement. She explains that she had not accepted VSW's support due to the belief that association with or from a women's liberation group would be harmful to her campaign. The article in *BC Affairs* concludes with a quote by Rosemary Brown, "the women's movement has really taken off. It is not just a city thing; there are many groups in the Interior now. It also operates at an international level. It has been an explosion. It would be stupid of a government, federal or provincial, to treat the women's movement lightly".<sup>151</sup> Therefore, not only did liberal feminists strongly believe that women's participation as MLA's or MPs would be significant to making legislative changes on behalf of women across Canada but that this would promote women's representation in electoral politics within Canada.

## Final Reflections

This chapter provided me with the opportunity to go back and look at the making of the Vancouver Status of Women through the making of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. By examining the Royal commission as a hegemonic document, I articulate the nation-building processes embedded within the liberal women's movement as brought forth from an intersectional critical race feminist discourse analysis of the archives and narratives. Such an analysis was used to examine the language and meanings that are ingrained in both texts and oral histories in the making of the RCSW era (1967-1971) and the *marking* of VSW while considering the reproduction of nation-building, racialization, and exclusion discourses. Both research methods interact to bring forth an increased breadth and depth in understanding the implications of this Royal Commission as a project of the colonial state.

This chapter captures VSW's *birth* within the women's movement as well as the nation. It's *birth* is ultimately through a project approved and sanctioned by Canada, a colonial nation-state, through the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. This Commission brings forth particular ideologies and priorities of *women* based on the accumulation of national capital. These ideologies and discourses regarding women's equality become the fabric of the making and marking of Vancouver Status of Women while constructing the imagined rightful feminist of the nation. National entitlements and belonging emerge and become crystallized within the culture of the organization particularly most reinforced within the first era of the organization.

What urges me to read this archive *against the grain* derives from my concern with the RCSW's historical implications for the current women's movement especially concerning racialized women from multiple locations and experiences of exclusion. By reading the RCSW and its making against the grain, we can fully engage in interrupting its contributions to processes of racialization, exclusion, and nation-building. Hence, this research allows me to immerse myself in the study and reflect on the voices of those who were denied, omitted, silenced and misrepresented. As I study this particular colonial history, I also realize that I do not have complete access to the past but only to accounts of that past. Therefore, the archival text of study and the oral interviews are specific accounts describing "only a fragment of what took place" (Wishart, 1997, p. 112).

Hence through this chapter, I argue that the RCSW era and VSW's emerging history were both and at times simultaneously subversive while also reproducing nation-building discourses. The RCSW Report further sustained hegemonic discourses of citizenship, belonging, and nation-building. It organized knowledge regarding women's issues, created and rearranged categories, and appointed state officials as creators of knowledge. The RCSW contributed to deepening essentialism and impeding the recognition of difference, diversity, multiplicity, fluidity, and complexity, within racialized communities. I conclude this chapter with the reaffirmation of my definition of the RCSW as a colonial archive that contributed to the marginalization and invisibility of the intersectional voices and needs of racialized women in Canada which was further transmitted to and crystallized within VSW. This chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of how state apparatus influence feminist organizations, hence, it is crucial for women's organizations to critically investigate and articulate their relations within national projects and nation-building.

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<sup>78</sup> RBSC UBC - 5-23: General - V.S.W. History, p. 1. Unknown author discussing the RCSW. The writer tells a brief history of RCSW and the emergence of VSW.

<sup>79</sup> Specifically, francophone women from le Federation des femmes de Quebec (FFQ).

<sup>80</sup> Commissioners of the RCSW were Jacques Henripin, professor of demography, Montréal; John Humphrey, professor of law, Montréal; Lola Lange, farmer and community activist, Claresholm, Alta; Jeanne Lapointe, professor of literature, Québec City; Elsie Gregory MACGILL, aeronautical engineer, Toronto; and Doris Ogilvie, judge, Fredericton, NB. (from: From: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0007674> July 11th, 2010).

<sup>81</sup> Florence Bird, senator, journalist, broadcaster, and author, was born in 1908 in Philadelphia and died in Ottawa in 1998. From 1942 to 1966 Bird was a news commentator for the CBC, also producing documentaries on women's rights and international affairs (The Canadian Encyclopedia).

<sup>82</sup> Liberal feminist principles and ideologies originates from liberal philosophy which was developed during the period of "Enlightenment" or the "Age of Reason" in the 17th and 18th centuries. Liberalism emerges at a time where democracy threatens monarchy as a form of government. The Enlightenment was also the age of colonialism and the beginnings of industrial capitalism in the Western world. From 1492 and onward, European nations actively undertook the conquest of many parts of the world for the lands and resources, particularly the Americas and the Caribbean. Liberal feminists take the core principles of liberalism and apply them to inequalities between men and women with a goal that women should be equally integrated into existing social, political, religious and economic institutions and that they should enjoy the same benefits that are accrued to men. Specifically, the liberal principles of rationality, meritocracy, equality of opportunities, and freedom of

choice are central to the development of liberal feminism while also commanding those that would fall outside such principles. For example, as Calixte, Johnson, and Montapanyane (2005) explain, "white women in Europe and the Americas might have seen hope in liberal ideas, but the status of Aboriginal and Inuit women within their own communities was particularly compromised by those acting on liberal democratic-but patriarchal and racist-ideas" (p. 5). Additionally, although the liberal feminist rhetoric of rationality challenged the dominant idea that women were not irrational by nature, it was also powerful in arguing that Indigenous Peoples, African slaves and other racialized Others were not capable of rational thought. An example of such an argument became entrenched in Canada as a nation and was legislated through the ongoing diminished economic, political and social status of the Indian Act of 1867 under white liberal democratic rule.

<sup>83</sup> "In April 1963, when Judy LaMarsh became Minister of National Health and Welfare in the Pearson Administration, she indicated to the Prime Minister the need for a public inquiry on the status of women in Canada similar to one which President Kennedy had established in the United States.... Although the subject was raised in the federal cabinet on 11 October 1965, according to LaMarsh, the Prime Minister did not respond because the press in Canada was very negative to the idea. LaMarsh, who became Secretary of State in December 1965, claimed that she would have been unable to convince the federal government to appoint a Commission on women's rights without the assistance of Laura Sabia, then President of the Canadian Federation of University Women. On 18 April 1966, Sabia sent a letter to all established women's organizations in Canada calling for a meeting to discuss the status of women. The meeting, held in Toronto on 3 May 1966, was attended by 50 women representing 32 organizations. It led to the establishment of the Committee on the Equality of Women in Canada (CEW) under Sabia's leadership.... Despite these initiatives, the government was hesitant. Early in January 1967, Sabia, the head of CEW, reacted by a veiled threat of a women's march on Ottawa. In addition, Judy LaMarsh continued to exert pressure for action on women's issues within the Cabinet. Finally, on 3 February 1967, the Prime Minister announced that the Government had decided to establish a royal commission" (Library and Archives of Canada, Royal Commission on the Status of Women Fonds).

<sup>84</sup> According to Bear (1991), the lobbying by Indigenous women across the country to change this discriminatory law began in the 1950s. In 1977, Sandra Lovelace filed a complaint against Canada by taking her case to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva, Switzerland. In 1981, Canada was found in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights due to sexual discrimination.

<sup>85</sup> The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1969) was a national response to the separatist movement in Quebec. National anxieties increased in October of 1970 as pressures from the Quebec nationalist group Front de liberation du Quebec (FLQ) targeted Anglophone communities through a series of bombings due to Anglophone dominance in Quebec (Tetley, 2006).

<sup>86</sup> This is further discussed and theorized in Chapter 6.

<sup>87</sup> Turpel-Lafond (1997) asserts that "equality is not the most important political or social concept [for the Cree], as it is in industrialized society... Our communities do not have a cultural or social history of disentanglement of women from political or productive life... First Nations women have always been the hearts of our communities. This is different than equality with men. Presuming equality is the prime feminist objective, why would First Nations women want to be like you?" (p. 69).

<sup>88</sup> [http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/rights\\_freedoms/topics/86/](http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/rights_freedoms/topics/86/).

<sup>89</sup> CBC Digital Archives, RCSW.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Illegitimate birth rate reaches peak in Yukon. (1968, August 8). *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 19.

<sup>93</sup> On behalf of mothers. (1968, April 20). *The Gazette*, p. 24.

<sup>94</sup> Many of these immigrants were seen as *enemy aliens* and experienced hostility as well as various forms of exclusions. See *Strangers at Our Gates* by V. Knowles (2007) and *Whiteness of a Different Color* by M. F. Jacobson (1998).

<sup>95</sup> When considering the construction of the immigrant woman, Ng (1996) states, "in everyday life... women who are white, educated, and English-speaking are rarely considered to be immigrant women" (p. 16). Therefore, within a white colonial nation the immigrant is considered a non-white person who is professionally challenged and speaks with an accent. This socially constructed category is often conflated with Third-World identity and the type of occupation that have predominantly been relegated to racialized women bodies.

<sup>96</sup> Recommendations 92: "We recommend that the federal, provincial and territorial governments encourage Eskimo and Indian women to take training in adult education for work in the northern communities" (RCSW, p. 408). Recommendation 93: "We recommend that the federal government, the provinces and the territories co-operate to (a) provide expanded, comprehensive courses for all public officials and employees and their spouses, working with Indians and Eskimos, to familiarize them with the cultures and traditions of the native people, including training in the native languages; (b) make available to Indian and Eskimo women education courses to provide at least functional literacy in either French or English; (c) encourage native women to participate in school planning and programming, and to serve on school advisory committees; (d) where it is not already being done, train native women as teachers and teachers' aides; (e) provide that teachers' colleges give special training courses in the instruction of English or French as a second language to Indians and Eskimos; (f) make sure that teachers' colleges provide courses in Indian and Eskimo culture, including training in the native languages for teachers planning to work with native people; and (g) make every effort to train Indians and Eskimos to provide the educational services in Indian and Eskimo communities now being performed by non-Indian and non-Eskimo public servants" (RCSW, p. 408). Recommendation 94: "We recommend that universities establish or strengthen courses and research in Indian and Eskimo cultures" (RCSW, p. 408). Recommendation 95: "We recommend to private industry that it provide training courses for employees working in the north, and their spouses, to familiarize them with the cultures and traditions of the native people, including training in the native languages" (RCSW, p. 408). Recommendation 96: "We recommend that the federal government, in co-operation with the territories, including individual native women, as well as couples, in the programme under which Eskimos and Indians are brought south on learning trips" (RCSW, p. 408). Recommendation 97: "We recommend that the federal government, in co-operation with the territories, ensure that management training programs in the operation of co-operatives and small business enterprises be made available to native women as well as to men and be expanded to fit the growing needs of the northern communities" (RCSW, p. 408). These recommendations primarily focus on national discourses of assimilation of Indigenous Peoples.

<sup>97</sup> Recommendation 106: "We recommend that the Indian Act be amended to allow an Indian woman upon marriage to a non-Indian to (a) retain her Indian status and (b) transmit her Indian status to her children" (RCWC, p. 410).

- <sup>98</sup> Recommendation 137: "We recommend that the federal government, the provinces, territories, municipalities and voluntary associations, in co-operation with the native people, establish or expand friendship centres directed and staffed by people of Indian, Métis or Eskimo ancestry, to provide needed services" (RCSW, p. 414).
- <sup>99</sup> Recommendation 88 "We recommend that the Department of the Secretary of State, through its Citizenship Branch, in co-operation with the provinces and territories, (a) conduct surveys in all areas of Canada where immigrants are settling to ascertain their special educational needs of immigrant women, (b) suggests programmes by which these needs could be met, (c) make these needs and programmes known to voluntary workers in the community, and (d) assist volunteers in the implementation of these training programmes" (RCSW, p. 407). Recommendation 89: "We recommend that the federal government, in co-operation with provinces and territories, review language training programmes in order to ensure that the needs of immigrant women are being met" (RCSW, p. 407).
- <sup>100</sup> Recommendation 143: "We recommend that the Immigration Division of the federal Department of Manpower and Immigration review its policies and practices to ensure that the right of a wife to be an independent applicant for admission to Canada is always respected and that wives are made fully aware of this right" (RCSW, p. 415).
- <sup>101</sup> Turpel-Lafond also discusses this exclusion and states, "the background study on First Nations women commission for Royal Commission was prepared by to non-Aboriginal person.... at that the Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology... it reveals little sensitivity to the different culture perspective of First Nations women on the mandate of the Commission" (p. 326).
- <sup>102</sup> [http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/rights\\_freedoms/topics/86/](http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/rights_freedoms/topics/86/).
- <sup>103</sup> CBC Digital Archives, RCSW.
- <sup>104</sup> Laura Sabia's interview broadcasted on CBC March 28, 1967 (CBC Digital Archives, RCSW).
- <sup>105</sup> According to Miles (1989), racialization can be defined as "processes by which meanings are attributed to particular objects, features and processes, in such a way that the latter are given special significance and carry or are embodied we've a set of additional meanings" (p. 70).
- <sup>106</sup> Grace MacInnis was born in 1905, she received her BA from the University of Manitoba and won a seat in the BC Provincial Legislature (Vancouver-Burrard) in the early 1940s which she retained until 1945. In 1965, MacInnis ran federally and won the Vancouver-Kingsway riding as British Columbia's first and only woman member of Parliament, which she retained her seat until her retirement in 1974 she is remembered as an influential politician advocating strongly for low-income housing, women's equality and family planning. (UBC Library - [www.library.ubc.ca/spcoll/AZ/PDF/M/Macinnis\\_Grace.pdf](http://www.library.ubc.ca/spcoll/AZ/PDF/M/Macinnis_Grace.pdf)).
- <sup>107</sup> RBSC UBC, 11-8: Royal Commission on the Status of Women, 1971, p. 1.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 2.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>110</sup> The Report of the RCSW, What Exactly Is It? RBSC UBC, p. 4.
- <sup>111</sup> RBSC UBC.
- <sup>112</sup> RBSC UBC, 5-23, General - VSW History.
- <sup>113</sup> Rose Charlie, President of the Indian Homemakers Association, Stolo Nation.
- <sup>114</sup> Hattie Ferguson founding member of the The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre who also joined VSW's first Board in 1971 and remained involved on the Board until 1974. a Tshimshian woman from Kitkatla.
- <sup>115</sup> Patricia Thom, one of the main conference organizers of the January 30, 1971 Conference at Hycroft University Women's Club. She was then also the Director of The Daytime Program, Centre for Continuing Education, UBC. She wrote the proceedings with the support of University Women's Club of Vancouver.
- <sup>116</sup> RBSC UBC, 1-39: Status of Women - Royal Commission on Status of Women. Document sent to participants of the conference of January 30, 1971.
- <sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 1.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>119</sup> As discussed in the Introductory and Research Methods chapters, research participants were categorized in the following organizational eras: 1971-1982 (Era 1); 1983-1991 (Era 2); 1992-1999 (Era 3); 2000-2008 (Era 4).
- <sup>120</sup> RBSC UBC, 11-39: Status of Women - Royal Commission on Status of Women. Document sent to participants of the conference of January 30, 1971 (p. 3).
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid, p. 3.
- <sup>122</sup> Recommendation 164: "We recommend that the federal government, the provinces, the territories and municipalities, each establish an implementation committee, composed of a number of its senior administrators, to (a) plan for, co-ordinate and expedite the implementation of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women to that jurisdiction; and (b) report from time to time to its government on the progress it is making" (RCSW, 1970, p. 417-418).
- <sup>123</sup> Recommendation 165: "We recommend that federal, provincial and territorial Human Rights Commissions be set up that would (a) be directly responsible to Parliament, provincial legislatures or territorial councils, (b) have power to investigate the administration of human rights legislation as well as the power to enforce the law by laying charges and prosecuting offenders, (c) include with the organization for a period of seven to 10 years a division dealing specifically with the protection of women's rights, and (d) suggests changes in human rights legislation and promote widespread respect for human rights" (RCSW, 1970, p. 418).
- <sup>124</sup> Recommendation 166: "We recommend that a federal Status of Women Council, directly responsible to Parliament, be established to (a) advise on matters pertaining to women and report annually to Parliament on the progress being made in improving the status of women in Canada, (c) undertake research on matters relevant to the status of women and suggests research topics that can be carried out by governments, private business, universities, and voluntary associations, (c) establish programmes to correct attitudes and prejudices adversely affecting the status of women, (d) proposed legislation, policies and practices to improve the status of women, and (e) systematically consult with women's bureaux or similar provincial organizations, and with voluntary associations particularly concerned with the problems of women" (RCSW, 1970, p. 418).
- <sup>125</sup> Recommendation 167: "We recommend that, where it has not already been done, each province and territory establish a government bureau or similar agency concerned with the status of women which would have sufficient authority and funds to make its work effective" (RCSW, 1970, p. 418).
- <sup>126</sup> The motion was passed and Anne Marie Sweeney sent the following telegram to Premier Bennett and a similar one to Trudeau: "On Saturday January 30, 1971, over 300 participants representing a wide range of B.C. organizations, businesses, and professionals met with Mrs. John Bird [Florence Bird] in Vancouver for a Conference on the Royal Commission's Report on the

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Status of Women. We were delighted to have Mrs. Pat Jordan, Minister Without Portfolio, with us. This conference accepted and urged for implementation without delay four of the Commission's recommendations (164-167). One further decision of the conference was regarding the establishment of a local Steering Committee composed of representatives of 20 different organizations, has been formed. A more comprehensive report of the conference will follow." (RBSC UBC, 11-39: Status of Women - Royal Commission on Status of Women Folder, p. 4).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>131</sup> VSW Archives. SWACC Newsletter, 1971.

<sup>132</sup> RBSC UBC, 5-23, General - VSW History.

<sup>133</sup> Organizational name change was due to unavailability of chosen names as indicated by Victoria. Archives - General\Board Meeting Minutes\_70-84\_June 10. July 1973 VSW Newsletter Vol. 3 No 23. UBC-13:23 folder. · We've Changed Our Name! Formally Status of Women Council and now Vancouver Status of Women: by the end of May 1973 VSW became registered as a society. Books are audited and submitted to Registrar of Companies; List of Elected Officers submitted annually; with the status, more favourable chances of receiving funding and now VSW can apply for registration to give receipts for income tax purposes in relation to donations. And finally another advantage of being registered is individual members cannot be sued. · Objects of the Society: (a) to form a non-profit, non-partisan, educational organization; (b) to promote action on the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada; (c) to foster public knowledge of the rights and status of women in Canada; (d) to facilitate communication between individuals and groups concerned about the status of women (p. 1).

<sup>134</sup> Rosemary Brown, a Social Worker, remained with VSW during its first year of inception and later served as a MLA of British Columbia Legislature from 1972-86. She was the first Black Canadian woman to be elected to a Canadian provincial legislature. Brown later became a Professor of Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University. See Brown's autobiography, *Being Brown*.

<sup>135</sup> For many years the women of British Columbia had advocated for a provincial Ombudservice, as this did not materialize, Vancouver Status of Women in its early years made the decision to begin its own Ombudservice. An ombudsperson independently receives and investigates public complaints made against governmental officials. According to VSW's president, Alice James as quoted in the article *Status of Women*, "we figured the government would never do it themselves, so we do it for them" (BC Affairs, 1973, p. 17).

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> RBSC UBC, 5-23, General - VSW History, p. 1-2.

<sup>138</sup> Carol Anne Soong had been involved in the women's movement prior to the release of the commission report, she has also chaired a University women's club study group on the report. She exited the organization in 1973 when she joined the Citizenship Development of the Secretary of State's Department. Hattie Ferguson of the Indian Friendship Centre. One of the founders of the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club in 1954, which became known later as Vancouver Indian Centre Society and today as the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. By 1974, Rosemary Brown, Hattie Ferguson and Carole Ann Soong were no longer involved in positions of leadership within VSW. Rosemary Brown exited the organization to run for the provincial election in 1972 and Carole Ann Soong and Hattie Ferguson remained until 1974. From this point and into the beginning of the second VSW era, the organization's leadership was primarily white women and predominately focused on the struggles and ideologies as presented by white liberal middle class heterosexual women. Hence, although the organization attempted during its initiation to represent a broad and diverse group of women, this appeared to be a struggle.

<sup>139</sup> RBSC UBC, 5-23, General - VSW History, p. 1-2.

<sup>140</sup> RBSC UBC and interviews.

<sup>141</sup> "In 1978 the Canadian Human Rights Act came into effect prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex (among other things) in the case of employees under federal jurisdiction. The Act contains provisions to ensure "equal pay for work of equal value," specifying that "value" should be determined with reference to skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions. A Woman's Program was established within the Secretary of State and began to make money available for special projects of women's centres, rape crisis centres, women's research programs and professional associations, and transition houses for physically abused women" (The Canadian Encyclopedia - Status of Women.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0007673>).

<sup>142</sup> Barbara.

<sup>143</sup> Charlotte.

<sup>144</sup> Researcher's contributions during interview with Lovena.

<sup>145</sup> Women Rally for Action, 1976. While the demonstration took place outside, lobbying took place from every writing in British Columbia as they met with their MLA's in the BC Legislative Buildings. Each MLA as presented with the Women Rally for Action Brief and questioned on his or her stand on several issues.

<sup>146</sup> The original brief included the following women's issues: representation for women within government; women's centres core funding; family law; education; childcare; human rights; maternity protection; rape; healthcare for women; pensions for homemakers; farm and domestic workers; labour standards; and women and economic development.

<sup>147</sup> Additionally, the addendum on lesbian rights, Lesbian Rights Policy Proposals to the BC Federation of Women, was taken from the preamble resolution by the BC Federation of women. It discusses lesbian rights in relation to custody and access and ensuring that discrimination is not experienced by children of lesbian parents. In addition addendum on lesbian right clearly advocates that lesbians are not to be discriminated against due to living arrangement, employment, and housing, and that resources, medical and counselling support be made available to lesbians.

<sup>148</sup> Women Rally for Action, 1976, p. iv.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>150</sup> Errington (2007).

<sup>151</sup> See Karen Loder's article in BC Affairs (Fall 1973, p. 18).

## Chapter 5: The Intersectionality, Contestation and Reinforcement of Power Relations

*One enters a room and history follows; one enters a room and history precedes. History is already seated in the chair in the empty room when one arrives. Where one stands in a society seems always related to this historical experience. Where one can be observed is relative to that history. (Brand, 2001. p. 25)*

Researching power and its mechanics was not an easy task, as the workings of power is very much embedded both in what is said and what is not said. I attempted to *follow* power through the narratives of the research participants by studying how power gets taken up and who or what it gets attached to. Also, this examination of power requires a focus not only on what is *named and present* but also what is *unnamed and absent*. Hence, I expose both how power *works* and also what it *hides*. As Ahmed et al. (2006) state:

Power itself works precisely through being ‘hidden’ within the everyday politics and practice of organisations. The ‘hidden’ nature of social inequalities is *part* of their power and provides part of the explanation as to why relations of inequality are reproduced even in contexts where inequalities are denounced. (p. 29)

Additionally, power becomes a code for social relations and difference. Power invokes particular words, feelings, and experiences for differently positioned individuals based on their intersection of social relations within institutions and the nation. Participants' narratives demonstrate how power became attached to certain words and practices of inclusion and exclusion based on class, race, ability, sexuality, whiteness, organizational positions, and citizenship.

### Theorizing Power

I suggest that power relations have three phases: invocation, deployment, and effects. The invocation of power relations involves a multiplicity of acts that conjure, call up or give rise to power in a situation between subjects/objects. The deployment of power relations distributes or implements it, bringing power into effective actions. The invocation and deployment of power produces effects which are the consequences, results, causes, and outcomes, or in a sense what is brought about upon bodies. Further, as will be demonstrated by the narratives, I reveal the invocations, deployments and effects of power as not only repressive and resistance but also as enabling. Enabling implies the act of facilitating an outcome by building capacity or empowering.<sup>152</sup>

In this chapter, I examine the mechanics of power relations within VSW by drawing on several theorizations of power, including Foucault (1990; 1994), Mills (2004), Althusser (2004/1971), and Göhler (2009). I find Michel Foucault's contribution most instrumental for theorizing models of power as relational and as resistance. I describe participants' conceptualizations and experiences of power within VSW while engaging with frameworks discussed in Chapter 2, including Hage (2000), Ahmed (2000) and Thobani (2007). I use a critical intersectional feminist analysis to demonstrate the specificity and complexity of participants' identified power relations within VSW. Additionally, I illustrate how this intersectionality also interacts with diverse subjects' positionalities across the following multiple sites: women's movements, the larger colonial nation-state, and globalization.

Foucault's (1990) important contribution lies in his assertion that power is relational and that "where there is power there is resistance" (p. 95). He further asserts that "this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power...one is always 'inside' power, there is no 'escaping' it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned" (1990, p. 95). Therefore, no power relation is one of complete oppression or domination; resistance is always present within all power relations. Mills (2003) concurs with Foucault's analysis of power. She states:

[Power] is productive in that it allows us to consider the relationship between those in struggles over power as not simply reducible to a master-slave relation, or an oppressor-victim relationship. In order for there to be a relation where power is exercised, there has to be someone who resists. (Mills, 2003, p. 40)

Power struggles are present and consistent within all organizations because power circulates through all aspects of society, including all relations. Communication and language remain a particular site where such power struggles are organized, arranged, and deployed. As articulated by Mills (2004) "discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (p. 40). Foucault argues that discourse carries effects and that power is a key element of discourse. Most importantly, he states that all knowledge is the result or effect of power struggles.

Foucault's work provides a way of thinking about the mechanics of power relations between differently situated subjects within the trajectory of an organization. More specifically, one comes to realize that these relations do not neatly fit into simple theorizations of power which tend to focus on the role of the State, ideology or patriarchy, as discussed by Mills (2003) and Thornborrow (2002).

Marxist theorists have primarily emphasized power as a possession of the State and the State as a repressive apparatus (Althusser, 2004/1971). Louis Althusser states:

The State is a 'machine' of repression, which enables the ruling classes...to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion (i.e. to capitalist exploitation). The State is thus first of all what the Marxist classics had called the State apparatus. This term means: not only the specialized apparatus (in the narrow sense) whose existence and necessity I have recognized in relation to the requirements of legal practice, i.e. the police, the courts, the prisons; but also the army, which (the proletariat has paid for this experience with its blood) intervenes directly as a supplementary repressive force in the last instance, when the police and its specialized auxiliary corps are 'outrun by events'; and above this ensemble, the head of the State, the government and the administration. (p. 91)

Althusser (2004/1971) explains that embedded in the repressive state apparatuses is the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA)<sup>153</sup>. He refers to the Ideological State Apparatuses as "a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions", which function by ideologies (p. 90).<sup>154</sup> The Repressive State Apparatus comprises of a centralized organizational body with multiple parts controlled by those in possession of State power and who are the ruling classes reproducing their ideology. From this emerges the political conditions necessary for securing the relations of labour exploitation. Central to the repressive state apparatus and its ideologies is the reproduction of the relations of production. These relations are secured by the exercise of State power in the repressive state apparatuses and the ideological state apparatuses.

As for Antonio Gramsci (2004/1971), he depicts the State as a hegemonic instrument that organizes actions and inactions to ensure the reproduction of its civilizing mission through Law. Gramsci further illustrates that certain individuals, organizations and groups are praised and rewarded for their "meritorious activity" of sustaining and regulating the civilizing mission of the State (p. 77). Therefore, those who challenge and contest the civilizing mission are then persecuted and punished through sanctions of public opinion. In contrast, Foucault (2000) offers different models of power which do not locate power solely within the monolithic State. In his article *Truth and Power*, Foucault (1980) affirms that "the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations" (p. 122). Foucault does maintain that the State is important but he argues for a shift away from this fixation on the State because "relations of power do extend beyond the limits of the State" (Foucault, 2000, pp. 122-123).<sup>155</sup>

I find both Foucault's and Althusser's articulation of power to be useful and applicable to this research. I argue that power circulates across multiple sites including VSW, women's movements and

the larger nation-state, as well as through globalization. This research illuminates how power relations are multidirectional and involve multiple targets. Hence, the strategies to contest the complexity of power relations cannot be singular and unidirectional because such sites demand that we revise the strategies of response and transgression in order to engage in multiple issues and concerns across multiple sites both externally and internally.

As discussed earlier, I also critically examine power relations not only as oppressive and constraining but also as enabling, empowering and transformative. Power is understood as simultaneously hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. This reveals a trajectory of power relations within VSW that it is always surrounded by complex acts of resistance as well as counter-resistance.<sup>156</sup> I want to further explore this conceptualization of power as enabling. By enabling I am referring to the resources necessary to provide the means, knowledge and opportunities for shifting power differences. To engage in the process of enabling requires visioning and risk taking which then produce possibilities and realities. This is a process of capacity building which then results in making something operational and active. One may also engage in enabling by intervening and influencing.

Manning (2003) describes power as "the ability to influence others toward the goal or outcomes that an individual desires, or requires, for the organization or the individual" (p. 70). Manning articulates different bases of power: coercive power, reward power, expert power, and reference power. Coercive power engages with forms of punishment and restriction which influence or coerce others into doing something. Reward power is based on providing something of value to others in order to provoke specific responses through performance. Expert power emerges from legitimate and valued knowledge and skills. Lastly, Manning discusses referent power as qualities such as charisma, integrity and reputation which are admired by others.

Meekosha (2006) provides an important contribution to the politics of enabling when she complicates intersecting discourses of disability and colonialism. Meekosha suggests that the social construction of disability is useful in examining other power relations in society which extends "far beyond simple relations between non-disabled people and disabled people" (p. 165). She argues that bodies of colour and their cultures have been and continue to be constructed as inferior and insufficient:

Since the very beginning of colonization, stereotypes of feeble-mindedness, poor physique and disease carriers have been part of anti-indigenous and anti-immigrant sentiment in settler

societies from the USA to Canada to Australia. Difference in skin colour and physiognomy became synonymous with impairment. These differences were then medicalized as the language and practices of eugenics gained popularity. (Meekosha, 2006, p. 165).<sup>157</sup>

Hence, according to Meekosha (2006) this colliding of disability with race ensured the production of exclusive and restrictive immigration policies.<sup>158</sup> She further argues that processes of colonization *disable* the colonized:

The process of colonization itself is a disabling experience for the survivors in the invasion. Western diseases and foods caused death and major illnesses in indigenous groups. As a result there has been a systemic weakening of populations over generations, with the result that impairments have become a way of life for large numbers of the indigenous population....Chronic health conditions permeate indigenous populations... life expectations are very much lower....deafness, blindness and trachoma foetal alcohol syndrome, brain damage from petrol sniffing, diabetes, substance abuse, mobility impairment, mental health issues (social and emotional well-being), renal failure, work-based disability (musculoskeletal problems), prenatal, perinatal and postnatal race conditions are but some of the major conditions currently facing the indigenous communities. (pp. 166-167)

Meekosha critically emphasizes the effects of power relations as disabling due to historical, social and political consequences of disabling environments and disabling conditions. These disabling situations are not only resisted and contested but they also require processes of enabling by providing the resources and capacity to envision a different and larger frame of power relations invested in experiences of inclusion and belonging. As will be demonstrated, in the case of Vancouver Status of Women, narratives exposed power not only as repressive and resistance but also as enabling. The next section presents participants' conceptualization of power.

### **Research Participants' Conceptualization of Power within Organizations**

Research participants were asked, "what does power look like in an organization such as Vancouver Status of Women?"<sup>159</sup> I also asked, "when you saw power erupt or come alive, what did it look like?" I am most interested in the invocation and deployment of power relations rather than a definition of power. By analyzing how participants understood power within the organization, what emerged is a deeper acknowledgement that power was enacted through relations with each other and across multiple political sites. These political sites are VSW (or other organizations), women's movements (or other social movements), the nation-state and globalization. Most importantly participants found that power as relational derives from multiple sites of interaction, where subjects are differently positioned and therefore have different degrees of power, but nonetheless are always engaging in relations of power.

I argue for the following three considerations regarding the workings of power relations. First, that we must always recognize the intersectionality of power relations. Second, that within this intersectionality of power relations, the mechanics of power relations are manifested based on one's changing positionality. Third, that power relations are situated and transgressed within histories, and specifically in the Canadian context, histories of colonial contact and white supremacy. Therefore, these considerations require that the study of power in Canada, in any context, cannot deny or omit the historical and on-going colonial occupation of Indigenous territories and theft of Indigenous resources.

The concept of intersectionality as discussed by several participants is worth mentioning here particularly because it is one of the three considerations discussed above. Participants, AJAY, Zeenat, and Ela from VSW's second (1983-1991) and third eras (1992-1999)<sup>160</sup> articulated VSW's process of shifting away from a solely gender/woman based analysis towards the "matrix of oppression" or "intersectionality". These participants illustrated how the organization recognized the importance of intersectionality that took place as multiple power relations and differing positionalities of social relations interacted. Specifically, Zeenat emphasized that the term intersectionality was not necessarily the language being used at that time in VSW but rather "the matrix of oppression" coined by Patricia Hill Collins.<sup>161</sup> Zeenat stated:

Kimberly Crenshaw<sup>162</sup> came up with the term but we were actually practicing something we didn't know what to call it yet. We started to use the word but we used to talk about not one oppression...[but] the intermixing....interacting...interlocking, then we came up with *matrix*. Those matrix politics that we developed at VSW echoed what was happening in *Kinesis*, we were doing it at the same time. Every time something happened at *Kinesis*, and this is the battleground for all of it because this is where the scrutiny of the country was on us. We got to do practical day to day manifestations of our politics...that allowed us to move forward faster at VSW.

This interview segment demonstrates the influence *Kinesis* had upon its publisher - Vancouver Status of Women. This influence was pivotal to the organization's ability to engage in the politics and language of intersectionality, which VSW referred to as "the matrix".<sup>163</sup> As will be discussed later in Chapter 7, by the mid 1990s VSW developed a number of anti-oppression policies which emphasized that no oppression stood on its own but rather interacted with other oppressions.

Hage's (2000) theorizing of the accumulation of national capital was very much present in how and when participants negotiated power. The accumulation of national capital can be understood as fluency in English, upper/middle-class status, identifying as white, high level of education, citizenship

status and engagement in white national knowledge and culture. Hage describes the field of Whiteness as also the field of national power, "a field where people's position of power is related to the amount of national capital they accumulate" (2000, p. 61). Hence, Hage provides an important framework to illustrate how differently positioned subjects within the organization engaged with power relations in a diversity of ways based on their "possession and deployment of the dominant national capital" which "appears as an intrinsic natural disposition rather than as something socially and historically acquired" (p. 62).

The following table provides a summary of participants' conceptualization of power as repressive, resistance and enabling. In the next section, I discuss the invocations, deployments, and effects of each of these power relations within VSW as brought forth by the participants.

**Table 5.1: Participants' Conceptualization of Power Relations**

<p><b>Power as Communication and Articulation:</b> Ability to articulate and express in a dominant accent and language often engaging in complex feminist debates and analyses</p>	<p><b>Power as Organizational Role(s) and Accumulated Organizational Knowledge:</b> Accumulation of knowledge, skills and entitlement deriving from one's organizational history and positionality</p>
<p><b>Power as Hierarchy and Hegemonic Feminism:</b> Ability to contest or reproduce hierarchical relations and hegemonic feminism</p>	<p><b>Power as Leadership and Empowerment:</b> Ability to engage with power as vision, freedom, autonomy, leadership, strength, responsibility, and empowerment</p>
<p><b>Power as Influence:</b> Ability to influence as decision maker or/and to influence a decision maker</p>	<p><b>Power as (Cou)Rage and Anger:</b> Ability to express and respond to rage, anger, and courage</p>

### **Power as Communication and Articulation**

Participants identified power as the ability to communicate, articulate, and express while also bringing forth one's expertise and knowledge. Power as communication and articulation was further advanced for members who had more organizational knowledge due to their role(s) in the organization. Several participants demonstrated how power to communicate and express interacted with one's positionality, including the ability to speak and read English and having a high level of

education. One's inability to engage in such dialogues, analysis and debates would often result in being left behind. In the late 1980s, Amrita was the second immigrant woman of colour Board member since VSW's inception. Amrita explained that much of her participation was observing and learning, and not fully engaging with the discussions and decisions of the Board. For Teesha, a white middle-class lesbian Board member from the third era, people who had power in the organization were confident in their agenda, including their ability to verbalize and convince others of that agenda.

Ann and AJAY, both white middle class heterosexual women but from different eras, understood power as one's ability to express, engage in debate, and articulate opinions critically while developing feminist analysis. AJAY explained:

The one thing we all had in common was that we were all *good communicators...all very articulate women*. Not necessarily speaking [and] using the same words. We spoke differently but very articulate from our place. We struggled with supporting those who didn't have, who didn't speak up as easily as others...and so you had to stick with us for a little while until eventually we figured out that you weren't saying anything and then we tried to mentor people into the group in that way, but there was a pretty sophisticated, ongoing debate, dialogue, conversation, analysis being developed...and it was moving at a pretty fast pace... you had to get with the program pretty quick.

Sonia, a lesbian of colour staff during the fourth era (2000-2008), also described power in organizations as the ability to communicate, which was influenced by the ability to write and speak English without an accent, accumulated knowledge and one's positionality. She stated:

I think identity would also play into it in different ways in terms of being a dominant identity or a marginalized identity, whichever happens to be given power, and 'cause I think in our realm it's shifting, where like dominant forms of power, like, not having an accent...can be used as power, but also having an accent might be accessed as a form of power in a space like VSW... So whatever identity happens to be invoked in the use of power... But I'm thinking that the communication bit, it is both a language, like a sort of a linguistic analysis, an ability to speak and write, and that does get heard.

Sonia, who speaks Spanish fluently, explained how English is the dominant language at VSW; she recognized that, "if there was another staff that spoke Spanish, Spanish would be very present" in the organization. Hence, the presence of additional staff or Board members with knowledge and languages that have been traditionally excluded or marginalized facilitated the opening up of the organizational frame.<sup>164</sup>

Creese and Kambere (2003) illustrate the intersection between processes of racialization and Othered accents. They determine that the nation "is discursively patrolled through accents" and that "a 'foreign' accent is socially defined" (p.565). They explain that British or Australian English accents do not bring out the same effects as those of Othered racialized subjects.<sup>165</sup> Their research illustrates

how the accents of racialized subjects determine their language competency. Creese and Kambere (2003) argue that “accents may provide a rationale for (dis)entitlement in employment or full participation in civil society without troubling liberal discourses of equality” (p. 565). This process not only exalts “Canadian” English language and accents as a form of capital but also then devaluates and erases Othered linguistic capital.<sup>166</sup>

When I asked Sammy, a two-spirited Indigenous organizer, to reflect on how she perceived VSW's permanent staff, particularly *Kinesis* staff and the *Kinesis* Editorial Board, she explained:

I felt like I didn't have the power that they had and the knowledge and the 'know how'...I wanted to know more. I wanted to be able to have the *finesse*. I felt like I didn't have the *activist finesse* that they did...and I didn't know how to articulate that, I didn't know how to negotiate that.

Sammy implied here that she lacked the articulation that she perceived *Kinesis* staff to have and craved for such skills and knowledge around feminism, activism, and organizing. At the same time, she experienced this as a form of exclusion and not belonging politically to the *Kinesis* "crowd". Foucault (2000) explains that knowledge as power rests on the notion that such knowledge must be accepted as valid and therefore must acquire legitimacy. Therefore power/knowledge struggles emerge as different viewpoints contest and challenge each other. Most importantly, the discourses which manifest are historically constituted within the specificity of context, subject formation, and relations of power. Hence, it is important to recognize that a legitimization process must occur for a specific articulation to be seen as a form of power. This legitimacy ensures that specific discourses will become a standard or authority that we strive for within the women's movement, if we are to be seen as feminist activists.

### **Power as Hierarchy and Hegemonic Feminism**

Power was seen as the reproducing or challenging of hierarchy, including hegemonic feminism. Discourses of hierarchy and hegemonic feminism focused on concerns such as who *was allowed in and who was kept out*, including which issues would be a priority for the organization. As discussed in Chapter 2, Fellows and Razack's (1998) provide an important analytical illustration of the failings of feminism due to engagement in competing marginalities and the *race to innocence*. The following narratives in this section demonstrate hegemonic and counter hegemonic processes which confronted or sustained the hierarchies that operated amongst the women in the organization.

One of VSW's past presidents, Laura, an educated middle-class heterosexual feminist from the first era (1971-1982,) explained that power meant someone dictating to others by "telling people what to do...and being authoritative". Several participants saw power as the reproducing of hegemonic feminism through behaviour, language, ideology, and symbols. Power was also seen as negative and hierarchical for some participants, including Amrita. Amrita explained how she never felt that she had ownership or entitlement in VSW as she was one of the first token immigrant woman of colour on the Board of VSW. According to Amrita, this lack of entitlement was due to white women's overrepresentation and ownership when she described VSW as a white woman's "joint".

When power relations are invoked and deployed to reproduce hierarchies and hegemonic feminism, the effects allow those in positions of power to manipulate the decision making process due to their organizational entitlement. AJAY<sup>167</sup> articulated the process the organization engaged in to demonstrate its commitment to building awareness regarding the workings of power. She explained:

A process like any process can be manipulated...[a] constant vigilance is required from every member...we are always looking at how power is functioning in the room. And if it is, how is it, how is it currently, who is it currently being unfair to? Because I'm not a big believer in sameness, you know, equal in that sense. I know that there's always, ups and downs, right? And there's always power differentials in the room, that's the world we live in, right? And so, we're not going to equalize power in the room, but what we're going to do is try to figure out how it's working and how do we ensure that it isn't always in favour of one person or one group. And so, *being aware of how power is working*, was our commitment.

Laura<sup>168</sup>, who is quoted below, demonstrated the power relations present in VSW which facilitated the silencing of difference. Specifically, she recalled one newly arrived immigrant woman of colour who was hired as VSW's bookkeeper in the early 1970s. Laura worked closely with this staff but could not recall her name.<sup>169</sup> Laura remembered:

Laura: Oh yeah, the bookkeeper was East Indian.

Benita: Do you remember her name?

Laura: I've forgotten her name. There were, there were all types-

Benita: Interesting, they never put bookkeeper on any of the staff lists.

Laura: Yeah...she was a fairly silent person, she had a lot of problems...*She wanted to be part of what we were but she could never get things done on time and so on.* You know.

This segment demonstrates the reproduction of hegemonic feminist entitlement both spatially and politically. The South Asian bookkeeper is not recognized in any of the minutes nor in the Annual Report, even though she was one of the paid staff who worked many hours based on her T4 annual income statement in 1972.<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, what emerges from Laura's narrative is that this staff was silent, "never got things done", and that she wanted to be like *them*. Laura is compelled to secure her

rightful space and political entitlement, because as Fellows and Razack (1998) explain, "not to do so is to risk erasure" (p. 339). Furthermore, Laura perceives the South Asian staff's marginalization through her lens of superiority by using hegemonic explanatory frameworks. Fellows and Razack (1998) explain that "we convince ourselves that the Others claim is not as legitimate as our own" (p. 339).

Flo, a woman of colour Board member at that time, recalled the bookkeeper's name and stated:

That was an interesting story. I think her family had come over pretty recently and that truly was her first job. [It] was an opportunity...she struggled, but you know what, it was the opportunity that opened the door, because she got...Canadian experience, work experience. That's what lib [women's liberation] was about, right?

I then asked Flo, "so she wasn't only a bookkeeper?" Flo responded, "no, she was more than that. She was there...sitting at the front desk...I guess she did *everything*". Clearly, the newly immigrated racialized bookkeeper was also performing administrative and organizational coordination tasks not only with the other VSW staff and Board members but "invisibly" played a more central staff role that was not necessarily acknowledged by the organization.

Several deployments and effects of power relations emerge based on Laura and Flo's narratives in regards to the bookkeeper which can be further analyzed using Hage's (2000) theory of accumulation of national capital and colonial hierarchies. The differing national capital accumulated by the women is very much dictated by nation-building discourses and practices. This further produces different processes of legitimization and entitlements in relation to citizenship, immigration history, organizational history, "Canadian history/experience", class, and racialization. Like Ahmed (2000) and Thobani (2007), this example illustrates the *welcoming the stranger* within one's spatial entitlement as the exalted benevolent national subject while ensuring that the Other remains *the stranger*.

Laura was asked about other racialized women in the organization and she recalled another Board member of "Chinese" descent:

Well I'd completely forgot that [she] was Chinese. You know [*laughs*] it just didn't make any difference to me, I don't know, I didn't see that it made any difference to anybody else either...I think it was really not race, it was degree of commitment, and people didn't join our organization unless they were committed.

Laura described the majority of women involved in VSW during her time as having "very good education...upper class...they were people who had university degrees...They owned homes...I think

virtually every female teacher at UBC was a member of VSW. Probably the vast majority of the female teachers at SFU." Hence, class, education, income, race and gender privileges intersected not only to further crystallize hierarchies amongst women but also to advance the accumulation of national capital for many of the privileged women of VSW during the first era.<sup>171</sup> I would further argue that white hegemonic feminism's understanding of "commitment" was very much attached to liberal nation building practices and definitions of being hard working, committed, loyal, and assimilable. The narratives above also brought forth the development of knowing your place and role within the nation as national subject or/and stranger.

When I asked Delixueiya, an Indigenous Elder who was marginally involved in VSW during its first era (1971-1982), to share with me her understanding of power and what it meant to have power, she offered the following story of Indigenous organizing which attempts to challenge power as solely hierarchical:

When we had our banquet...all the executives sat up at the table on stage and everyone else sat at the tables on the floor. And when I went in with my group from BC [British Columbia] and I sat with them at one of the tables on the floor and then there was about two different ones that came to me and said 'Delixueiya, you got your plate, your name's on a plate up on the stage there, as one of the executive members.' I said 'oh, I feel comfortable here.' You know. And I thought why should I be up there and then have everyone else sitting down, you now. That means I'm looking down at everyone and I don't want that. I'm part of the group here and that's what I'm doing... I don't want to be put up here looking down at the people that are in need, you know, and that are good enough to do what they're doing locally. I never put myself up before anyone else. I always thought that the women that are behind me, they're my strength. And that's where it is. And they're the powerful people...

Savannah, a working class woman of colour staff from the fourth era, illustrated her frustrations by discussing how power relations get invoked and deployed in multiple social justice organizing spaces, and she specifically discusses the reproduction of national discourses of white supremacy:

That power ends up playing out in different ways in all POC [people of colour] organizing. So, as I was learning that, I was learning...the insidious way that white supremacy entrenches itself in spaces, including radical spaces, and how hard it is to battle it at that level, when everyone shares a language and everyone shares the politics and everyone shares these values, and *still* this shit happens...

Savannah also identified the effects of such power by describing how her experiences of disappointments in organizing spaces have informed her (re)conceptualization of leadership and organizing. Zeenat, a lesbian of colour staff in the third era and later a Coordinating Collective member in the fourth era, further added her frustrations regarding the normative centering of white

women and their entitlement, "their focus was always on white women, because they were the ones who have power. They had no concept of understanding or seeing us [women of colour] as equal in the room, that's how basic it was".

For Anemki Wedom, an Indigenous two-spirited woman who had been a contract staff in the third era, she explained that VSW was not very inclusive of Indigenous women:

When I think about power, I think about hierarchy right off the bat...that word for me represents hierarchy. I think there was a hierarchy to a certain degree within VSW because it seemed like if you weren't part of the Collective you weren't in...and I think there was a certain degree of uh...uh...of um...[hesitates]...limited outreach to Aboriginal women. Because if it wasn't for the Aboriginal women going to VSW and AWAN [Aboriginal Women's Action Network] or me ... actually getting involved, I think it would have been highly unlikely that Aboriginal women would have gone there on their own. You know what I mean?

Anemki Wedom described that VSW was not open enough especially to Indigenous women, and she further indicated, that:

I think that at the time...the focus was really on immigrant women issues and women of colour types of issues, and wasn't really supportive of...I would say of Aboriginal women's issues, you know. I think to a certain degree, after we got involved, I think women realized that there needs to be that support for women's Aboriginal issues, particularly because of the Bill C-31 issue became very prominent.

Therefore, the leadership and presence of Aboriginal women enabled and facilitated the inclusion of Indigenous women's struggles and concerns in VSW in a more responsive way.

Zeenat demonstrated her engagement and witnessing of the contradictions of contesting as well as reproducing hegemonic feminist practices and ideologies during the early 1990s. She explained:

We went from a place of....throwing things out and keeping things that you need, that you think are good. We never never never threw out the baby with the bathwater. *Never, we kept the core values of what we were and all we did was broaden and strengthen them.* This is the core of the politics that was there, was that we can only be stronger by including difference, by recognizing difference, by broadening our understanding. We never changed anything, in a sense... *the foundation was solid....*And intersectionality pervaded everything... there wasn't a story you could write in *Kinesis* about anything that did not have to have diverse voices.

Vera, a white lesbian staff during the second era (1983-1991), discussed the process in which she engaged in as she commenced the journey of recognizing the natural entitlements and normalization attached to her positionality as an educated white lesbian feminist:

It's more all those unconscious beliefs that you have about how things should be done, how the work should be done, how it should be prioritized, what represents a skill, what represents responsibility, what represents taking care of a situation.... you need to know that you've got those beliefs...A whole shaking of foundation and it's very deep because it's even deeper than what your politics are...it's what you have absorbed from your culture, your branch of your culture that says what competency is, what articulateness is.... let alone the content of those

ideas are...the change we're talking about is so deep that we don't even know where to begin at some level.

This narrative illustrates Vera's process of recognizing her accumulation of national capital as a white national subject of Canada. Vera began to express at a deeper level her sense of entitlement and ownership, as well as the making and negotiation of power relations which was disabling to others:

One of the big differences for the white woman is they don't necessarily have to do any of that stepping back to see their ownership, because it's a normative. It's just so normative. So here is for an instance, here's where my mind goes... from what you just said. I was given a custodian message about my relationship to *Kinesis* as the Editor.... in other words, nothing had to be stated about ownership because it was so implied, so utterly implied. So instead the message is, this is not your paper...this is NOT your paper, you are the custodian of this tradition... you inherit the responsibility, you don't even inherit it as yours. You don't get to make this paper express your point of view, you are part of the tradition of serving the community...it is service...you do get to have all the responsibilities of the Editor which is, this is the irony, this is a volunteer newspaper but it has a paid Editor, it's a collective Editorial Board but the Editor has so much power and so much responsibility.

What emerges from Vera's narrative is not only the power embedded within her positionality but also with the organizational position of *Kinesis* Editor as "custodian of *Kinesis*". Vera's entitlements include not only the occupying of space as staff within VSW and feminist Editor within the women's movement but the symbolic entitlement attached to the newspaper *Kinesis* regarding organizational white normativity.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, from this entitlement derives the political legitimization granted from the women's movement and Vancouver Status of Women. What Vera is articulating is what Stewart (2009) explains as learning to wear privilege as "a comfortable pair of shoes" which provides a legitimization process of entitlement that is naturalized and normalized. Ward (2008) also identifies racist generalizations and racist imagery which reinforce organizational white identity and normativity that sustain white entitlements within organizations.

### **Power as Influence**

The power to influence was also discussed by the participants with a particular focus on the power *to influence as a decision maker* and *power to influence a decision maker*. This articulation of power provides a good understanding of power as *enabling*. This included the ability to be heard as well as influencing hirings, politics, and key organizational decisions. It also included influencing an important decision-maker in the organization, often with the risk of one's idea or knowledge being appropriated. It may entail manipulating key decision making processes and decision makers. Mondros and Wilson (1994) explain that power reflects "both a process by which it is attained (i.e. the concrete activities one pursues to exercise influence) and an outcome (i.e. actual power measured by

the extent to which another's activities conform to one's preferences)" (p.5). This exercise of influencing or enabling to produce an outcome is discussed by Ruby, a women of colour during the third era, she understood power as "the ability to have influence and to move forward what you think needs to happen...and spread the power of influence".

I begin this section by introducing The Immigrant Women and Racism Committee of VSW which was active from 1988 to 1993. It was an important response strategy in the form of a committee to influence the organization regarding racism and immigrant issues arising within the white feminist movement. This Committee was made up of a group of immigrant women who also organized outside VSW in the larger community. It is described in VSW's 1988-1989 Annual Report and discusses how the organization has successfully drawn *new* women into VSW which has influenced VSW's areas of work and educational development:

This committee was struck to forge links between the white feminist movement and immigrant women's groups from various communities. This committee began by expanding its own knowledge of immigrant women's concerns. The priorities established within the committee included: Immigrant women's job ghettos, discrimination by health professionals, and the sex tourism trade. We see this committee becoming more active in the coming year and are pleased to report that successful efforts have been made to ensure committee representation includes women from a broad cross section of immigrant communities.<sup>173</sup>

The Immigrant Women and Racism Committee was not initially part of the decision-making structure of the VSW and was largely seen as a *token* committee of racialized feminist women discussing issues arising in the immigrant community. Divali, a member of this Committee, as well as Board member during the second era (1983-1991), clearly argued that power to influence did not necessarily mean having power within the organization but rather it was the ability to influence decision-makers. Divali, a woman of colour who had recently immigrated to Canada in the late 1980s, explained:

I never felt that I had power inside VSW. I never felt that. I felt that I was able to *influence* some of the kind of workings of the organization, but I never felt like I had power in the organization, never...I was NEVER in a *decision-making position*. As for the Immigrant Women and Racism Committee, the organization could still decide whether they wanted to, how much attention or how much weight they were going to give to this Committee.

As explained above, Divali, clearly saw this Committee as not having much power but yet having the *ability to influence* the organization. For Divali, power in organizations was being part of the decision-making process and being a key decision maker. She observed that the influence of the Committee upon the organization rested on VSW's decision-makers to legitimize this influence by

transforming it into action. Divali stated "there were times when I did feel that I was being heard...and I knew that I had had some impact but that wasn't power. *That's not power, because they can still decide whether you'll have the influence of impact or not and how far that will go*". She understood decision-making power as the power to implement decisions; influence was *limited to* the ability to be heard.

As discussed above, Mondros and Wilson (1994) differentiate between influence and outcomes. Clearly, from Divali's narrative, to influence or enable did not guarantee a certain outcome or effect. The final decision and follow through lay in the hands of those with the most decision making power in the organization. Bachrach and Lawler (1980) suggest that authority and influence are two important dimensions of power in organizations. Often authority is seen as stable and formal, as reinforced by State imposed regulations, such as a Board of Directors. In contrast, influence is experienced as fluid, informal, reciprocal, and contradictory. According to Bachrach and Lawler (1980) "this distinction between authority and influence has implications for organizational change, the flow of power, and the relation of basis and sources of power in organizations" (p. xi).

There were numerous committees, caucuses and individuals within VSW's four eras, as well as other women's organizations and external caucuses within the broader women's movement which also influenced the organization. As discussed above, the Immigrant Women and Racism Committee played such a role in arguing for structural and institutional change within VSW regarding the absence of racialized women in leadership positions. Additionally, based on the archives and narratives, the politics of transgenering and trans-inclusivity/exclusivity surfaced during the first, third, and fourth eras of the organization.<sup>174</sup> In 1979, VSW coordinated an Assertiveness Training Workshop for Transsexuals and a Transsexual Support Group<sup>175</sup>. It is apparent from the archives that a transgendered staff was hired to specifically coordinate this program, provide support and respond to the needs of the transgendered community. Hence, pressures and influence upon the organization to make a commitment to the transgendered community was translated into VSW's investment by providing the financial support and resources toward the program.<sup>176</sup>

There is no other indication in the organizational archives or in the narratives of specific persons, events or discourses which influenced the organization to take up the rights of transsexuals in the later 1970s. Yet, within the larger context of North America, 1979 is the year that Janice

Raymond's book on transsexualism was published, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-male*. Raymond (1979) focused on the psychologizing and medicalizing of transsexualism, which she argued reinforced traditional gender stereotypes. Raymond narrowly argues that the medical-psychiatric discourse of "gender identity" largely emphasized transsexual treatment and surgery as normal and therapeutic medicine. Her analysis of transgenering and transsexualism has been criticized by trans-inclusive communities and feminists as transphobic.<sup>177</sup> Raymond's book had a profound impact on the North American movement in the early 80s and 90s, as can be seen in Ruby's narrative recounted below.

Phoenix and Ruby, both lesbian of colour staff during the third era, recalled several discussions during the Coordinating Collective meetings in the late 1990s regarding trans-exclusivity within VSW. They explicitly remembered how certain events, individuals and women's groups influenced VSW's position on trans-exclusivity. Ruby explained that VSW was transphobic during her time in the late 1990s and multiple influences contributed to such a culture of exclusion:

I think that...you know, we were at different places. For me it was very difficult... the kind of entitlement that transgenders felt at that point in women's organizations and how [women's organizations] were shutting down...and, that problem with [that women's organization] and those things where they wanted to be women, you know. Why is it that you want us to change everything when it's, when it's all about being women in the bathroom because you are there, so it's us [women] that have to adjust to you...or you having to adjust to this environment. This for me was very difficult to understand. Not the inclusion as much as their sense of entitlement and wanting to change the organizations.

Ruby identified specific individuals who influenced the Coordinating Collective to maintain this transphobic essentialist culture of constructing "all" transgendered women as altering women's organizations. The ability to articulate, influence, and accumulate organizational and women's movement knowledge interacted to produce *race to innocence* discourses by predominately VSW racialized staff.

Ruby further added, "You know, there were ways in which things would get undermined if they were not according to *tradition*". This tradition is precisely what continues to haunt feminism, the women's movements, and feminist organizations in Canada. "Tradition" as a form of hegemonic feminism erupts and becomes further embedded in nationalist discourses and practices of gate-keeping as a form of entitlement. Hence, during this third era, I argue that VSW reproduced hegemonic feminism as a national practice of essentialism, entitlement and exclusion. By the fourth era in 2001, VSW finds itself being influenced by racialized queer feminists working in the organization

and who were committed to developing and implementing a trans-inclusive policy. The Coordinating Collective of VSW embarked on a process of critical education and historicization of transgendered politics within the women's movement and adopted its own trans-inclusive policy in 2002.<sup>178</sup>

Another specific example of individuals inside VSW influencing the organization and some of its key decision makers is brought forward by Ela's narrative below. When I asked Ela, a lesbian of colour non-permanent staff hired on Unemployment Insurance (UI) Top Ups<sup>179</sup> from the second era, if she had decision-making power within the organization, Ela responded:

I didn't. On an everyday level, I had an enormous role with [the *Kinesis* Editor], [she] and I were basically there all the time together... she consulted me on everything on a minute-by-minute level, but when it came to policy-type decisions, I had to fight like hell for them to recognize that I even had a role, so for example, the Editorial Board of *Kinesis* was set up for the first time when I was there, and I became part of the first editorial board of *Kinesis*...we developed a mission statement for *Kinesis*. Well...I fought like hell...to try and get a mission statement that addressed and understood an intersectional analysis. But I was resisted by people... and I remember really having to fight, like literally ending up having a personal fight with these people over this, and it became very personal, because *I was the only one there*.

This narrative illustrates the lack of power as decision-maker but sufficient power in influencing another decision maker, the Editor of *Kinesis*, who then influenced the content of the paper, the organization, and the women's movement overall. The fact is that *Kinesis* played a fundamental role in influencing the Canadian women's movement and the members of that particular movement. Ela's narrative demonstrates not only her influence upon the Editor, but also her resistance, struggle, and determination in enabling for the creation of more relevant policies in VSW.

One has to consider how we study power relations particularly when those who have less power are often forced to conform in the presence of the powerful and additionally when those with power reinforce their entitlement and mastery. This is something that the theorist Scott (1990) attempts to examine, how those with power and those with less power perform in each other's presence, which he calls "a hidden transcript...a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant" (p. xii). He explains that the powerful and those constructed as powerless develop a hidden transcript which consists of their claims of their rule or dispossession. Although those who have been traditionally marginalized in feminist organizations may perform themselves within that marginality, they also critique those with power through various actions and processes of resistance. Mills (2003) concurs with Scott and further adds "in order to analyze a power relation, we must analyze the total relations of power, the hidden transcript as well as the public performance" (p. 41).

Also implied in Ela's narrative are the challenges as well as the counter resistance from privileged women, who were predominately white, to Ela's ideas and knowledge. Ela displayed her anger and frustration during the research interview when she asserted the effects of her contributions and ideas being appropriated by white women in leadership positions.

What ended up happening with the Editorial Board of *Kinesis*, and I remember this very clearly, is that they used a bunch of my ideas 'cause they came from a bunch of political experience, so I helped them write the statement, which nobody acknowledged. Then, what they remembered about it was the fight we had over some of the race questions. But I had helped them, actually, do some of the other work. It's a complete appropriation of labour, like [the Editor] would not have survived as Editor of *Kinesis*... without the support that I gave her on a day-by-day basis. I'm not saying I did all the work, she worked, she worked, but you know... and I know very well what her limitations are, politically. And she also found out what her limitations were, politically, at that time. I mean I also had limitations, I didn't have a lot of, you know, formal journalistic skills, which I couldn't get anybody to teach me.

Ela explained how those in positions of power with accumulated organizational knowledge and entitlements did not share with her the necessary journalistic knowledge and skills. Deriving from Ela's experience of power relations across multiple sites is how she had power in a marginal way, but also in a profound way. She emphasized this contradiction:

It was a paradox, it's the same paradox that we, we as women of colour find ourselves in society as a whole, which is the paradox of marginalized centrality. I was central, I was there every day, I was part of the everyday culture, I was a major contributor in the everyday culture and the everyday thinking, and the everyday intelligence, and the everyday campaign planning and priorities and so on and so forth, but...*I was not*.

Intersectional invocations, deployments, and effects of power can be exemplified from Ela's story. These included the following interlocking power relations: differently situated positionalities, State UI Top Up policies, Ela's ability to influence decision-makers, decision-makers' ability to influence as decision-makers, organizational roles, appropriation of knowledge, and power as resistance and rage. Such deployments of power intersected with each other producing their interlocking effects across relationships between the nation, women's movement and organizational historical legacies within the context of globalization (see Figure 5.1).

Göhler (2009) also contributes to this discussion of power. He explicitly refers to transitive power and intransitive power. Power as transitive refers to an outside point of reference and the ability to influence, whereas power as intransitive focuses on self reference (power inside) as a form of empowerment and shared communication. This framework is somewhat useful for a deeper understanding of the participants' conceptualizations of the power in organizations.<sup>180</sup> Göhler asserts that "power is the medium in social relations to structure fields of action. When power emerges or is

exercised, certain options to act are opened up or closed off to the parties involved" (2009, para. 29).<sup>181</sup> Intransitive and transitive power interact with each other to demonstrate the influences being invoked to challenge or reproduce hegemonic feminism. The participants in this section speak explicitly about power as the ability to influence a key decision-maker in the organization, who was then able to further influence the decision-making result. Hence, I imply that power relations were deployed in particular ways where the ability to influence from different positionalities within the organization interacted with each other with the intention to either challenge the organization or reproduce hegemonic practices.

### **Power as Organizational Role(s) and Accumulation of Organizational Knowledge**

This category of power relations as identified by participants involved their role or multiple roles within the organization as Board or Coordinating Collective members and staff. According to Manning (2003) "power is vested in positions of authority (legitimate power), but it is also available through other means. The power associated with a role or position gives the person with the power the right to exert power that is appropriate to job performance and organizational policy" (p. 70). Within VSW, power relations were invoked, deployed and responded to differently, based on a diversity of staff positions (i.e. *Kinesis* Editor, Administrator/Fundraiser, Program Coordinator), and also varied based on the precariousness or permanency of the positions (i.e. full-time, part-time, permanent, contract). Furthermore, participants' accumulated organizational knowledge deriving from such roles in the organization influenced the degree of decision making power. I argue that those who occupied multiple roles, particularly in less precarious positions and with the most decision making power, accumulated the most organizational knowledge. Such accumulated organizational knowledge was a form of power being invoked and deployed, producing a variety of oppressive, enabling, and resisting effects.

Manning (2003) discusses the power that is associated with a particular leadership role or position (i.e. *Kinesis* Editor or VSW Administrator/Fundraiser) within an organizational hierarchy. She states, "the power that resides in a particular role or position is related to the legitimate authority assigned to that role or position" (p. 72). According to the Society for Human Resource Management

(2006) this can also be referred to as "positional power" indicating that one's position in the organization confers some level of formal power (p. 38). They explain:

Your formal position in the organization is one source of your power. That position is usually invested with a title, a set of responsibilities, some level of authority to make decisions and act, and control of specific resources....It's the authority to act and to control resources that others want or need that generates power. These resources include the following: career - enhancing assignments for subordinate; permission to form a project and move it forward; approval of budgets, work plans, and vacation schedules; the power to appraise performance; money; promotions and pay raises; materials and equipment; information. (Society for Human Resource Management, 2006, pp. 38-39)

Such positional organizational power has the authority to make organizational decisions that affect the lives of other organizational members while promoting self-interest. Further, these key positions may facilitate or impede the development of organizational policies which relate to the organization's structure, processes or political positions. The access to and control over organizational knowledge as organizational capital may also be manipulated by those with the most power in the organization. Ethical dilemmas arise as feminists in such positions engage in critical organizational/self reflection about the making and reproducing of privilege and national practices. All participants identified permanent staff positions as holding and invoking the most organizational power, particularly regarding informing, enabling and influencing decisions (Mondros and Wilson, 1994). Clearly, with time such staff gained organizational knowledge, hence informing the work and direction of the organization, including its policies and vision.

Thornborrow (2002) illustrates power as position within organizations when she makes the important distinction between institutional status and local status. She explains that institutional status is the status attached to one's position within an institution (Board or Staff) (Thornborrow, 2002). Whereas the local status is the status which one negotiates for oneself while interacting with others. Institutional and local statuses not only interact with each other but also inform each other. What emerges from the narratives of the following participants regarding the Administrator and Fundraiser position, as well as the *Kinesis* Editor position, is that power relations within VSW shaped interactions as intersectional while bringing forth power as repression, enabling and resistance.

Stephanie, a straight woman of colour from the fourth era (2000-2008)<sup>182</sup>, explained that power is most present within organizational structures in the form of employment positions, seniority, time spent within a position, and various institutional and local statuses. Stephanie stated, "there's just something that happens, and I see this more where I work now, like the accumulation in time and

space...there's a particular kind of expertise that you can't really undo, like...it's not to say you learn everything". She further explained that this expertise or organizational accumulated knowledge is non-translatable to another. As discussed above, such power relations are reinforced by one's positionality and accumulated organizational knowledge. This can be further understood as a form of accumulated organizational capital which facilitates increased organizational entitlement and expertise.

Attached to one's accumulation of organizational knowledge and capital is one's sense of entitlement within the organization, which is an effect of power applicable also in the women's movement and larger nation-state. Hage's (2000) examination of the accumulation of national capital provides the framework to further theorize the relationship between the accumulation of organizational capital and national capital. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the interaction between the accumulated social justice organizational capital and national capital produces deployments and effects of power relations as spatial, affective, political and symbolic entitlements both within the nation and VSW. Stephanie acknowledged the dilemmas in negotiating organizational knowledge and the constant power struggles within oneself and those around her. She stated:

That's a real struggle...one is understanding other people's knowledge and ...getting to know and understanding who has been there for a long time or were there before. I've learned long ago, there's just no point in reinventing...it is really critical to understand paths that have been taken, tried and failed, or succeeded. Those dynamics...there's a maturity to that, I would say, and I don't know that I always had that, I think it's something I've learned...to respect.

Liz, a white woman staff from the second era, also discussed the power deriving from staff's experience and accumulated knowledge. Liz understood power as "multilayered":

While some of it comes from a more benign place, that comes from experience, like having done things and learnt things and knowing the ropes. Somebody who is new... like I did when I was new, I knew that there was no way I could contradict their talent because I knew none of this. Then as I became more familiar, I developed some of my own ideas and questions. And then there is power because of one's social location, it's the power that in some ways is trickier to challenge, it's more subtle.... And then the other one is experiential power... I think you have to question it but on the other hand... we don't want to get rid of that, we want people with experience to sometimes have more influence over. Well, I think like when I'm new somewhere... it would be very arrogant for me to say that I want you to change this, that experience is worth [something] and at times we write it off as just power. But, there has to be room for new ideas to move in and change things.

Sonia found knowledge and specifically organizational knowledge to be an important force within power relations. Organizational knowledge for Sonia is accumulated through time. This accumulation of organizational knowledge can be seen as the accumulation of organizational capital

that provides the entitlement to participate in decision-making processes within the organization. For Sonia, she fully participated in the organization because of the entitlements that developed over time, as she articulated:

I am part of VSW. So I would get heard not because I have more power than other people, but because I'm part of it. The way in which I've started to feel like I have power is in terms of being the one that receives the requests. Being the one that has to communicate certain and more administrative information [as the Women's Centre Coordinator].

The position of Administrator/Fundraiser which was renamed in 2002 as the Women's Centre Coordinator, was a very powerful position as it was most responsible for the finances and legal obligations of VSW under the Society Act of British Columbia<sup>183</sup>. The narratives clearly indicated how those who occupied this specific position, including myself and others, invoked and deployed power which interacted with our positionalities as privileged white or racialized women. As these privileged statuses interacted, we accumulated increased organizational and national capital which situated *us* differently from those who did not have similar accumulated entitlements.

The VSW Administrator/Fundraiser position required significant administrative, fundraising/financial skills and knowledge. This position had traditionally been held by white women reflecting over 20 years of systemic affirmative action in favour of educated white women. Such a position within many social justice organizations was responsible for adhering to State regulations regarding nonprofit organizations, as well as for producing the documenting culture of accountability demanded by funders. It was also VSW's last permanent position to become an affirmative action position in 1995.<sup>184</sup> Based on the narratives, many women of colour were extremely resentful of the entitlement attached to the Administrator/Fundraiser position particularly when it was occupied by white women. They also expressed their anger and frustration regarding the effects of power relations that translated into institutional racism. This institutionalized racism was grounded in white feminism's construction of racialized women as not capable of securing the organization's existence as white women had done since the 1970s.

Nilima's narrative illustrated how the Administrator/Fundraiser position was experienced as organizational power. Nilima, a woman of colour staff, was initially hired during the second era (1983-1991) through a UI Top up contract and later in the third era (1992-1999) hired into a permanent position via the Affirmative Action Policy. She explained that during the third era, the Administrator/Fundraiser position was occupied by a white middle-class educated straight woman who

exercised her power with a deep sense of entitlement, "my biggest complaint was that [she] kind of dictated it all". This entitlement as power was very much invoked within the staff collective and financial decisions. This further influenced relations amongst the staff. Nilima narrated:

I mean she was the person that organized the money. I mean she was the fundraiser and the administrator. I felt she was really- and it was who she aligned herself with, and that's how it kind of directed...I was very vocal. [A woman of colour staff] and I would get into debates, heavy debates, and back then also, you know what it was like in the women of colour communities, you don't air your dirty laundry in front of a white woman. You didn't say anything, *you stood in solidarity with each other*.

Nilima demonstrated that as women of colour hirings increased under the Affirmative Action Policy during the third era of the organization, they were expected to present themselves in solidarity with each other even when differences existed among them. Therefore, as power struggles and tensions surfaced among racialized staff, the one white staff in a dominant position remained central within the organization exemplifying a specific role of reproducing essentialist conceptions of the racialized. Nilima found this one staff to have too much power within the organization even when the organization was structurally shifting towards no longer hiring white women in the permanent and full-time positions.

Nilima illustrated how women of colour contributed to the reproduction of white women's privilege. White women played a fundamental role in legitimizing the first wave of women of colour permanent staff in VSW. It is through accumulated national and organizational capital that white women developed their entitlement which then facilitated the legitimization of racialized women's participation, knowledge and contributions within the organization. White women, who were seen as allies to racialized women, played an important role in opening up the space and welcoming the stranger<sup>185</sup>. I argue that what has remained silent and removed from such discourses of alliance building has been the important role that national entitlements have granted national bodies who then might chose to facilitate, open out, and give space to the Other. It must not be forgotten that such power relations remain in the hands of those with the most power. As much as white women in power were able to legitimize the work of some women of colour they also had the influence and power to also delegitimize the presence and work of other women of colour. Diwata, an immigrant heterosexual woman of colour staff during VSW's third era, brought forth a key point when she illustrated how VSW was an important site for white women to accumulate skills and experience which

then paved their career for the future, "VSW was their launching pad for their career". Based on the analysis, I argue that VSW was clearly a national site for accumulating national and human capital.

Zeenat, a lesbian of colour staff, articulated her frustration with the role of the white feminist Administrator/Fundraiser who held the "purse strings":

I just remember how angry I was...first of all the finances and what we had money to spend on, what was important was always made by [Administrator/Fundraiser], because she held the purse strings. She held the power of the organization. If she agreed with what I said, it would happen. *She held ALOT of power all the way through. Our power was limited based on whether or not she backed you.* This was partly because of the Administrator/Fundraiser position.... part of it was that and the fact that it was held in a *white woman's hands legitimized VSW.* Had a woman of colour had that position at that time, VSW would not have had the power it had...People listened to VSW because [she] was there. [She] was the face that legitimized VSW. *Having white women involved legitimizes us.* When you are all women of colour you become marginalized. *When you have white women involved in the organization or some kind of white power, your women of colour politics become a little more sanitized.*

Deriving from Zeenat, Nilima and Diwata's narratives, is the role of white women as the helper and sanitizer of race politics, *she* is the one that allows, *she* is the one that facilitates the entrance of the Other - *she is the exalted feminist of the nation.* As Thobani (2007) explains such national subjects are constructed as the national inheritors of rights and entitlements, and in this case it is only through their reproduction of their superiority, that they are able to facilitate *welcoming of the Other.*<sup>186</sup>

This entitlement is founded on the unequal distribution of what Hage (2000) argues is accumulation of national capital such as income, education, language, wealth, knowledge, and other national colonial, class, and gendered privileges.<sup>187</sup> This is apparent in the last few narratives discussed where the deployments of power become most apparent in relation to one's accumulation of organizational knowledge and capital, which further interact with the privileges attached to one's positionality. The entitlements that are attached to the white feminist national subject must be recognized as having been taken by force during colonization and reproduced through nation-building discourses.<sup>188</sup> Just as the national subject or Canadian citizen is perceived as caring, tolerant, benevolent, so are the white women who invested in diversity, inclusion and multiculturalism. The benevolent white feminist is the national subject who engages in shifting the organization by demonstrating the "progressiveness" of Canada as a nation. VSW becomes an important site of valorizing and stabilizing hegemonic white femininity. These invocations, deployments and effects of power reproduces national discourses of racialization, essentialism and exclusion within the landscape of Indigenous dispossession and Othering of people of colour.

## Power as Leadership and Empowerment

Power as leadership and empowerment included the forces of power to see opportunities, to demonstrate autonomy and freedom, as well as to engage in responsible and responsive relations of power. Various organizational theorists have attempted to provide a definition of empowerment within non-profit organizations. Mondros and Wilson (1994) refer to empowerment as a psychological state "a sense of competence, control, and entitlement-that allows one to pursue concrete activities aimed at becoming powerful" (p. 5). Lott (1994) discusses empowerment as a redefinition of power as "inclusive, consensual and heterogeneous in terms of who serves and who is served" (p. 175). She explains that this redefinition is important particularly for marginalized groups of people who have been traditionally excluded from nonprofit organizations or assigned secondary status.

Sammy, an Indigenous feminist was present within VSW during the third and fourth eras. It is only in the fourth era that she was hired on contract as a facilitator to support the organization. When I asked her if she felt she had power based on her role as facilitator within VSW, she explained that power was very much attached to her role. Sammy stated that power is "a negotiated relationship of opportunity" and the "ability to seize the opportunity, being able to say 'Okay, I can accept this opportunity and do it.'" Hence for Sammy, power is the ability to identify and grasp an opportunity for change. For Zeenat, power was also the ability to learn to navigate one's racialized queer self in a white dominant women's movement:

I learnt it, along the way. I walked in kind of fighting every battle and then, I also learned how to be quiet. I learned how to play race politics and how to articulate things so that people can hear me... I learned how to say things, we all do that, right. So I learnt that, I didn't come in with that. Actually that's part of the immigrant experience, I didn't learn it outside the country, I learned it inside the country.

Zeenat recognized that although we may have the ability and influence to emotionally and spatially shift white women's entitlement "but *they* ultimately still hold the reins of power... and as long as you know that, it doesn't necessarily take away from your power, what it does is it allows you to know how to find your power".

Anemki Wedom, an Indigenous two-spirited contract worker during VSW's third era, understood power as both hierarchy and leadership. She explained that the lack of Indigenous women's presence and participation in VSW was due to the lack of leadership:

It probably would have made a huge difference in terms of their ability to outreach to Aboriginal women. But in all the years that I volunteered with them, never once I don't think

did they ever hire an Aboriginal woman...So I think it had a lot to do with leadership and, you know...why they didn't... I don't know why they didn't.

Lillian, a white heterosexual Coordinating Collective member during the fourth era (2000-2008), saw power as "the ability to shift or influence or lead or change". Leadership was also articulated by Ruby who brought an additional level of complexity:

Power is something situational. Leadership is something that is situational. If you really understand what is leadership all about, it's not about telling people what to do, it's about working hard so others follow you. And also to recognize...you know...the areas where you are good at this and this, and take the leadership, but then let it go to who needs to go...

Similarly, Savannah saw power as "the capacity to vision, implement and reflect". She further argued that many organizations are too focused on acting and not visioning. For her, the ability to vision creatively requires a different kind of confidence and grounding than the ability to act, and "to take responsibility for the vision that you put out there in the world".

Manning (2003) explains that the ability to direct energy and power toward the creation of new sources, alternatives, and innovative solutions depends on the organization's ability to nurture such leadership towards empowerment and increased choices. Increased choices are important for realizing freedom and autonomy, as also discussed by participants. Power as *freedom* and *autonomy* focuses on being given the power to bring about change and to envision and implement that change. Zeenat recalled her experience as the first racialized non-white Editor of *Kinesis* during the third era and the mobilization that took place in building a community of women of colour within and through *Kinesis*. She explained, "I was given complete freedom at *Kinesis* and I was given the *power to infuse VSW* with the politics of what was happening in *Kinesis*" including the presence of women of colour on VSW committees which had been predominately white. Zeenat also clarified that she was given power within the VSW structure because of her full-time permanent position as Editor of *Kinesis*.

*Kinesis* played a profound and fundamental role in shifting VSW's composition as well as its organizational politics and culture. Zeenat further discussed power as *strength*, *empowerment*, and *skills building* which included the accumulation of organizational capital based on her presence and interaction within VSW and *Kinesis*:

*Kinesis* was a dream job, where else do you get feminism and journalism coming together... At such a key time of broadening it and enhancing it... I walked into a tradition that was beautiful, that was a gift, that was a fantastic creation of feminists.... I walked in with the *power to influence it and make it grow and reshape it*.... but broadened I would say, we threw something out but we mostly added. *It gave me a sense of my own power, it really empowered me*. I learned a lot of lessons like how to negotiate, how to speak publicly, and

just basic skills. It taught me the value of working with people even more than I had learned before because I had been in hierarchical people of colour organizations or other kinds of structures. The structural lessons I learnt were brilliant... how to negotiate collectivism, how to appreciate rounds, how to make them work...*It has created a sense of entitlement that very few places allowed me to actually fulfill.*

Zeenat also explained that the lessons learned from VSW included how to engage in a collective structure which made her realize her current dissatisfaction with organizing in the larger community. Most importantly, she also shared how she then developed through time a sense of entitlement which she had not been able to do in other places. This narrative provides a good example of the intersectional deployments and effects of power relations in VSW. The deployment of several power relations intersected, these included Zeenat's positionality, her role within the organization as *Kinesis* Editor, her ability to influence, the organization's history within the women's movement and nation, power as empowerment, and power as accumulation of organizational/organizing capital.

For ITTC<sup>189</sup>, VSW has contributed to her journey and provided the space for her to influence a product which for her was about creating change. She stated the following:

[VSW] helped me to where I am right now. They were part of my road, you know, they're part of my journey. Because I'm so happy to be able to say that I changed that [resource guide] to open up to the wider community and take out all that out-dated stuff, you know...I was able to influence change, *that is power...It's empowerment power.*

Power was also discussed by AJAY as the engagement with being responsive and responsible based on one's positionality. Specifically, for AJAY this meant the ability to own and negotiate one's power appropriately due to one's privilege. As a white permanent staff during the second and third eras, AJAY understood her relationship to racialized women as exercising one's power responsibly, she explained:

No! No! And not to, and not to rescue those women. They didn't need me to, right? It's not that they needed me to do that. *They needed me to own my stuff*, not worry about their stuff...*To own my power*, use my power appropriately and properly within what we were trying to do as an organization.

Hence, for AJAY it was important to demonstrate support to those who had been traditionally excluded and to invest in processes of inclusion. Entitlement attached to whiteness could not be erased but it could certainly be deployed as resisting and enabling by white feminists in VSW. As Stewart (2009) explains, when those with privilege become aware of their privilege they may develop a sense of responsibility and responsiveness towards investing in progressive change. Zeenat recognized that "white women had to learn... to learn when something was offensive in the

room...yes, white women really learned to catch up". The narratives highlight how some white women in dominant positions in the organization invested in a politics of intersectionality, anti-racism, and inclusion.

### **Power as (Cou)Rage and Anger**

*I had power in that moment of some kind, and anger that moved me, I used my anger to challenge his[her] entitlement. (Sammy)*

The last conceptualization of power as explained by participants depicts the deployment and effect of power as *rage*, *anger* and *courage*. Ahmed (2009) affirms that "rage can interpellate us; it can get through even our best defences" (p. 42). Ahmed discloses her frustrations regarding how racism gets reproduced in institutions and organizations. She articulates her pain, anger and sadness, as well as the emotionally taxing work of *doing diversity* or engaging in anti-racist work. She explicitly refers to "the unhappy consequences of embodying diversity" (Ahmed, 2009, p. 43). This embodiment is something we do not fully know how to inhabit as it is fragmented and scattered through power relations.

Cindy, a lesbian of colour *Kinesis* Editorial Board member was involved during the second era. She depicted her repeated frustrations not only regarding white writers of *Kinesis* who consistently spoke for racialized bodies but also the racist exclusions she experienced as she challenged VSW and *Kinesis*:

I mean *my rage came from hurt*, it came from other places, and probably one of them was my actual real feeling that I was not powerful, right? And so screaming and being angry was how I felt powerful. At the time I don't remember feeling afraid. I was just too damn, fucking mad. I was so mad, I was so mad and I felt betrayed by the feminists, who I thought, you know, is this utopia? So I assumed that of course their interests are going to include mine...and so finding out that actually that wasn't the reality...they actually don't have my interests in mind at all, or my mother's. I was hurt, hurt, hurt, hurt and quite pissed off that in the name of feminism they were doing this shit. How dare they. Because I would never dare to do that, in the name of feminism. To speak for my mother who is an immigrant woman, whose first language is not English.

Also for Zeenat, she came to understand power as rage, a power she had not known of before her engagement in VSW. She articulated "*I had a rage*, I would come in and I'd go 'I can't fucking believe this that white women are constantly telling me that I am throwing the baby out with the bathwater'". This rage expressed by Cindy and Zeenat exemplified the effects of power due to white superiority and normativity, resulting in racist ideologies and actions. During the early 1990s a transgressive shift was taking place within the mainstream women's movement and other social justice organizing. This

transgressive shift was also illustrated by Ela, Divali, and Diwata who depicted the invocation of rage by racialized women as a form of resistance that deeply disrupted hegemonic feminists' spatial entitlements.<sup>190</sup> Zeenat especially explained:

The concept of women of colour having influence and power was not present yet. We were brought in through *the politics of inclusion*. We were going to be included into something that already existed, the power structures had not change. I came in, I threw a fucking fit, they couldn't keep me shut up in those meetings, in those days I was very vocal, I was ready to walk, I was ready to walk every minute. You know it was this arrogance. I don't know if I can do that now...we've learned to compromise, but in those days it was very uncompromising because you were really powerful because we had women of colour caucuses... *we had no power, but we had rage and we had nothing to lose.*

These narratives illuminate how politicized women of colour were constructed as the most threatening in white feminist spaces because they did not cater to white women's national or organizational entitlements as natural and inevitable. These racialized feminists were constructed as what Ahmed (2009; 2010) refers to as "killjoy feminists" since they did not present themselves as the happy and smiling Other but rather as the angry feminists who kills the joy of the rightful feminist of the nation and the women's movement.<sup>191</sup> Ahmed (2009) argues that to be seen as a killjoy feminist is to cause the national white feminist "to lose their right to happiness, resting as it is on an ego ideal of being good and tolerant. You certainly should not speak of whiteness, which would implicate them in the force of your critique. You have to stay in the right place to keep your place" (p. 48). Hence, the requirement to present oneself as happy by smiling and being cheerful appears to be a requirement that many oppressed people must negotiate and learn to navigate as a gesture of compliance.

White women learned to recognize racialized women's rage and anger against racism and exclusion. Ann<sup>192</sup>, a white heterosexual woman who was both a VSW staff member and later a Board member during the mid 70s to 80s, provided an important illustration of this. She asserted:

When I was at VSW, which was the early days, even the second time around, right...it was by and large a white middle-class women's organization whose experience of race was nil. Whose growing up years was nil...for whom women of colour were Other. And they just couldn't get over it and most of us, you know, were raised on colonialism, women in my generation, when we were being taught...the model was similarly situated rights, you're born into your group, you stay in your group, you don't cross the border. And so I would imagine even for most white women *there would be a fear of women of colour.*

Additionally another white woman participant, Kinross, recalled witnessing an Indigenous two-spirited staff at VSW expressing her anger:

[She] was in a period in the latter of the 80s where she was really mad. She was really angry, and...so, it's really kind of interesting because some of it is just like this, a sharing of these [*hesitates*]... *being able to understand what made people so angry*, like, some of it was just

this kind of a connection to the anger, and I could go with that, I understood that, but I wasn't going to talk about my own feelings around how I was not one of those privileged white women, because I was too afraid to, and I felt like I - *I was afraid to get into the issue*, I felt like it would blow up in my face, really, you know that's what I felt like.

Kinross illustrated the process of comprehending such anger while hesitating being grouped with privileged white women as a working-class lesbian. She struggled during the latter years at VSW as she encountered colonial relations of power around class, queerness, and race. According to Zeenat this same Indigenous two-spirit feminist discussed by Kinross "was in a place where she was coming into her own... she was ready to confront her identity as an Aboriginal woman, having had that put on the back burner for so long, *she was coming into her rage*".

Sydney, a white lesbian staff, highlighted that during her involvement with VSW, it was a time within the women's movement when women were being encouraged to express their anger but predominately towards the "common enemy" - men or patriarchy. Such discourses of anti-patriarchy remained within a narrow understanding of "enemy" and essentialist categories of men and women. Sydney explained her understanding of the accumulated anger being expressed by women of colour, "you see, before women were angry at men...and we were united together against that enemy, but now we're the enemy, and they're [women of colour] taking it out on us". Sydney was extremely resentful that women of colour projected their anger and frustration onto white women, including herself. She did not feel that she was solely responsible for the pain and trauma associated with racism and colonialism.

Kivel's (1996) writing on *Uprooting Racism* specifically to a white audience provides a critical analysis of whiteness that is useful in analyzing these narratives. He states that "when people of colour are angry about racism it is legitimate anger. It is not their oversensitivity, but our lack of sensitivity, that causes this communication gap.... It is the anger and actions of people of colour that call our attention to the injustice of racism" (p. 93).<sup>193</sup> Kivel explains that within white culture, anger and conflict is often seen as a sign of failure rather than becoming more honest, dealing with the real differences and problems in our lives" (p. 93). He demonstrates that white people respond to such anger by becoming:

...scared, guilty, embarrassed, confused and we fear everything is falling apart and we might get hurt. If the angry person would just calm down, or go away, we could get back to the big, happy family feeling. We may back off in response, feeling that the relationship is falling apart. We aren't liked anymore. We've been found out to be racist. For a person of colour, this may be a time of hope that the relationship can become more intimate and honest. The anger

may be an attempt to test the gaps and possibilities of the friendship. They may be open about their feelings, to see how safe we are, hoping that we will not desert them. Or the anger may be a more assertive attempt to break through our complacency to address some core assumptions, beliefs or actions. (p. 93)

Kivel (1996) acknowledges how "tremendously draining, costly and personally devastating" it is for people of colour "to have to rage about racism...we need to ask ourselves how many layers of complacency, ignorance, collusion, privilege and misinformation have we put into place for it to take so much outrage to get our attention?" (p. 94). Vera recalled as a white lesbian permanent staff at VSW a specific lesbian of colour who challenged her tremendously by *giving her a hard time* and who had a profound impact on her politics and analysis. Specifically, Vera remembered this woman of colour's anger and frustrations as she called Vera on her privilege and whiteness. Vera expressed that these challenges broadened her understanding of her place in the world. She recalled saying to herself "shut up, [Vera], you poor little white girl'. You're just feeling sorry for yourself because people are calling you on things that you're part of. You're part of it, you can't pretend that you're not". Vera acknowledged this woman of colour's courage, forthrightness, and endurance during the research interview. She further explained, "[she] was really important in connecting... stepping back, gathering people... pushing, insisting". Vera expressed how such institutional and structural changes were necessary and that "lots of white women couldn't handle it".

It is important to recognize that anger is experienced and expressed at and from multiple fronts based on the power relations and interaction of gender, sexuality, ability, language, class, race, and other social locations of power. Additionally, those who have traditionally experienced this exclusion, are also fatigued from multiple and simultaneous exclusions and oppressions onto their bodies. This can be understood as a pivotal affective disempowerment. Clearly the more the women's movement understood these intersections, the more women dispossessed by the movement became angry and expressed this anger across generations. Zeenat, Divali, Diwata, and ITTC explained that they grew up with a very strong sense of rage against white people due to life experiences of colonialism, racism and racial exclusion both within Canada and in other Euro-western countries. Hence, rage as everyday living and everyday life across generations within imperial histories were very much invoked and deployed across sites of colonial encounters.

An example of historicized anger due to dispossession and exclusion is expressed by ITTC. ITTC's entire interview brought out a deep historical narrative of the rage and anger that accumulates

over time as an Indigenous girl-child, youth, woman, and mother within colonial Canada as a racist nation. This accumulation of rage as power derived from her interactions with white national subjects and policies that consistently reproduced the nation's essentialist construction of the "Indian" as the dispossessed disempowered Other. She narrated many stories of how she daily experienced and expressed this rage as violence. ITTC recalled her mother identifying her daughter's rage and begging ITTC to find alternative ways to be responsibly assertive.

Nilima remembered her participation in the Women of Colour Group who challenged *Kinesis'* content and culture, including racist hiring practices (see Appendix C.1: Women of Colour Group Meeting with *Kinesis*). This Group of racialized women became troubled by how women of colour were being represented. They also raised concerns regarding the white writers of these stories. Nilima specifically explained the concern that non-white women's lack of voice and representation within *Kinesis* fabricated the identity of the "unpoliticized woman of colour or immigrant woman" who was not worthy of writing in *Kinesis*.<sup>194</sup> Additionally, predominately privileged white women were traveling the world and bringing their representation of Third World experiences into *Kinesis*.<sup>195</sup> Nilima explained that there were also some women of colour traveling, but their voices were not represented in *Kinesis*.

White privileged women's colonial encounters during their travels to the South was very much centered in VSW during the first two decades. In particular, they were not only invited as news writers for *Kinesis* but also as keynote speakers for events including VSW Annual General meetings. For example, Lisa Hobbs, author of *India, India* (1961) and *I Saw Red China* (1966), was the keynote speaker for VSW's AGM in April 1971.<sup>196</sup> White women summarized their adventures and travels into the world of the racialized Other both inside and outside Canada which brought forth constructions of speaking and saving the Other as benevolent exalted subjects of the nation.<sup>197</sup> Their commitment to imperial liberal ideology were saturated in Orientalist writings of Otherness while reproducing the West and white feminism.<sup>198</sup> Hence, I argue that Western hegemonic feminism is invoked and deployed because of its relationship to the South and that this is precisely the site of power inhabited by exalted Western feminists.

Affluent white women with the necessary resources to travel the world reported back stories based on their perspective of racialized Other's struggles and organizing, including Third World

feminists. Specific privileges included accessing funds for such travels as well as the luxury of time, education, and writing skills demonstrates the accumulation of (inter)national capital which legitimized their voices in the newspaper *Kinesis* and the mainstream women's movement. It is therefore through the telling and printing of the Others' stories in *Kinesis* that white normativity, supremacy, and Eurocentrism were reproduced and sustained.

Heron's (1999, 2007) research focuses on Canadian white women as development workers and how they negotiate their positions and power relations when working in Third World countries as saviours, helpers, and benevolent subjects of the first world.<sup>199</sup> What is omitted from such discourses of exaltation is the recognition of imperial power relations that are invoked and deployed by white women development workers. This is precisely what Nilima and the Women of Colour Group brought forth regarding the coverage of racialized voices and struggles that were being (mis)presented through a Eurocentric perspective. These deployments of imperial power relations are also what Alcoff (1994) defines as "speaking for the Other" to legitimize one's own supremacy and dominance. Alcoff affirms that "the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation" (p. 306). Hence emerging from these narratives are the nurturing/saving constructions of white middle-class/bourgeois women's femininity.

Also illustrated are the misrepresentations and appropriations of Third World racialized histories, content, struggles and resistance. Nilima emphasized that the Women of Colour Group asked to meet with *Kinesis* to express their concerns not only regarding the lack of women of colour writers but the problems with white women writing such stories (see Appendix C.1: Women of Colour Group Meeting with *Kinesis*). The Group was also frustrated with *Kinesis*' assumptions that "women of colour weren't politicized enough or that women of colour couldn't write" for a newspaper.<sup>200</sup> Nilima explained:

We were really angry. *We were coming from a place of anger*...Racism was a huge huge issue. Emotions were quite high. But we knew we needed to be a bit strategic so, you know, we gave them some sort of concrete suggestions that they needed to work on as opposed to bringing us in and having us [do the work]. They were defensive....there was tension around, it felt to me that there was tension around um, that *we were attacking* them in some ways. And maybe we were. I mean we were challenging them for sure. But they did make some changes. They did... then the hiring started happening.

What emerged from these power struggles were forces of anger, defensiveness, instigation, invitation, dialogue, and institutional change. Deriving from such courageous and difficult meetings and discussions by both white women and racialized women were transformative policies of increased inclusion, belonging and leadership across a wider spectrum of women.

By honouring the earlier women of colour feminist who brought forth a strong anti-racist intersectional analysis, Zeenat emphasized such struggles as breaking and disturbing white hegemonic feminism's hold and entitlement. She emphasized:

They had pushed and pushed and pushed to make room and create a consciousness that we were needed, and that they could not move forward. We were the generation that was then, that had the legacy of having people who fought for us that we have to do something with it, we could not compromise, we were uncompromising in that first period.

Hence, power as rage was pivotal for change to take place not only within VSW but also within the mainstream women's movement. This rage has been articulated by many racialized feminists theorists including Lorde (1984) who recognizes anger as "loaded with information and energy" (p. 127) and Ahmed (2009) who emphasizes that "anger can open the world" (p. 51). As demonstrated thus far participants identified anger and rage as a form of resistance to the racism and exclusion experienced but it also enabled for the visioning and leadership as articulated by Savannah, Anemki Wedom, and Sammy. Lorde (1984) explains "anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification" (p. 127). She insists that racialized women must engage in anger so that a different world is imagined, she stated:

I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing, also.<sup>201</sup> (Lorde, 1984, p. 124)

Many participants articulated the necessary investment and engagement in changing the hegemonic feminist's culture by reflecting on how we talked to each other and how we understood each other's anger. Most importantly, examining who, when, how and why the 'killjoy feminist' was invoked was pivotal to strive towards challenging hegemonic power relations. Talking through the many invocation and eruptions of power relations was an important response to anger and rage. As Lillian stated, "I understand that so much is related to oppression and how people react to people's anger, I don't want to be a white woman that's saying 'you're too angry'. Right, because I know that comes up a lot". Her responsiveness as a white woman involved recognizing the anger as well as

knowing where that anger came from for women who have traditionally and who continue to experience multiple forms of oppression and exclusion within the women's movement. As discussed in the next section, experiences of exclusion are very much embedded across multiple sites of organizations, movements, state, nation, and globalization.

### **Multiple Sites of Power Relations: Organizations, Movements, Nation-State, and Globalization**

VSW can be constructed as one of the institutions or apparatuses of the State, which has been theorized as "the shadow state" to reflect the relationship between non-profit organizations and the State (Trudeau, 2008; Wolch, 1990). The shadow state was first identified by Wolch (1990) as "a para-state apparatus comprised of multiple voluntary sector organizations, administered outside of traditional democratic politics and charged with major collective service responsibilities previously shouldered by the public sector, yet remaining within the purview of state control" (p. xvi). This concept initially focused on the relationship of offloading State responsibilities onto the non-profit sector due to the restructuring of social services and the welfare state. The privatization of social services required non-profit organizations to provide social services while being funded by and accountable to State authorities.

Trudeau (2008) explains that, "recent restructuring has introduced new arrangements of power that have engendered multiple ways in which institutions of the state and civil society interact....towards a relational view of the shadow state" (p. 669). Hence this relationality between the State and a feminist organization such as VSW has real material and discursive implications in contesting and reproducing national discourses and practices. This relationality is further discussed by Jessop (2007) through strategic-relational approach (SRA). This approach considers the State as a social relation rather than functioning in isolation. The State coexists with multiple social relations and complex interactions with differently positioned subjects and social institutions.<sup>202</sup> Such State mediated relations bring forth a "complex web of structural interdependencies and strategic networks that link the state system to its broader social environment" (Jessop, 2007, p. 6). Hence, this indicates the State's dependency on labour and resources produced in society and not necessarily within the State apparatus.

Other scholars have described the *shadow state* as the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) (Gilmore, 2007; Rodriguez, 2007; Smith, 2007). According to Andrea Smith (2007) and Dylan Rodriguez (2007), the NPIC is a system of relationships between the State (or local and federal governments), other funders (ie. foundations), the owning classes, and non-profit/NGO social service and social justice organizations. Smith (2007) argues that the NPIC diverts funds through foundations into private hands while redirecting "activist energies into career-based modes of organizing" (p. 3). Additionally, she asserts that the non-profit industrial complex obscures State and corporate hegemonic colonial discourses in the name of philanthropic work. Smith is most concerned with how this system urges social justice movements to replicate capitalist, colonial and patriarchal structures and behaviours rather than contest them. Social change theorists exposing the NPIC's complicities and complexities in reproducing capitalist state and national discourses argue that the NPIC performs a devastating role in policing and managing dissent while sustaining the State and its construction of social relations (Gilmore, 2007; Rodriguez, 2007; Smith, 2007). Within non-profit organizations, such social relations secure the reproduction of the relations of production. Hence, the workings of power particularly through labour ensure that the State apparatus and its ideologies are solidified (Althusser, 2004). Hence, I argue that the deployments of power are embedded in State practices and formulations, which also become invoked across and within VSW, the women's movement and the nation. The making, mechanics, and interactions of power relations are mediated by such relations.

Acker (1995) explains that as State funding become available to feminist organizations, State agencies begin to define the conditions under which organizations would be funded. This has often resulted in shifting organizational focus from confronting oppressive relations (structural change) to services focused solely on the victims of such relations (service delivery). An important struggle and tension experienced by feminist organizations is the dilemma and contradictory context of providing feminist services while receiving government funding as this solidifies an ongoing relationship of power with the State. Acker (1995) recognizes that State support may be essential to the survival of feminist organizations but it simultaneously undermines their intended goal.

As also discussed by other feminist theorists, State relations bring about organizational demands which contribute to strained relationships and power relations both internally and externally to feminist organizations (Das Gupta, 2007; Lee & Cardinal, 1998; Mertzendorf, 2005; Ng, 1990).

These theorists demonstrate how government funding changes the culture of feminist organizations by shifting goals and priorities, as well as organizational structure, leadership, and decision making processes. In particular, democratic/collectivists feminist organizations, due to their nonhierarchical and collective structures are often micromanaged by funders because they are perceived to lack accountability which has been predominately attached to bureaucratic leadership and authority.

Ng (1990) explains that funding requirements and procedures are constantly changing which make the process of applying and receiving funds, as well as reporting, increasingly complicated, conflictual, and time-consuming. Furthermore, such funding constraints often create a culture of precariousness, particularly among marginalized alternative women's organizations. Funding limitations aggressively push feminist collective organizations towards a more hierarchical structure while increasing tensions between and amongst Board and staff members. Due to the impact of globalization and privatization in the last two decades, feminist organizations have witnessed regressive State funding shifts and the restructuring of funding programs. Many women's organizations experience downsizing, closures, loss of services and staff, as well as increased staff burnout. These cutbacks brought on by globalization and free-trade agreements have not only been detrimental for feminist organizations but especially more so for women depending on such organizations for services and support.

As internal women's movements and VSW organizational power struggles were invoked, so were the deployment of State and national systemic and institutional power. Most of the participants recalled federal, provincial and municipal governments consistently implementing funding cuts while restructuring Canada's social safety net. When feminist organizations contested these regressive cuts to social services, they experienced backlash and saw the rise of liberal feminism.<sup>203</sup> As social justice organizations attempted to survive in a neoliberal conservative climate, the narratives illustrated how such a climate also affected social justice organizations. Women's organizations found themselves catering to liberal ideologies and goals, particularly liberal equality discourses. Stephanie explained the struggles in resisting neo-liberal conservative agendas:

It's really hard to resist that, because...you're like focused on survival, especially smaller spaces. But I think it's also the capacity to be an advocate and to speak against these conditions becomes detrimental to your capacity to actually access funding,...we're so marginal and unimportant.... I mean, the impact on our bodies and our individual lives and families, just the ripple effect throughout the whole thing.

Many of the participants discussed power relations deriving from the women's or social justice movements, as well as the State and nation which intersected with or reproduced similar power struggles within the organization. ITTC discussed Canada as a white settler nation and specifically focused on how the Canadian flag was a symbolic reminder of colonialism:

The flag I said, to me, is a symbol of power over my people. Canada Day is to remind our people 'this is Canada, we have power over you. Look at all these millions of people. Don't forget. You're in the minority. Look at all these millions of people'...Millions of dollars going into...and then there's National Aboriginal Day, I can't get it into the news!

Phoenix, a racialized lesbian permanent staff during VSW's third era, also argued that the struggles and anger amongst women were very much an effect of frustrations with the State and lack of funding. She explained:

Because you can't express that anger in a satisfactory way to the State, you take it out on the people closest to you.... I think most non-profits have those challenges of being underfunded, you know, trying to do so much with so little, and again that frustration of always just scraping by and being under-resourced, it takes its toll.

A more recent example of anger emerging from State policies and decisions is the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics in the Province of British Columbia. Savannah expressed this:

I feel really angry...I feel really, really angry around the Olympics stuff, and I feel my anger is growing and I know I'm going to need to get into something really active...I'm going to need to release that anger through some activism around it and in my community.

Mega events such as the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver can be seen as invoking political, symbolic, affective and spatial power relations which had oppressive material effects such as the destruction of Indigenous lands, increased poverty and homelessness, and massive funding cuts to social services in the City of Vancouver and the province of British Columbia.<sup>204</sup> For many anti-Olympics activists, these power relations produced physical, emotional, political, and symbolic displacement which were expressed with resistance and anger.

Another important deployment and effect of power was expressed by Zeenat as embedded in her role as *Kinesis* Editor which influenced other feminist spaces outside VSW through committee and coalition work. All participants remembered VSW's role as a leader in the women's movement particularly in advancing gender, race and intersectional politics, Zeenat explained:

It was happening in the larger movement but in nowhere the way it was happening at VSW. VSW was a *leader*, the unions were starting to talk about it and looking to us. Other women's organizations who were already hiring women of colour but did not have the politics in place, the structures to actually empower these women to have power, to have voice... we, from the beginning, I had voice because I came from [home country]. *I was not born in the politics of marginalization, I was not born accommodating white women, I was born fighting*

*colonization*. I came in and I was not going to take a back seat to no white woman, you know. I didn't learn to compromise.

For women who had participated in social justice organizing outside Canada, particularly those who immigrated to Canada, they found themselves employing social change tactics that had been successful in their 'home' country. Divali, Diwata, Zeenat, and Ela explained their engagement with feminist or social justice organizing in other countries prior to entering Canada and their deep frustration with the Canadian women's movement for not recognizing that history. Divali explained that often as an immigrant woman of colour, the Canadian women's movement only recognized immigrant women's entry point to activism and feminism within the Canadian women's movement, hence erasing their histories of organizing in other First World and Third World countries.

By casting the West as the unacknowledged subject/norm and the "Third World" as an artificially homogenized object/Other, Western feminists deny Third World women's subjectivity and status as active agents. Mohanty (2003) notes that this kind of discursive categorization has its roots in liberal humanism, a model often critiqued by feminists. She proposes that a better theoretical model involves intersectionality, in other words, constructing the category of *women* in "a variety of political contexts that often exist simultaneously and overlaid on top of one another" (p. 32). This model is politically focused and highly context-specific, with an alertness to the links between women and groups of women without falling into false generalizations. It also carefully acknowledges the contradictions as well as the commonalities in women's experiences across time, geographies, and locations.

When Ela thought of the effects of power as processes of exclusion and lack of permanent employment during her time in Vancouver and VSW, she recalled the following:

Well, you know, I left Vancouver because I couldn't get a full-time job in a progressive organization. And my experience there, whether it was with VSW or subsequently with a bunch of other different, solidarity-based organizations, was that people would actually use me to train the people they wanted to hire. I remember feeling very strongly that I had to get out of there, because *I would never get work*...as long as I was there, because, they even would recognize my skills, but they would not hire me.

This was also referred to as "trying to break into the women's movement" by Zeenat. She further explained:

There was rage everywhere and it was enough, people had had such a hard time getting jobs, trying to break into the women's movement. The racism was powerful, direct, there was blatant condescension, talking down to, women of colour were not really seen as.....bright or... I mean we were really really really [*pause*] angry and we were enraged. And women of

colour started to talk to each other... and so what had happened at *Kinesis/VSW* was that there were a few women of colour hanging around who had been volunteering and trying to break in.

This form of exclusion from social justice organizations was very much rooted in national discourses of entitlement and privilege. Clearly, those who occupied permanent positions ensured the security, stability and value of their entitlements while producing precarious contract positions for the Other. Such colonial encounters resulted in welcoming the stranger into the organization but only temporarily while ensuring nation-building practices of carefully guarding the white women's movement.

I would like to further analyze the State as relational in regards to the reproduction of labour and the category of immigrant women. In particular, Althusser's (2004/1971) examination of the reproduction of labour within the State is imperative to understanding how this very labour is also required and reproduced across all institutions as a way of functioning. As discussed earlier, I consider VSW *a shadow State apparatus* which not only provided services funded by the State but also reproduced the labour required for its existence and survival. Power differences in the form of exploitation and exclusion determined how differently positioned subjects in relation to the nation produced labour that was differently valued. This chapter and Chapters 6 and 7 expose how women constructed as Other produced precarious labour such as unpaid, underpaid and flexible labour while others secured labour that was considered of more value contributing to their accumulation of organizational and national capital.

Marx's (1967) contributions provide an understanding of exchange based on production through labour exploitation. By accumulating capital, the wealthy focused on a complex mechanism of production where wage labour was central. Skeggs (2004) illustrates how value was established through exchange via relations yet "in this exchange the relationship to the commodity itself generates different forms of personhood" (p. 9). Hence, through the production of labour, labourers and commodities, as well as the values attached to them, historical social relations are established and shaped between differently positioned groups. Skeggs explains that society recognizes categorizations of race and class not only as classifications or social positionings but also cultural constructions imposed onto bodies which have been "generated through systems of inscription in the first place" (p. 1).

Skeggs (2004) offers an understanding of how racialized bodies as Other become fixed and are excluded symbolically from performing whiteness. Such markings onto bodies inscribed symbolic systems of denigration and degeneracy within discourses of respectability and morality. Arising from the above discourses of belonging, entitlement and inclusion is the determination of how certain groups become consolidated as the *problem* spatially, emotionally, politically and symbolically. These organizational discourses did not only produce and reproduce power relations as transfers of power but also articulated what was desirable, undesirable, legitimate and illegitimate.

Since the 1980s, feminist scholars have brought to the forefront the struggles of *immigrant women* particularly those of working-class women of colour in Canada (Arat-Koc, 1999; Das Gupta, 1999; Giles & Preston, 2003; Lee, 1999; Ng, 1992; Ng & Das Gupta, 1981; Thobani, 2000b). In particular the work of Roxanna Ng and Tania Das Gupta (1981) was among the first to interrupt liberal feminist discourses that invisibilized immigrant women's labour in Canada, which they referred to as the "captive labour force" (p. 83). Clearly such scholarly work has not only emphasized the multiple and simultaneous forms of exclusion experienced by immigrant women but also a nuanced understanding of the intersections of labour, race, citizenship, class, immigration and gender upon the bodies of racialized working-class women in Canada.

According to Thobani (2003), "the category 'immigrant' is a racially coded one which has come to be a referent for all people of color within Canada regardless of their citizenship or actual legal status in the country" (p. 408). The term *immigrant women* becomes constructed by its relationship to the State as bodies of colour that are *seen* as immigrants by dominant national subjects, therefore not belonging or belonging differently regardless of one's formal legal status.<sup>205</sup> Ng, since the 1980s, has provided feminists with an important understanding of the construction of immigrant women as a discourse that is sustained by the Canadian nation and the State.<sup>206</sup> Ng (1992) argues that immigrant women's problems "are the products of Canadian society, and have little to do with their cultural backgrounds. The institutions of Canada, notably our legal system, are important determinants of the unequal status of immigrant women" (p. 20). Hence, State constructions of immigrant women are embedded in racial, gender, and class biases which are rooted in the legal and economic processes of society, such as Canada's immigration policy. As immigrant women within the women's movement and

the larger Canadian society lobbied for change and contested such hegemonic power relations at play, VSW also experienced such contestations.

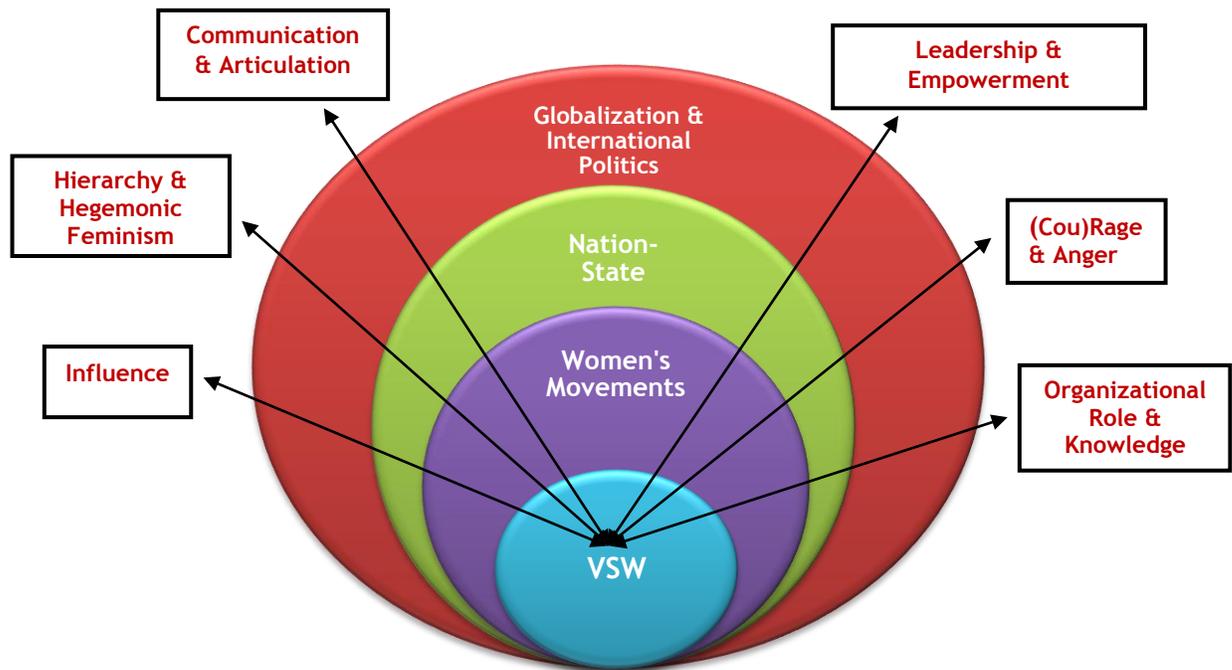
Also important to emphasize in this analysis are the effects of economic globalization and restructuring upon racialized immigrant women in relation to the production of exploitative labour. As economic globalization intensified since the early 1980s through Canada's involvement with free-trade agreements such as CUFTA (Canada-US Free Trade Agreement) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), Canada was seen as a neoliberal state undergoing rapid economic restructuring. Emerging from such policies were processes of downsizing, privatization and deregulation as a way to participate in global competition (Man, 2004; Ng, 1992). Therefore the State developed new immigration initiatives to correspond to such global competition.<sup>207</sup> Man (2004) states "gendered and racialized institutional processes in the form of state policies and practices, professional accreditation systems, employers' requirement for 'Canadian experience' and labor market conditions marginalize" immigrant women into precarious positions or unemployment (p. 135). This is clearly depicted in the history of VSW especially during the second and third eras when racialized women were channeled into part-time, volunteer, contract and underpaid or unpaid work in order to provide labour for the organization. Specifically, State employment programs such as UI Top Up positions in VSW often were the only positions available to racialized women in VSW.

The narratives of Ela, Nilima, Diwali, Diwata and Cindy describe deskilling processes which they experienced within VSW, the women's movement, and the larger nation under the State produced category of immigrant women. I would like to argue that VSW participated explicitly in streaming particular groups of women in unpaid, part-time, and flexible labour with no benefits or job security. With the arrival of more intensified economic globalization policies, immigrant women of colour were increasingly labeled as flexible and disposable labour (Man, 2004). I assert that the process of building the nation in itself has always been highly dependent on the disposable and precarious labour of Others and strangers, and that the emergence of economic globalization in the 1980s only intensified that situation for a larger group of women.

Based on the findings of this chapter, I propose the following illustration of power relations across multiple sites: VSW, Women's Movements, Nation-State, and Globalization/International Politics

(See Figure 5.1). I also demonstrate the presence of the different conceptualizations of power relations being invoked and deployed across these multiple sites as discussed by the participants.

**Figure 5.1: Intersectionality of Power Relations Across Multiple Sites**



All organizational sites function within intersecting modes of power relations that reflect and embody historical social relations, which I call colonial encounters. The multiplicities of power relations across and in between globalization, Canada as a nation-State, the women's movement and VSW mark both the internal and external power differences as these sites intersect to reproduce nation-building discourses of belonging, citizenship, entitlement and Othering. Across these sites, also emerges the complexity of subjectivities that must be read against the realities of Canada as a settler nation and the formation of a colonial state. The mechanics of power relations are always in full force across all intersecting social relations which are imposed, reproduced, and contested. The State is explicitly involved in the making of subjectivities pertaining to the value of labour and work for poor and working-class immigrants of colour.

The data from this research demonstrates how the State constructs and imposes identities based on how subjects are historicized and embedded in the nation while recognizing the

contradictions, tensions, and resistance. Discourses of who truly belongs to the nation and who remains forever a stranger also are asserted and ripple through these multiple sites. Hence, reproducing and sustaining that which ought to remain the "we" and the "they". These ripples of such nation-building discourses within the women's movement in Canada find themselves at times quietly, and at other times aggressively being replicated and maintained within feminist organizations.

Feminist organizations and social justice organizations in Canada have primarily focused on challenging State practices and constructing themselves as opposite to the State. This narrow focus on the State as enemy has resulted in a lack of critical examination of the ideologies and values within social justice organizations. Such failings demonstrate in itself the complicity of sustaining economic globalization, national discourses, and State ideologies.<sup>208</sup> This chapter illustrates the eruption of colonial anxieties across intersecting social relations as feminists' experience disruptions and contestations in the accumulation of organizational privileges and national capital. Conflicts, differences and tensions across race, ethnicities, class, sexualities, citizenship, abilities, languages, and education surface to highlight the complexity of differently positioned participants based on their social relations to each other and their conceptualizations of power across sites.

## **Conclusion and Considerations**

This chapter illuminates three main contributions to the literature on the conceptualization of power relations in organizations. First, that power is present in all relations and that it manifests itself through three phases: invocation, deployment and effects. Second, three considerations consistently emerge when considering the invocation and responses to power relations: one's positionality or social relations, the intersectionality of power relations, and the historical colonial context. How one responds to power relations is largely influenced by one's multiple and simultaneous positionalities and social locations.<sup>209</sup> Therefore, it was imperative for me as the researcher to strive to fully understand each participant's historical and situated material and discursive realities which informed their responses to power and their relationship to the nation. Power comes to be fabricated through the constant interaction of race, class, citizenship status, education, queerness/straightness, marital status, presence of children, ability, migration history, language, age, and organizational history, including number of years and positions held with the organization.

The third important contribution is the six conceptualizations of power relations identified by the participants which are not distinct and separate but rather are always interacting with each other. Power as (1) communication and articulation, (2) hierarchy and hegemonic feminism, (3) influence, (4) organizational roles and accumulated organizational knowledge, (5) leadership and empowerment, and (6) rage and anger. These conceptualizations of power by participants contributed to the theorizing of power as repressive, enabling and resistance. Such multiple deployments of power relations produce simultaneous struggles both with the subjective self as well as among subjects. I also imply that as the participants engaged in power struggles, they also participated in their own subject formation within national discourses of entitlement, home and belonging.

This chapter asserts that diverse forms of subjectivity are produced in negotiation with existing power relations. I emphasize that power relations do extend beyond the State, where power is not owned or captured by one group; rather, it circulates within society and is constantly being negotiated in and around institutions. Mills' (2003; 2004) situates discourse as transmitting and producing power while reinforcing it. Yet, discourse also undermines power and exposes it, creating its vulnerabilities. Discourse does not simply construct material objects, it also constructs certain events and sequence of events into narratives. Mills argues that the most important structure of discourse is its effects of exclusion, which is useful for studying the exclusions experienced within feminist organizations by marginalized women across time and political climates. This chapter provides an important entry point into the next chapter on theorizing national discourses of *entitlement* and *home making*. Specifically, power to accumulate organizational and national capital illustrates the power to legitimize entitlement and the making of home. Racialized bodies' accumulation of national capital is inevitably based on white national subjects' entitlement to grant such capital to racialized people.

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<sup>152</sup> I will further discuss the concept of *enabling* later in this chapter.

<sup>153</sup> These include the religious ISA (churches), the educational ISA, the family ISA, the political ISA (includes different political parties), the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA (media), the cultural ISA (literature, sports, arts) (Althusser, 2004. p. 90).

<sup>154</sup> According to Althusser (2004), "what distinguishes the ISAs from the (Repressive) State Apparatus is the following basic difference: the Repressive State Apparatus functions predominantly 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function predominantly 'by ideology'" (p. 90).

<sup>155</sup> See Mills (2004), "this relation involves more possible role positions than simply that of the master-slave presupposed in the State power models; it also involves an analysis of the degrees of power involved in the relation rather than an assumption that in any relation there is simply a powerful participant and a powerless one (p. 34).

<sup>156</sup> I use counter-resistance here as defensiveness and hegemonic responses to being contested.

<sup>157</sup> Balibar (1991) and Wallerstein (1991) challenges such racist notions of inferiority and suggest that race functions as a consequence of social definitions and constructions of group power relations.

- <sup>158</sup> Meekosha (2006) explains, "disability became the rationale for eugenic policies that were destined to become the mechanisms for the exclusion of different races and religious and cultural groups from the immigration process or, in the case of indigenous peoples, bred out" (p. 165).
- <sup>159</sup> Additional questions asked to the research participants include "when you think about the word 'power' what does it mean to you? When you think about power in organizations, what do you think about?"
- <sup>160</sup> As discussed in the Introductory chapters, participants were categorized in the following organizational eras: 1971-1982 (Era 1); 1983-1991 (Era 2); 1992-1999 (Era 3); 2000-2008 (Era 4).
- <sup>161</sup> Collins (1993) explicitly recognizes race, class and gender as interlocking categories of analysis that together cultivate profound differences in our personal biographies.
- <sup>162</sup> See Crenshaw's (1994) work on intersectionality.
- <sup>163</sup> According to Zeenat "because we had always been organized in opposition to white racism and our politics were fairly simple and early, you know. Black and white, in a sense... it was white, and black. That was a struggle, initially, when we started to complicate our analysis... when we started to create space and power that brought in women of colour and Aboriginal women that's when you started to see the development of the complexities, the differences between us. So we no longer were natural allies... united around the same thing. We started to look at the differences between our politics and how we were affected... politics of citizenry, who's a citizen, whose country is this, all this stuff, everything. And the different ways we were affected".
- <sup>164</sup> I first discussed the concept of *frame* from a discussion with Lee Maracle about four years ago, when we were discussing the shortcomings of the women's movement and specifically white women. She explained to me that the failures of white feminism was that white hegemonic frame remained narrow and the importance of widening this frame which would inevitably bring alternative, silenced, and omitted knowledge and histories into that frame of knowledge.
- <sup>165</sup> Creese and Kambere's (2003) study focuses on recently arrived African immigrant women in Vancouver.
- <sup>166</sup> See Creese (2010) for more discussion on the erasure of marginalized Othered linguistic capital.
- <sup>167</sup> AJAY, a white heterosexual white woman staff from the second and third eras.
- <sup>168</sup> Laura, a Board member and past VSW president from the first era.
- <sup>169</sup> Interestingly, I was only able to track down who she was through the organization's year-end tax slips (T4s) at RBSC UBC.
- <sup>170</sup> RBSC UBC.
- <sup>171</sup> See Hage (2000) framework of accumulated national capital in Chapter 2 of dissertation.
- <sup>172</sup> See Ward's (2008) theorizing of white normativity in social justice organizations. Ward specifically discusses the ways queer organizations preserve white identity even while including diversity which she refers to as "white ways of achieving diversity" (p. 577).
- <sup>173</sup> VSW Annual Report, 1988-1989, p. 4.
- <sup>174</sup> VSW Archives. Board meeting minutes 1970s; Coordinating Collective meeting minutes 1990s; Coordinating Collective meeting minutes 2000s.
- <sup>175</sup> VSW Archives. Folder - Transsexual Assertiveness Training and Transsexual Group.
- <sup>176</sup> Within this Archival folder on Transsexual Assertiveness Training, I found notes with messages for the Coordinator of this Training and Support Group from "transsexuals" who were registering for the workshops or other request for information and support regarding transsexuality/transgendering. The Coordinator wrote: "Dear Friend; The Vancouver Status of Women is forming a Transsexual Support Group. There are no support services available for people experiencing gender identity conflicts. Their problems often appear insurmountable, frequently leading to drug abuse, alcoholism and suicide. With the help of a post-operative transsexual currently working at V.S.W., we are endeavouring to change this abhorrent situation. We would appreciate any publicity and/or referrals you could give us in this matter. Interested persons are asked to call or write [Coordinator] at our above address. Thanking you in advance for your support" (Letter from Coordinator to community, 1979, p. 1).
- <sup>177</sup> See Hayes (2003) and Namaste (2000).
- <sup>178</sup> See Appendix C.2 for Transgendered policy.
- <sup>179</sup> As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, Unemployment Insurance (UI) Top Ups played a contradictory role within many non-profit organizations by keeping marginalized staff in precarious positions while facilitating an entry point for many women who would not have traditionally been hired into these organizations.
- <sup>180</sup> Max Weber (1978) understanding of power can be seen as transitive because it primarily focuses on exerting one's influence over others in a systemic and institutional manner. Weber explains, "power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (p. 53).
- <sup>181</sup> Göhler (2009) explains, "power can structure fields of action in a dual way, transitively or intransitively...transitive power interlocks the fields of action of the parties involved in social relations by executing influence, intransitive power creates a common field of action in the first place by 'speaking and acting in concert'" (para. 29).
- <sup>182</sup> Stephanie began at VSW as a volunteer and later as a part-time staff and Coordinating Collective member during the fourth era.
- <sup>183</sup> The Society Act of BC is the legal body with a society (organization) registers to be incorporated under this Act. Currently, five or more persons may form a society by filing with the registrar, and providing the proposed society's constitution and bylaws. This will be further discussed in Chapter 7 on VSW's Constitution.
- <sup>184</sup> The *Kinesis* Editor position as a permanent full-time position was the first to enforce the affirmative action hiring practice in 1992, followed by the Program Coordinator position.
- <sup>185</sup> See Ahmed (2000) theorization of the *stranger* and *strange encounters*.
- <sup>186</sup> Ahmed (2000) theorizes the *welcoming of the stranger* within discourses of multiculturalism and diversity which remain framed within national colonial practices and encounters.
- <sup>187</sup> For Van Dijk (2008), this would include "membership in a dominant or majority group" (p. 30).
- <sup>188</sup> Hage (2000), Thobani (2007), Ahmed (2000), Carty (1999), Moreton-Robinson (2003), and Yuval-Davis (1996) all contribute to demonstrating colonial nation-building processes which further facilitate national white subjects' accumulation of national capital and the implications upon Indigenous dispossession.
- <sup>189</sup> ITTC is the acronym for '*Indigenous to this Continent*'. ITTC was an Indigenous contract staff from the third era.

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<sup>190</sup> Nilima and Zeenat recognized earlier pivotal feminists of colour who played a leadership role in 1980s and 1990s, who "gave voice and power to women of colour who had been fighting for the longest time". These feminists of colour were seen as having pushed and fought for an anti-racist and later an intersectional agenda that would no longer silence and marginalize racialized women. Zeenat described one particular women of colour leader, who "did not think that white women were smarter or that she had to be nice. She came in with angry politics... and not ever ever ever doubting her marginality.... not ever feeling marginal".

<sup>191</sup> Ahmed (2009) suggests that, "there is a relationship between the negativity of certain figures and how certain bodies are encountered as being negative" (p. 48). In Chapter 6, I further discuss the making of the "killjoy feminist".

<sup>192</sup> Ann active during VSW's first and second eras from the mid 70s to the mid 80s in various capacities.

<sup>193</sup> Kivel (1996) states, "anger is a scary emotion in our society. In mainstream white culture we have been taught to be polite, never to raise our voices, to be reasonable and to keep calm. People who are demonstrative of their feelings are discounted and ridiculed" (p. 92).

<sup>194</sup> Ela also indicated as did Nilima that white women in the movement were labelling women of colour as non-feminist, or not political enough, which also informed hiring practices. This is further supported in the *Kinesis* Editorial Minutes regarding hiring of non-white women.

<sup>195</sup> Nilima recalled "I remember there was a lot of articles written by women going abroad, coming back, writing articles for *Kinesis*, around women of colour issues from all over the world".

<sup>196</sup> See VSW's [SWACC] Newsletter (February/March 1971) which announces the keynote speaker of the upcoming Constitution Meeting as Lisa Hobbs. Lisa Hobbs was a journalist, traveler and author of *India, India* (1961), *I Saw Red China* (1966), and *Love and Liberation* (1970).

<sup>197</sup> See Thobani (2007) theorizing of exaltation and nation-building.

<sup>198</sup> See Mohanty's (2003) work on *Under Western Eyes* where she exposes white feminism's racist constructions of essentializing Third World women.

<sup>199</sup> Heron's (1999) work is profoundly important as it makes the case of the continued persistence of "the project of white, bourgeois identity formation that was undertaken in earnest during the era of empire"(1999, p. ii-iii). She further explains that colonial continuities of "the presence of racialized Othering, the ambivalent positioning of white women as ever-minimal bourgeois subjects, and the individualist imperative to conceive of the self as moral" (p. iii).

<sup>200</sup> Nilima.

<sup>201</sup> Lorde (1984) states, "women responding to racism means women responding to anger: the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation" (p. 124).

<sup>202</sup> Jessop (2007) suggests that the State "changes shape and appearance with the activities it undertakes, the scales on which it operates, the political forces acting towards it, the circumstances in which it and they act...." (p. 3). He provides an important examination of State mediated relations by emphasizing that the State "apparatuses and practices are materially interdependent with other institutional orders and social practices" (p. 5).

<sup>203</sup> Vera, Kinross, Lovena, Diwata, and Zeenat discussed the backlash experienced by feminists and the women's movements. In addition, liberal feminist practices became more prominent.

<sup>204</sup> See Boykoff (2011), Lenskyj (2008), Shantz (2010) regarding the destructing and oppressive effects of mega events such as the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.

<sup>205</sup> Additionally Bannerji (2000) discusses the power relations that construct the contradictions of belonging and non-belonging simultaneously for immigrant women of colour.

<sup>206</sup> Ng (1992) exposes the problematics within this creation which largely focuses on, as demonstrated in Chapter 4 on the Royal Commission, as arising from their cultural differences and their difficulties to adjust to all aspects of "Canadian society".

<sup>207</sup> Man (2004) explains "the strategy therefore is to bolster Canada's competitiveness in the global marketplace with a skilled, fluid and flexible labor force that would provide Canada with a 'comparative advantage' in the postindustrial era of global competition" (p. 136).

<sup>208</sup> Skeggs (2004) explains that the project of globalization is very much concerned with nation-building and argues that it is rooted in the complacency of imperialistic power.

<sup>209</sup> As Alcoff (1994) notes, "location and positionality should not be conceived as one-dimensional or static, but as multiple and with varying degrees of mobility" (p. 295). How one reproduces dominant hegemonic national formations within the women's movement is based on our intersectional positionalities along the axes of power. Yuval-Davis (2006) explains that, "such positionalities, however, tend to be different in different historical contexts and are often fluid and contested" (p. 199).

## Chapter 6: The (un)Making of Home: Discourses of Power, Entitlement and Nation-Building

This chapter demonstrates the intersectionality of power relations in the making of nation-building discourses of (dis)entitlement within Vancouver Status of Women. I argue that VSW engaged in processes of *home making* by reproducing and contesting modalities of spatial, symbolic, affective and political entitlements. When we think of entitlement in Canada, a white settler nation that remains occupied by its colonizers, it is imperative that we begin with the emerging discourses of spatial/territorial colonial power. By beginning from this entry point with an intersectional critical-race feminist analysis, I argue that spatial power as a nation-building discourse is inherent within Canada. Further, nationalist practices are informed by categories and classification of exclusion based on the intersections of race, class, sexuality, ability, citizenship, family status, education, language, geography, and other social relations.

The making of *home* emerges from the narratives and archives as a clear theme in constructing an image of national space. This image includes the symbols, politics and affects of the dominant national subject as master / mistress of this national space. This hegemonic national body is also embedded within the women's movement and Vancouver Status of Women as the *rightful* feminist of the nation. Therefore, the image of the Other becomes a mere object or symbol that is either kept out or welcomed as guest within this national space. Hage's (2000) framework contributes to developing a deeper understanding of the imaginary construction of space within the nation through forms of exclusion ranging from intolerance to tolerance. For Hage, intolerance and tolerance derive from the same thinking because the ability to tolerate directly invokes the ability to not tolerate. Similarly, for Ahmed (2000) the national subject can only exist by invoking the stranger who is never just a stranger to the national subject because the stranger is a preconceived figure who is recognizable.

In this chapter I also examine the reproduction and contestation of national discourses through organizational *killjoy*<sup>210</sup> moments as articulated by the participants and in VSW archives. I draw specifically on several killjoy moments instigated by internal and external bodies who challenged organizational hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power based on the struggles of lesbians, women of colour, women with disabilities, and Indigenous women. Additionally, I document how such

challenges disrupted white heterosexual middle-class women's entitlement and happiness through the emergence of colonial encounters within their modalities. Thobani (2007) suggests that it is imperative to interrogate distinctive colonial forms of power in order to explicate colonial encounters. By examining the multiple forms of power relations and multiple processes of subject formation within colonial contacts, we can witness the emergence of the *exalted Canadian white feminist*. This exalted national subject's modalities of entitlement may become displaced and contested within VSW but they remain intact and secure within the women's movement and the nation as pointed out by the participants.

I conclude this chapter with a critical recollection and reflection of one particular situation regarding Indigenous women and women of colour relations during the fourth era when I was involved in VSW. I consider ways women of colour may reproduce hierarchical power relations by replicating past practices of feminists in leadership positions in the prior eras. The navigating, the not knowing, and the questioning on how not to reproduce nationalist discourses of essentialism, racialization and exclusion become fundamental to power relations as a form of resistance. This speaks to my struggle to envision and implement alternative ways of responding and taking risks as a non-Indigenous woman attempting to support differently positioned Indigenous women within the organization.

## **The Making of Home as Entitlement**

*What is "home"? What does "home feel like"?  
What does it mean when someone says "this is our/my home"?*

Mohanty (2003) complicates the notion of *home* by asking, "is home a geographical space, a historical space, an emotion, a sensory space?" (p. 126). As one engages in this site of contestation and entanglement, one's understanding and definition of home becomes a political, affective, symbolic and spatial journey. Furthermore, one may ask, *when does a location become home? What does feeling at home look like?* Mohanty (2003) discusses home as:

The place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries: not being home is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself. (p. 90)

When considering the making of home in feminist spaces, Ang (2003) offers a valuable contribution when she advocates for a politics of partiality rather than the politics of inclusion and rejects the notion of feminism as the universal home. Her argument for a politics of partiality is helpful in

recognizing the limits of hegemonic feminism while critically bringing to the forefront difference without desiring a universalized feminism. Adam (1989) also points to similar discourses within the women's movement in regards to *sisterhood* and the expectation that women have similar needs. Adams states "the women's movement hasn't been organized as a multi-voiced coalition but rather as a large, if incohesive, identity-group (the sisterhood), reflecting the identity of the majority (straight, white, middle class)" (p. 27).

Nation-building discourses of the power and appeal of *home* as a concept and a desire are grounded in what Mohanty (2003) explains as the "pursuit of safe spaces and ever-narrower conceptions of community" which "relies on unexamined notions of home, family, and nation" (p. 84). She further articulates that marginalized women and particularly racialized women "have not been able to easily assume 'home' within feminist communities" (Mohanty, 2003. p. 86). Home as explained by Grewal (1996) is very much about the "space of colonial encounters" and "contact zones" with "spatial constructions that metaphorically and metonymically construct home and away or Empire and nation in various sites" (p. 4). Grewal further explains that contact zones "are everywhere and not contained in particular discursive spaces that embody and control the narratives of encounters with difference" (p. 4).

The demarcation of an organizational space as *home* is a site of colonial encounters. From such colonial encounters emerges the development and reproduction of different modes of entitlement. Narratives and discourses within this study reveal the ways in which colonial encounters with and across white national subjects and racialized subjects are invoked through power relations that are distinct to nation-building discourses. Both white and racialized subjects are invested in the accumulation of national capital, yet the processes of investments and accumulation, as well as the value of the national capital as currency are differently realized and materialized. This differing realization and materialization is grounded within imperial and colonial legacies of the making and unmaking of home through power relation processes of theft, appropriation, travel, migration, economics, geography and the production of whiteness.

Grewal (1996) contributes to this discussion and articulation of home by affirming that in fact the nation has often been articulated as home and she argues that such deployment of discourses of home must be grounded within the framework of colonial epistemology. "The concepts of 'home' as

nation, as feminized space of domesticity, and as spirituality that was to be kept pure and sacred" is integral to modernist discourses of imperial travel, theft and occupation (Grewal, 1996, p. 7). Home from a feminist viewpoint for Grewal is "a place mediated in the colonial discursive space....I see home not only as the original site of nationalism but also of feminism, since it is here that women can resist nationalist formation by rearticulating them as a site of struggle rather than of resolution" (p. 7). For Mohanty and Grewal, *home* is a central category within imperialist projects, as it is the site of reproducing and securing the dominant Self and inventing the Other.

As Said (1978) articulates in *Orientalism*, "the Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture" (p. 2). Orientalism is a form of Western domination which has authority over the Orient. The relationship between the Other and the Western dominant subject is "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said, 1978, p. 5). Said (1983) suggests:

The connection between culture and place does not mean simply connection to a nation or region, but includes all the nuances of reassurance, fitness, belonging, association, and community, entailed in the phrase *at home* or *in place*....It is in culture that we can seek out the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases *belonging to* or *in a place*, being *at home in a place*. (p. 8)

What are the complex intersections of discursive practices that construct *home* within feminist movements in Canada as a settler colonial nation? How do we consider feminists' roles within nationalism and the construction of organizational space as *home*? Grewal (1996) discusses "home as the repository of nationalist culture" which I argue embodies nation-building practices that are symbolic, affective, political and spatial (p. 53). Grewal provides an additional element and states, "if the home was a space of women, than the protection of home...was a central concern" (p. 53-54). The narratives highlight this deep commitment to ensuring the protection of the feminist organization as home and solidifying the insider and outsider status, which have been discussed by Collins (1999) as well as Bannerji (2000), especially in relation to the nation. The relationship between home and women depicts a long intersectional history of class, racialization, (under)employment, and labour. Attached to this relationship is what suffragist Josephine Butler (1869) explains as the value of home, "I believe that Home is the nursery of all virtue, the fountain-head of all true affection, and the main source of strength of our nation" (p. xxxiv).

Several participants articulated the feeling, the understanding, the making, the fighting for, and the carving of *home* within Vancouver Status of Women, the mainstream women's movement, and the larger *Canadian* nation. The narratives presented home as imagined, tangible, abstract, and political. Charlotte and Sydney described home as a conflicted and partial space where tensions around homophobia, classism, and racism were present. Teesha, Sydney and Charlotte also explained their deep connection to the nation and feeling Canadian. For others, such as Lovela and Divali, home was non-existing in Canada and not possible.<sup>211</sup> For all the participants *home* was identified as invoking emotional feelings or attachments of belonging and familiarity.

Mary and Ann, both white heterosexual middle-class feminists from the first era who immigrated to Canada, recalled the feelings attached to the women's movement as home. Mary illustrated:

I felt [the women's movement] was something I owned, I could take part in, I had a full voice in, I could play. Certainly around the Left, I felt it was male dominated, very treacherous...I never felt I had ownership of that. With the women's movement...I felt at home in that...I felt the issues were mine that I knew there was something authentic about it, you know. *It felt homey because it's about your own deepest interests and desires.*

As for Ann, she described her sense of immediate entitlement as home the moment she stepped into VSW, "I mean the minute I walked through the door on the first day...this was *my home*". For Ann home was about being and working with like minded people who politically wanted "the same kind of world...the same kind of treatment...to treat people in the same way". Sydney who identified as a white working-class lesbian from the first and second eras indicated that she always felt that the women's movement was *her* movement yet she experienced home in a conflicted manner when she stated that the movement "never felt like it was home because it's too fractious...I wouldn't call it home because...I don't want to live on a bed of prickles". Sydney did not feel that the women's movement nurtured her.

Sammy as a two spirited feminist of Indigenous descent understood home as the place she was born and where she has history.

I've lived here all my life, I do feel that this is my home...although, I feel displaced within my home...like many Indigenous people...because my home is through my mom's home in Eastern Canada...but I was born in BC. Because I was born here...I feel conflicted, because I was born here. I'm not Coast Salish, so, I feel displaced...this is my home...but I also don't feel a sense of home like I know a lot of other people do to their homeland or when Indigenous people will say they go back home. I don't. So, it's a qualified home. I have a little sculpted piece that I made. This woman, she's about this long, made out of clay, I have her in a little box... one

side of the box is open, she is suspended, and it says: 'I am forever suspended above the roots of my land.' That's how I would describe [home].

Divali, a heterosexual woman of colour Board member, expressed how she saw entitlement and its relationship to space, politics, home and nation, "entitlement is about the politics and about who is there, and how the work is done". She explained the work of carving political spaces of organizing in relation to entitlement:

I was trying to create my space in there...I was trying to push for a certain kind of politics...white mainstream women thinking that the women's movement is their *home*, and it was, VSW was home for those white women who owned it for 20 odd years, right. For somebody like me, even this country is not home, how is an organization or a movement going to be home...[or] feel like I belong to.

Divali also described how other spaces of organizing, particularly amongst a South Asian women's group were more comfortable and familiar but yet "they came from an elite class.... so then the work they were doing, work to *help* women who are having problems, they [elite South Asian women] didn't see their own survival as being at stake". She described this as a form of charity model where "the investment was different but also their relationship to the work was different...they were *doing good*, they were *helping*...and I just wanted to blow that kind of politics apart".

The invocation of *home* in Canada is always embedded in the specific power relations of colonial violence and encounters. Home for non-Indigenous Peoples came to be through the imperial legacy of colonial theft and dispossession. Home is forever haunted by its colonial making but yet this colonial making has been conveniently silenced, forgotten, and hidden within discourses of home. The making of home is the making of entitlement. Home as a location, space, and territory that is occupied, claimed, policed, protected and manipulated, is what I call *spatial entitlement*. Spatial entitlement is founded on a long and violent history of colonization around the world, and continues to be reproduced within settler societies such as Canada. Gunew (2004) discusses spatial entitlement as spatial power and control inhabited by discourses of belonging and unbelonging. Such discourses present real material effects upon bodies differently positioned in relation to the nation.

Our understanding and feeling of home is very much attached to our positionality and relationship to the nation. What home feels like for a privileged white nationalist will be experienced and understood quite differently than for an Indigenous person who has developed an intergenerational relationship with the land and their ancestors within the colonial context. Additionally the invocation of home produces affective entitlements of what home feels and tastes

like; it is the production and security of the familiar which becomes a very powerful emotional attachment of belonging and safety. As spatial entitlement and affective entitlements become threatened, so do the symbolic and political entitlements and hence, the subject must engage in power struggles to reassure that these entitlements are not revoked, lost or displaced.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Carty (1999), Devereux (1999), and Valverde (1992) explain how white feminists constituted themselves as mistresses of national space. Both Carty (1999) and Devereux (1999) argue that imperialist feminists had a mutual investment in the project of nation/empire-building within the colonies. She states "white women who already regarded themselves as pioneers working with white men on behalf of the Empire...came to regard themselves as leaders in the feminist movement and as heralds of a new day of imperial civilization and advanced women's rights" (Devereux, 1999, p. 184). This particular research finds that during the earlier eras of the organization, white national feminists viewed the racialized Other as objects requiring management and organizing.<sup>212</sup>

As white women within the women's movement deepened their understanding of white privilege, particularly through "unlearning racism"<sup>213</sup> workshops, many engaged in unpacking how they and the histories they were attached to profoundly impacted their relationships with racialized bodies. Those that chose to unsettle these hegemonic relations of power played a profound systemic role in shifting hegemonic feminism and hierarchies within organizations. But such systemic shifts must be acknowledged as only possible through the possession of white national entitlements which facilitated the *welcoming* and *inclusion* of the Other. Therefore, as Thobani (2007) explains, the exaltation of the national subject revolves and is embedded within the subjectivity of the bearer of a higher order of humanity in relation to the racialized Other. It is this elevated humanity which is seen to legitimize racialized inclusions within historically white spaces.

This research has used an intersectional analytical approach that derives from the recognition of the relationship between race and space. From this perspective we can better understand the emerging national practices between the self and territory embedded in racist, classist, heterosexist, and ableist modes of thought and knowledge that materializes in social justice organizations. I argue that the development of political sites of organizing as well as the arrangement of bodies within them do not emerge naturally. Yet, organizational theory has predominantly constructed organizational

sites as natural, inevitable and neutral where power relations only appear because of the individuals who come to inhabit these spaces.<sup>214</sup> By studying Vancouver Status of Women as a site of social change that both contested and reproduced nationalist discourses of inclusion/exclusion, power relations, belonging/unbelonging, and (lack of) entitlements, we come to see that the emergence of VSW is not natural but rather comes from particular ideologies and political/socio-geographical discourses of a liberal colonial settler society.<sup>215</sup>

By exploring how VSW as an organizational site was created, challenged and reasserted over time through nationalist discourses, my research reveals the racial hierarchies that emerged and intersected with queerness, class, presence of children, disability within the culture and counterculture of whiteness. Razack (2002) explains that:

A white settler society is one established by Europeans on non-European soil. Its origins lie in the dispossession and the extermination of Indigenous population by the conquering European. As it evolves, a white settler society continues to be structured by a racial hierarchy. In the national mythologies of such societies, it is believed that white people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land; Aboriginal peoples are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated. European settlers thus become the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship. (p. 1)

Attached to these white settler mythologies, there exists white amnesia and the ongoing denial of conquest, genocide, chattel slavery, and the exploitation of racialized bodies for labour. The "White Fantasy" as described by Hage (2000) is enveloped in reproducing the myth that Canada was peacefully settled and not colonized.

It is also relevant to explicate the relationship between sexuality and nationhood when studying entitlement within feminist or social justice organizations. Kuntsman (2008) examines queerness and the ways sexuality and nationhood intertwine with queer immigrants' sense of belonging while also situating immigrant's perception of themselves within the nation in the making of *home*. He discusses how white immigrants' purpose was to strengthen Eurocentric colonial domination. He speaks to the scholarship on gender and sexuality in relation to the condition and shaping of immigrants belonging within heterosexual discourses hence, "approaching nationhood and gender relations as exclusively heterosexual" (Kuntsman, 2008, para 4).

As discussed earlier, interview participants who were privileged in terms of race in relation to whiteness and who also identified as lesbian spoke to their construction of belonging within Vancouver Status of Women as *home*. Kuntsman (2008) provides the tools to articulate these participants' white

queer classed subjectivity as they experienced colonial anxieties when racialized women contested and critiqued organizational white normativity and supremacy. The relationship between immigration, queer sexuality, citizenship and nation as theorized by Puar (2006; 2007) theoretically contributes to the argument that not only has queer sexuality within Canada been excluded from citizenship and national belonging but also how it has been complicit in reproducing hegemonic formations of nationhood and belonging.<sup>216</sup> Puar (2006) articulates the collusion between homosexuality and nationalism reproducing "homonationalisms" and the "properly homo" key patriotic subject of the nation.

Kunstman (2008) recognizes nationalist discourses regarding queers have predominantly focused on how gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people have been excluded from national discourses or processes of queering the nation through shifts in institutional policies and laws (marriage, military service, or consumption). Yet, these debates explicitly focus on queering the nation as either transgressive or mainstreaming. But is queering always transgressive? Puar (2005) suggests that one cannot remain within that limited and narrow confinement of queerness "exclusively as dissenting, resistant, and alternative (all of which queerness importantly is and does)", but rather there is a need to recognize its contingency and complicity in reproducing and sustaining dominant national formations (p. 121-122). Therefore, drawing on Puar's analysis, I argue that the complicity of queerness as described by white lesbian participants demonstrate the presence of dominant colonial formations of nation-building. By engaging in a case study of VSW we come to better understand how colonial encounters reproduce national hierarchies, practices and discourses. The next section offers a theorizing of entitlement by examining the spatial, symbolic, affective and political practices of power relations and demonstrates how they are produced, challenged, sustained and invoked within this feminist site of organizing.

## **Theorizing Entitlement**

### **Participants' Articulation of Entitlement**

In this section I draw on several participants' articulation of entitlement. Emerging from these narratives is the construction of the different degrees and intensities of entitlement that were accumulated through increased organizational memory, history, and investment. As discussed in the previous chapter, as participants increased their organizational and national capital, they also

accrued, across time, degrees of spatial, symbolic, affective and political entitlements. Hage (2000) highlights how the accumulation of naturalized and legitimized entitlements is experienced as having a sense of governmental belonging. This differs from passive belonging, which refers to an accumulation of entitlements that is earned differently and has lower currency.

Research participants, Vera and Mary, both discussed their understanding of entitlement as privilege. They further described the struggle and resentment in giving up such privileges as white women. Mary stated, "people don't want to lose privilege...nobody loses privilege without a fight". Vera, a white middle-class university educated lesbian, further adds to this analysis by speaking to white normativity within organizations:

There was always that understanding that it was systemic, that it was historical and in my own view, the oppression of women was, I would always ask the question, "well, who benefits, who benefits from oppression?" People don't oppress because they are mean, their oppression happens because it confers advantages on certain groups. And nobody wants to give up their advantages and that's sort of the nature of exceptional people who realize that their advantages are corrupting them, and people can make that realization.

Ward (2008) illustrates how white normativity is sustained in social justice organizations which results in reinforcing whiteness as *natural* and *right*. Ward's analysis of white normativity in organizations becomes apparent in Ela's description of entitlement.

Ela, a lesbian of colour staff during the second era (1983-1991), differentiated between formal and informal entitlement within feminist spaces of organizing. She described herself as having informal entitlement "on an everyday basis, I felt very much like I was part of the organization, but I was never given the acknowledgement in...any kind of the formal channels, so when they would go to their meetings, the sort of formal meetings of the Board ...I would become invisibilized".<sup>217</sup> Ela emphasized that formal entitlement was built within the organization's structure and was held by white women which she referred to as, "a white women's niche". She began to challenge VSW's normativity by connecting it to broader social justice struggles and the larger community. She discussed how her influence "livened up the place enormously, and more people started coming to meetings, just in the short time that I was there, because I brought all my connections with me". Ela also described that these changes were seen as:

Very threatening for the people who were worried that they would lose its kind of feminist focus. But, of course, there was nothing not feminist about the way I was working...they were also really worried I would bring in a lot of other women of colour and that they would lose control...and ultimately I think their fears were racist fears.

ITTC<sup>218</sup>, a heterosexual Indigenous contract staff during the third era (1992-1999), recalled experiencing entitlement when she worked at the Vancouver Friendship Centre where the people in power trusted her organizing skills. She affirmed that she felt entitled there "because of my skills and my verbal gifts, because of my skill of organizing and the fact that they had trust in me that I would do what I said I would do. The fact that they knew, as executive directors, that I had the capability, the skill, to organize and to coordinate people...So I gained a sense of entitlement...". Further, this entitlement brought about an autonomy that was needed as an organizer to facilitate organizational leadership roles and qualities. ITTC shared that only recently she experienced a sort of entitlement in the mainstream women's movement which she did not experience in the past. She discussed how in the past she often would only be invited as the 'token Indian' Coast Salish to open up women's events. She indicated she would "stick out like a sore thumb and I felt like they thought that I didn't really know much or didn't really have much of a voice...not that long ago, I opened up this event, I felt very tokenized. I had 2 minutes, you know...so I don't have a voice". ITTC considered how "some things" have partly shifted from such tokenizing Indigenous openings. She recognized that a legitimizing process is taking place and recalled:

I had to prove, I always had to prove myself to non-Native people. I'm not just saying white people. I find that I also have to prove myself as an Indigenous person, Indigenous woman, Native First Nations woman. You know. It's every day. In the Safeway line... Superstore when I'm buying shoes. They're not sure how to deal with me until they hear my voice...but in terms of action and activism and advocacy work, I find that I still have to prove myself. Now I don't because so many people have heard my voice, people have heard me on TV, read what I have written.

Lovena, a racialized lesbian staff during the late third era (1992-1999) and early fourth era (2000-2008) of the organization, articulated her understanding of entitlement in relation to belonging.

She explained:

I had a sense of holding organizational history, or organizational memory...a leadership role and that inside I have something to contribute here. Again and again and again and again throughout my life I lay down to sleep at night and I reflect....and I think, and I literally see myself standing outside the house, looking in the windows at what is happening on the other side. There are different scenes that happen on the other side of those windows. But I'm always on the outside. I'm not sure that I'm alone in that or if that's a really common experience across people, and I've heard people describe experiencing their sense of separateness or isolation, in that same kind of way.

Lovena further discussed the different degrees of entitlement and belonging experienced as outsiders not only within an organization but also the women's movement and nation:

There is a belonging and there is not. So I can expect, for example, because I was born here, I have certain expectations based on every time I get asked for my god damned birth certificate, that I will receive whatever service, whatever that birth certificate entitles me to. As with any other person who then forks over their birth certificate versus a non-status person. I recognize the privilege in that and I recognize that there is currency. There's different layers going on. There is the legal or technical expectation of entitlement. There is the experience of not being, of not feeling like you either can access what you're entitled, what your technical or legal entitlements are, and then there's another level of that, sort of, deeply internal space of- *there is no home*. But then for me that's very complicated...*there is no home, literally there is no home. There's no physical space that I can really turn to and say...there's a sense of home here.*

Lovena carefully illustrated her conception of entitlement and its embeddedness within *home*. Her narrative brings to light the 'currency' attached to degrees of entitlement which draws on Hage's (2000) conceptualization of the currency attached to the accumulation of national capital. This currency is differently accumulated and is also differently converted into degrees of national capital within the imagined "White fantasy" of the nation. In Lovena's case, the making of this internal space of home, remains unrealized.

Entitlement was articulated by Sonia as "a negative connotation" because of its relationship to colonization. Sonia who identified as a queer woman of colour from the fourth era, questioned "where is that part of my own decolonization, where is that part of my own entitlement, am I becoming entitled? ...because I don't want to become entitled like white people are entitled, like that they think this is their land and that this is their country or whatever, that immigrants are invading...". Sonia clearly illustrated her increasing anxieties as a racialized immigrant lesbian regarding the accumulated entitlement that takes place for immigrants in relation to occupied land and Indigenous Peoples. Her anxiety primarily focused on not becoming as entitled as white people because the term "entitlement" for Sonia was congruent with the colonial privileges of whiteness and the act of colonizing.

Teesha, a middle-class lesbian Board member from the second era (1983-1991), exhibited entitlement as "feeling part of something" and she explained that the more she invested in a project, the more she felt entitled to that project or organization. The investment articulated by Teesha speaks to how one develops affective entitlement through emotional attachments within spaces and with objects. Teesha also highlighted the similarities and differences that emerge regarding organizational and national entitlement through the making of home. She stated:

I have the entitlement that I was born here, and so I feel entitled, I mean I do feel like it's my country. I didn't ever feel like VSW was my organization necessarily, or that the women's

movement is my movement. Although I support both. I identify very strongly as a Canadian. More strongly than I would identify as a member of the feminist movement because...I wasn't born into the movement...I never studied it...so I don't feel as at home there as I do in Canada, in my country, my country.

Divali expressed the resistance she witnessed as white women's entitlement was being challenged:

I think they were happy with the situation of having this Immigrant Women and Racism Committee... that they could bring in when they wanted to... but it didn't really force any change. So I think they were quite comfortable about it... in terms of dealing with the Committee and with what some of us were trying to do with the organization. So I think that they did come around to recognizing that they needed women of colour in the organization but I think there was anxiety around that... I think they were concerned about who these women of colour would be... and in some way, I think they felt that they could work with us but I don't think they could have worked with me if I was working in VSW. [laughs] You see what I'm saying? There was still this arms length kind of thing. I was not one of them...it was clearly *their* space... and *they* said it.

What Divali witnessed were white women's increased anxieties and fears that women of colour would take over their organization, *their* home. Divali understood clearly:

That this was not my space... But I was also very clear that it needed to be pushed, and that women of colour should be inside the organization but I never felt it was my place. And I also knew because of my location outside the organization that it was safe for these women to say, "Oh, we were influenced by her" and work with me because I was located at arm's length and they were still in control about what they would do with the Immigrant Women and Racism Committee, whether they would listen to us or not... or how much of it they would do or not. So there was a level of comfort which wouldn't have been there if [women of colour] were working in there... that would have freaked them out.

The claiming of ownership as a form of entitlement was described by Zeenat, a middle-class lesbian of colour staff from the third era (1992-1999). She indicated the process that she engaged in to ensure that she claimed ownership not only within the women's movement and VSW, but also within the nation. Yet, she clarified that taking ownership did not necessarily mean having a place called *home*. She emphasized:

I felt ownership, I learned to feel ownership. I always had a sense of it, I didn't know how to tap into it and I didn't see it...I saw myself as having come from outside too, not being a Canadian, not being from Vancouver, not being from the women's movement. Having learnt my bases there, having formed my alliances here. That's why I can fit in everywhere, that's why I can fit in the queer community, that's why I can organize in the labour movement, or work for a newspaper. Whenever, I had different places I could belong, I never felt it was just one place but no place has been home....

Zeenat acknowledged that this sense of entitlement that she felt was very much attached to having come into VSW as a legitimate permanent full-time staff. Therefore, the permanency of such a leadership position within the organization attached to decision-making power facilitated the process of claiming ownership and entitlement for Zeenat. She explained, "I did not have to fight to have

power because I walked into being a full time staff person. So I never carried a chip on my shoulder of having been part time at VSW". As a mentor to women of colour who came after her time, she stressed the need to claim and take ownership of space particularly within white and straight spaces. She explained that she places herself fully in the movement as a queer racialized feminist, "I do not see myself as a marginal part of the movement, *they* see me as a marginal part. I will not marginalize myself. I own this movement, and I always say, "this is my movement, this is my community".

Grounded in the narratives of this dissertation discussed thus far, are the functioning of spatial, symbolic, political and affective organizing *modalities of entitlement* which produce discourses of home and nation. I demonstrate the various modalities of entitlements that are produced and contested during the four eras of the organization. Nationalist discourses and practices present themselves into the politics of space, voice, and power. Hage (2000) provides an important entry point to the development of a theory of entitlement as applicable to this research. Hage articulates the field of accumulation of Whiteness as also the field of national power, "a field where people's position of power is related to the amount of national capital they accumulate" (p. 61). He explains that this accumulation also has its limitation because of how one goes about accumulating this national capital and how it is converted into national recognition and legitimacy differs significantly based on one's relationship to the nation. Additionally, as white subjects of the nation assume their innate and natural entitlement due to governmental belonging they become the national managers that they *ought* to be or are/were destined to be, rather than socially and historically acquiring such entitlements.<sup>219</sup>

Hage acknowledges that because national capital is seen as a democratic incentive, providing aspiring nationals with the drive to 'play the game', "it is the belief that capital is 'up for grabs' for whomever can grab it and accumulate it, that it will lead anyone who succeeds in accumulating it to gain more recognition and power (symbolic capital), which provides the national field with its dynamic." (p. 63). Yet, Hage also demonstrates the contradiction built into this logic as there are those who inherit and possess this capital innately and those who don't. Therefore this logic solidifies the nationalist discourse "that only those who have the innate capacity to dominate can really be said to possess enough capital to dominate the field" (p. 64).<sup>220</sup> This articulation of accumulation of national capital also requires further theorizing of *how* one comes about accumulating, *who* does the

accumulating of differently constituted national power, and *how* does the legitimization of capital take place. Such processes provide a framework to analyze the data of this dissertation with the understanding that one's accumulation of national capital very much corresponds with maximizing one's homely belonging to the nation and national spaces.

Governmental belonging as explained by Hage (2000) requires accumulation of additional specific elements that constitute what he calls Whiteness:

...it is only by *naturalising its hold on this Whiteness* that a group can achieve aristocratic status....in so doing, a group succeeds in imposing its symbolic violence on the national field by naturalising its aspirations and ideals into national aspirations and ideals. (p. 65)

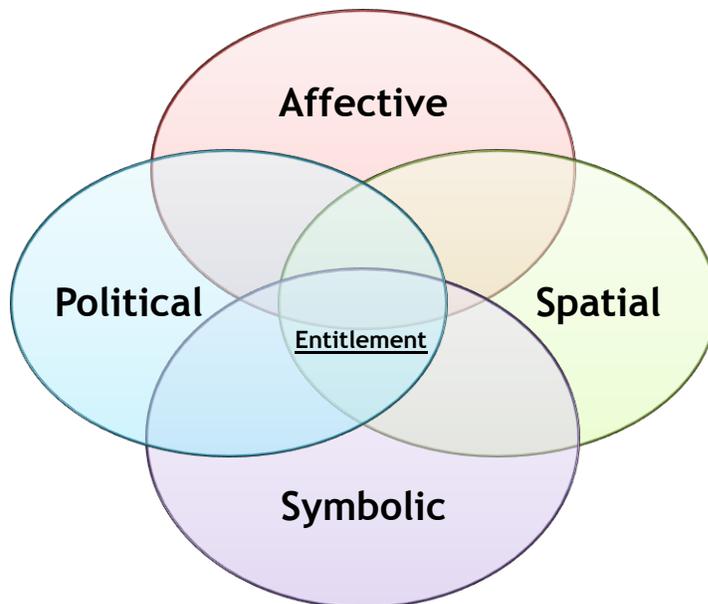
This Whiteness is embedded in "the belief in one's mastery over the nation", which Hage refers to as "White fantasy", "it is a fantasy of a nation governed by White people, a fantasy of White supremacy" (Hage, 2000, p. 18). Governmental belonging comes about with the power to position others within the nation by imposing on Others specific national values and identity while producing a national order held by this dominant national subject. It is through this process that such subjects manage to become the "enactors/representatives/inhabitants of the national will" (Hage, 2000, p. 65). Furthermore, national white subjects invoke their governmental belonging as a way to naturalize the value of their capital, *to naturalize their hold on it*, by ensuring that their Whiteness is constructed as a valuable possession indicative of being Canadian. Hence, being White is both a matter of acquisition as it is a social construct within the nation. It is this process of naturalization which consistently undermines the legitimacy of any other aspiring capital.<sup>221</sup>

By drawing on Hage's theorizing of White fantasy and accumulation of national capital, as well as the intersectional critical race feminist discourse analysis of the narratives and archives for this research, I define accumulated national capital as entitlement. I began to discuss the various modes of entitlement as spatial, symbolic, affective and political in Chapter 5 and would like to reaffirm that these multiple and simultaneous modes of entitlement are in constant interaction, reinforcing and contesting each other. Hence, these diverse modes of entitlement should not be conceived as singular or static but rather as intersectional. I argue that spatial, symbolic, affective, and political (dis)entitlements are nation-building discourses of power relations which produce or contest *home-making* (see Figure 6.1).

## Modalities of Entitlement

The four modalities of entitlement bring forth intersecting discourses of inclusion/exclusion, insider/outsider, and belonging/unbelonging. For the national subject, including the exalted feminist national, these entitlements tend to be naturalized and become articulated when they are most threatened. The making, accumulation and enactment of entitlements is a national project that differs and varies according to one's positionality vis-à-vis the making of the Canadian nation. Additionally, how one accumulates national capital and how that capital's currency will be converted is also dictated by national discourses of belonging and entitlements. Hence, Indigenous subjects, non-status migrants, immigrants, national racialized subjects and national white subjects within their intersecting positionalities and histories will differently experience the changing spatial, symbolic, affective and political entitlements.<sup>222</sup> Power relations as entitlements are dynamic processes that are not fixed in time and space but rather are constantly interacting and being contested, resisted and reproduced.

Figure 6.1: Modalities of Entitlement



### Spatial Entitlement

According to Razack (2002), "mythologies or national stories are about a nation's origins and history. They enable citizens to think of themselves as part of a community, defining who belongs and who does not belong to the nation. The story of the land as shared and as developed by enterprising

settlers is manifestly a racial story" (Razack, 2002, p. 2). It may seem with a colonial settler society, this may be subverted under the disguise of equality and multiculturalism discourses but nonetheless we must always go to the basics, to the entry point to where it began but also to where it continues, and that is a national story, a racial story. Razack (2002) helps us understand how nationalist discourses and mythologies of white settler societies are in fact spatialized stories. Spatial/property/land entitlement as embedded in law is fundamental to this national racial story. From the moment of contact and conquest, a coherent relationship between law, race and space emerged under *terra nullius* - land that is uninhabited and empty (Moreton-Robinson, 2003; Razack, 2002). For the British Empire, uninhabited lands signified "not Christian, not agricultural, not commercial, not sufficiently evolved or simply in the way" (Culhane, 1998, p. 48).

The master/grand colonial narrative tells the story that the land was empty and became populated by thriving settlers building a strong nation, and it is now seen as overcrowded with racialized bodies of (im)migrants from the South who want to reap the benefits of hard working (white) Canadians. Hard working white Canadian don't jump the queue, because they are polite, benevolent and exalted.<sup>223</sup> It is inevitable that the racialized master narrative will come alive and be invoked in all sites that emerge from that history and from this land. Yet as feminists, we continue to deny ourselves the important interaction and connection to this precise national colonial story. Clearly, feminist sites are unavoidably embedded in the constant reminder that they remain forever haunted by that colonial history in their everyday/everynight. Yet, it is a story and a history that we rarely call herstory, yet nonetheless, we remain part of this colonial legacy, its reproduction in the present and the future.

Contesting the reproduction of national discourses and practices attached to this master narrative must consistently take place within feminist organizations as a means of disrupting hegemonic power relations that persist within social justice organizations. More specifically how we reproduce these national practices of white normativity, domination, racialization, exclusion and essentialism must remain at the forefront of our daily colonial encounters. Therefore, first and foremost, a feminist organization within a colonial settler nation is on and participates in occupation of stolen lands. Secondly, the making of space while occupying territory is also about the making of home physically on stolen Indigenous lands. The carving of home's borders, the protecting of home,

who is in and who is out, produce spatial (un)belonging which are the same discourses of gatekeeping and policing the nation and the home.<sup>224</sup>

As discussed in chapter 2, Yuval-Davis (1996) defines women as reproducers of the boundaries of nation. Particularly, embedded in discourses of white women as reproducers of the nation and the women's movement, is the production and accumulation of national entitlements. The policing of space, whether it be nation, women's movement or organization is reproduced to ensure that the stranger and Other remains an outsider even when *they are welcomed* (Ahmed, 2000). According to Ahmed (2000), it is by conferring this outsider or stranger status which grants the national subject the insider and normative status of belonging and the attached naturalized entitlements. I suggest that one develops entitlement through the accumulation of national (organizational) capital that is seen as legitimate within nationalist discourses. Therefore, the ensuring of physical and emotional boundaries produces the politics of location. The politics of where we are located is entrenched in discourses of who belongs in this community of the women's movement and what / how that belonging looks differently for different subjects.

#### **Affective Entitlement**

Affective entitlement is very much about *what home feels like* and *feeling at home*: it is deeply embedded in emotional attachments. To feel entitlement is to feel the familiar, to experience emotional stability and belonging in space. Spatial and affective entitlements produce emotions of safety and ownership embedded in discourses of happiness which require continuous investments. Ahmed's (2010) theorizing of the *promise of happiness* explains that "the history of happiness can be thought of as a history of associations" (p. 2). Ahmed further describes happiness as an industry which accumulates value as a form of capital and duty that sustains dominant social norms. Hence, happiness can be measured by what feels good while also measuring how good people feel *in the right way* based on discourses of worthiness. "It matters how we think about feeling. Much of the new science of happiness is premised on the model of feelings as transparent, as well as the foundation for moral life. If something is good, we feel good. If something is bad, we feel bad" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 6).

When national subject's *feel* that their spatial entitlement is being threatened or encroached upon, *feelings* and *emotions* of fear, insecurity, anxieties, and unhappiness arise.<sup>225</sup> Ahmed (2000) also introduces the concept of "stranger danger" where the stranger is "already recognised as posing

danger to property and person, not just in particular valued dwellings and neighbourhoods, but also in public life as such", including "valued and devalued spaces" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 32). She urges us to consider:

...how strangers are read as posing danger wherever they are: the projection of danger onto the figure of the stranger allows the definition of the subject-at-home, and home as inhabitable space, as inherently safe and valuable. One knows again whom one does not know by assuming they are the origin of danger. (p. 32)

Hence, VSW is constructed particularly for white women not only as a valued space to be claimed, owned, and protected but also the emotional attachments deriving from such a space must also be secured and reproduced. Consequently, as demonstrated later in this chapter through participants' narratives, affective emotions of entitlement attached to fear and stranger danger are specifically invoked as spatial, political and symbolic anxieties increase.

Yuval-Davis (2006) also discusses forms of identifications and emotional attachment which develop to deepen one's sense or feelings of entitlement. She explains, that this sense of affective entitlement or belonging produces "many different objects of attachments...belonging can be an act of self-identification or identification by others, in a stable, contested or transient way" (2006, p. 198). The displacement of affective entitlement brings about much affective anxieties for the national subject. Hage (2000) understands this as the "worrying nationalist" who fears being displaced and losing what one has historically accumulated. Additionally, Ahmed (2004b) illustrates the relationship between space and emotional attachments by asking what are the things that attach us to specific places, such as the women's movement or a feminist organization. Additionally, Ahmed (2004b) explains that emotional responses to Others "involve the alignment of subjects with and against other others" (p. 32). Hence, encounters are invoked upon bodies yet they play out as emotions and these bodily encounters reconstitute bodily spaces.

Ahmed (2004a) argues that emotions are significant in the making of individual and collective bodies through the circulation of emotions between bodies and signs. Hence, Ahmed critically demonstrates that in fact emotions are not private matters that simply belong to individuals but rather emotions produce "the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds" (p. 117). Ahmed's provides an important examination of how affective entitlement is deployed by how the presence of Others is imagined as a threat to the white subject's happy emotions or happiness which she explains as being concealed in a fantasy. Others are constructed by white national subjects as

causing injury to the imagined white community which results in damaging or invading the nation. Others or strangers are recognized "as the ones who are taking away the nation" and threatening its nation-builders and gate-keepers. It is this fear or hatred which Ahmed explains "that binds the imagined white subject and nation together" (p. 118).

### **Symbolic Entitlement**

Within the home, the subject also develops symbolic entitlements through experiences of attachment to symbols, signifiers, texts, rituals, slogans, stories, expressions, language and persons that are familiar and which reinforce spatial and affective entitlements. For the dominant national subject hegemonic symbols of entitlement reflect hegemonic slogans, pictures, images, posters, books, language, histories, films, national persons or symbols, national holidays, master/grand narratives and hegemonic mythologies. Within the feminist movement and therefore also replicated within the feminist organization are symbols and statements that transmit and reproduce mainstream women's movement culture. These include: "the personal is political", "global sisterhood", "together united, we will never be defeated", "sisterhood is global", "Nellie McClung"<sup>226</sup>, and the suffragists as mothers of feminism. These images, pictures, documentaries, poems, and books primarily not only centre white middle-class hegemonic feminist histories and experiences but also create and sustain knowledge about racialization, the Other, and whiteness. As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, Yuval-Davis (1996) identifies women's role within the nation not only as reproducers of national subjects but also as symbolic and ideological reproducers and transmitters of national culture and of difference.

Hence, within the mainstream women's movement a symbolic teaching and passing of entitlements takes place through mentors, teachers, mothers, and feminists as cultural carriers of knowledge. This role as white normativity culture carrier includes both knowledge about the white feminist self as well as the racialized Other. The role of the white nationalist woman subject is to teach and transfer the cultural and ideological traditions of white dominance, entitlement and culture.<sup>227</sup> They are constructed as "cultural carriers" and are seen as the main socializers of small children, as mothers, caretakers, and teachers. Most importantly they are often required to transmit symbols of dominance and supremacy as well as ways of interacting with the outsider, Other, and stranger to the nation. Further, the female white national subject also teaches about difference, who belongs, who is a stranger, who is to be feared, and who produces unhappiness. She is implicated in

the symbolic and ideological production of difference. White subjects are taught about boundaries and borders in relation to the stranger entering the nation or national home, as well as contact and touch with the stranger.<sup>228</sup>

Moreover, it must not be forgotten that white feminists themselves become symbols of symbolic entitlement within spaces of hegemonic feminism (ie. Agnes MacPhail<sup>229</sup>, The Famous Five<sup>230</sup>). These iconic symbols remain crystallized in the nations' mainstream women's organizations and institutions. Many of the symbols left over from First and Second Wave liberal feminisms may appear to have been tucked away and put in storage but somehow they resurface at particular moments demanding security, certainty, and happiness. These are the precise moments when we fall back on reproducing national symbols and slogans which have predominantly been visible during protests and demonstrations within the women's movement. One of the most powerful symbols related to national entitlements, is the symbol and song of *Bread and Roses*; this symbol of entitlement is entrenched in imperialist feminism's duty to save and nurture the *race* and continues to proliferate in the women's movement.<sup>231</sup> Any alteration of that particular symbol has been very much resisted, as it is seen as a sacred symbol of the women's movement.

### **Political Entitlement**

Political entitlement is the fourth modality of entitlement, it is grounded in the deployment of citizenship rights and entitlement. It encompasses all political and legal entitlements including immigration rights and other national and State common duties (owning property and protection under the law) as a member of the State. Yuval-Davis (2006) describes three dimensions of citizenship: civic, political and social. In the case of this research, full membership in one's community includes rights and responsibilities as it applies to feminist organizations and the larger women's movement. From such political entitlements come one's sense of belonging within feminist spaces and active participation in political struggles, projects, and activities which pressure the State to make changes.

According to Yuval-Davis (2006), this belonging to the collectivity is very much situated and differentiated in one's "common descent (or rather the myth of common descent)...common culture, religion and/or language" (p. 209). She emphasizes that:

Loyalty and solidarity, based on common values and a projected myth of common destiny, tend to become requisites for belonging in pluralist societies. In other words, in different projects of the politics of belonging, the different levels of belonging - social locations, identities and ethical and political values - can become the requisites of belonging. Requisites

of belonging that relate to social locations - origin, 'race', place of birth - would be the most racialized and the least permeable. Language, culture and sometimes religion are more open to voluntary, often assimilatory, identification with particular collectivities. Using a common set of values, such as 'democracy' or 'human rights', as the signifiers of belonging can be seen as having the most permeable boundaries of all. (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 209)

This section has introduced and identified the multiple modalities of entitlement that intersect to provide an analytical framework of entitlement. In the next section, I draw on 3 participants' narratives, Vera, Zeenat, and Kinross, to further demonstrate the intersectional deployment of power relations through the application of this theory of entitlement.

### **Intersecting Power Relations as Entitlement**

For women who have traditionally been very comfortable in the organization and whose issues were at the centre of Vancouver Status of Women, probing about their entitlement appeared to be most difficult. As discussed in Chapter 5, it is through the deployment of power that we see its emergence as entitlement. As women traditionally excluded from leadership positions in VSW and the women's movement questioned their lack of power, entitlements, and inclusion, white women including those who were lesbian and working-class began to feel displaced, unhappy, and excluded. As white women's collective happiness was being unsettled, they responded initially in a defensive manner creating much pain and exclusion for many women of colour. Their feelings and emotions as well as material entitlements attached to home were very much challenged and undermined. Ahmed (2004a) suggests that as white subjects mobilize around this threat, they reproduce themselves as the injured party, "the one 'hurt' or even damaged by the 'invasion' of others" (p. 118).

Many of the white women interviewed discussed the process of how they came to see the inclusion of non-white women in *their* organization. Some also expressed the deep understanding that "it just had to be done", an affirmative action policy particularly based on race had to be implemented.<sup>232</sup> Yet, white women who wanted to invest in institutional change were conflicted as such a policy would displace them from employment in permanent positions of power and decision-making. Furthermore, the power relations that were invoked in such positions of leadership were embedded in the complexity of entitlements which has clearly been passed down through generations of white women. These four modalities of entitlement provide an important matrix translating into a very particular construction of home and belonging. To unsettle this matrix, that was intended to be preserved, demanded not only challenging hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power but also

national formations and practices. Achieving equality through the accumulation of entitlements and rights has been imperative for white women's advancement within the women's movement as well as the larger nation. By shifting the very foundation of home that facilitated this advancement, white women feared losing *their* home because it would mean interrupting their continued advancement and accumulation of national capital.

Thobani (2007) explains that white working-class families increased their sense of entitlement as citizens through access to social programs. She states, "feminist have found that social programs offered women 'a measure of economic insulation against total dependence on men' and promoted a 'feeling of entitlement,' which empowered them and fuelled their further claims to full citizenship" (p. 117). Therefore, the welfare state facilitated women's accumulation of national capital in the form of economic advancement. Evans and Wekerle (1997) explain that the welfare state's policies and programs not only provide social services but also redistributes status, rights and entitlements. Thobani affirms that this "feeling of entitlement" and "its symbolic and material inclusion of women in nationhood, would be immensely inflated in these women's encounters with racialized Others" (p. 118). Hence, Thobani provides an important contribution which historicizes the access and granting of particular entitlements through the welfare state. She further argues that:

Strange encounters constituted excluded Others as individually unworthy of entitlements and their families as deficient. Moreover, social citizenship deepened the meaning of 'belonging' to the national community, strengthening the historically entrenched commitment of national subjects to protect it from the encroachments of undeserving Others. (Thobani, 2007, p. 118)

Vera, a white middle-class lesbian staff, stated that during the early 1990s, the entire women's movement and social justice organizing was being challenged regarding the lack of racialized bodies in leadership positions as well as the racism within social justice organizing. She explained that she was very conscious about people in the community who were dissatisfied with *Kinesis*:

You're being told that you've been doing something wrong or not good enough. You're being told that you are part of an *old guard* and you're being told that you have *power*....You have constructed your own sense of identity as being not the powerful one but the oppressed one, woman. You have constructed your own sense of your social location as marginal.... and [yet] you're being told that you're the centre of something [and that] you've got to step aside. You're being told that you are guilty of oppressing other people and that, frankly horrifies you because you really don't want it, on that sort of "poor little white girl level", so that *hurt my feelings*.

Vera articulated that she understood power relations as entitlement based on her positionality as a white woman Editor of *Kinesis*. She reflected through the complexity of how one comes to understand

and sees oneself shifting from the position of the oppressed to that of the oppressor. This critical reflection by Vera destabilized her comfort and security of accessing, occupying, and the making of home and entitlement. Additionally, this process of destabilizing directly produces emotions of unhappiness as discussed earlier by Ahmed (2010).

Power as spatial, affective, symbolic and political entitlement was illustrated by Vera, she identified power as:

The ability to do something, it means both symbol and practicality. It means responsibility and it means ....conscious and unconscious...I think power in organization gets invoked in any number of visible and invisible ways. I think there is the power of whose food gets offered at the meeting table...what is normal around the breaking of bread together, that's an expression of who's in power, whose food is there. I think it gets expressed in who feels they have a right to bring an item to the agenda, whose version of a personal problem is accepted? Whose assumptions about safety, whether that is literal, how safe you feel as a being occupying time and space or how safe you feel as being somebody who is going to be treated with respect.

Vera further asserted that for her she has felt included in VSW, "I felt welcomed and I became the Editor of *Kinesis* on one hand because of all my *markers*, I'm white, I'm middle-class, I'm educated...". She affirmed that these markers are similar to the markers of being included in the larger women's movement and the nation. As a privileged white lesbian, Vera described the discomforts that arise with change, including the decentering of privileged bodies that "*needed to leave because they [and now we] were an old face of power*":

I would say that, my ascension to the throne of *Kinesis* was completely to do with the power structures...It has nothing to do with whether or not [*mocking voice*]... "but I'm a good person and I have good politics". You know, it's like, *you are occupying that territory and you are occupying it for historical reasons*, and you need to step aside. And in so doing, things will change and become not recognizable to you, and that is the nature of change.

Another *Kinesis* Editor, Kinross, a white working-class lesbian, brings forth the complexity of how her social relations intersected with the position of *Kinesis* Editor. She illustrated the emerging power relations regarding whiteness within the organization and her resistance to *unlearning racism* workshops. Kinross stated:

I was also thinking "I'm not those white women, I'm not those white middle-class women. That's not me." I didn't want to be seen in the same way and I got very *emotional*. People who I saw as women of privilege, were starting to organize unlearning racism workshops, and I never went to one...I was afraid to go to one and there would be somebody who was going to say: "Well that's not me," you know, like: "I'm not racist...I didn't feel like I was represented in that...dominant white women's movement group. As an individual, I felt very *emotional* about the whole issue around racism, I felt like I...[*pause*] I felt like it was assumed that I was a white middle-class woman, it was assumed that I came from privilege, and that I had a lot of privilege because of my colour and my class, and I really resisted the idea that my whiteness would give me more...privilege.

Kinross described the need to differentiate between herself as a working class white woman and other white women who were middle-class and who were being challenged on their privilege. This narrative demonstrates the complications and intersections of class and race for differently positioned white women. For Kinross, her resistance to participating in these unlearning racism workshops was deeply embedded in her own struggle not to be associated with a form of white middle-class hegemonic feminism while conflating this with invisibilizing white superiority across sexuality and class.

Both narratives by Vera and Kinross demonstrate their increased anxieties, disappointments and unhappiness embedded in the political, the symbolic, the affective, and the spatial (dis)entitlements through the proximity of certain objects such as *Kinesis*, VSW and the women's movement. Ahmed (2010) explains "we could say that happiness is promised through proximity to certain objects. Objects would refer not only to physical or material things but also to anything that we imagine might lead us to happiness, including objects in the sense of values, practice, styles, as well as aspirations" (p. 29). At the same time happiness provides the emotional setting for disappointment because it is what we expect. Ahmed further explains, "if happiness is what we desire, then happiness involves being intimate with what is not happy, or simply with what is not" (p. 30).

Also present in Vera's and Kinross' narratives is what Thompson (2003) discusses as "white exceptionalism" which takes place when progressive white subjects "pride themselves on 'getting' race issues, congratulate themselves on being exceptional white" (p. 7). White exceptionalism as a form of power relations is invoked when anti-racist whites "are invited to see themselves as not that kind of white and to embrace only those aspects of whiteness that can be construed as positive" (p. 7). Furthermore, Thompson argues that "progressive whites must interrogate the very ways of being good that white identity theory offers to protect, for the moral framing that gives whites credit for being antiracist is parasitic on the racism that it is meant to challenge" (p. 7).

Many white women leaders in the women's movement were furious with VSW for granting Zeenat, the first woman of colour Editor, the organizational power and entitlements which were closely linked to the *Kinesis* Editor's position. Zeenat describes:

I was seen as having robbed *Kinesis*... like... *having robbed the movement of its baby*. I was *going to ruin it all with race politics*. I had thrown out the baby with the bathwater which was the term actually used with me. That is when I heard over and over again, white women coming to my face to say "don't throw out the baby with the bathwater"... I heard that so

many times... it was offensive but literally offensive. *It was this notion that if you bring race in, you will ruin feminism.*

This narrative exposes the movement building and gate-keeping discourses of spatial, symbolic, affective and political entitlements attached to the position of *Kinesis* Editor which had a profound influence on the women's movements across Canada. The fear that a racialized queer woman *unhappy object*, Zeenat, would single-handedly destroy the women's movement and VSW with race and race politics provides the entry point into a deeper articulation of the construction of *home* as sacred and affective, a space that also housed *Kinesis*, a powerful symbol of not only VSW but also the women's movement. By granting Zeenat this position, she would now influence and produce knowledge within the women's movement in Canada which brought many anxieties. Hence, Zeenat was constructed as the unhappy object who not only will damage the happy object, *Kinesis*, but also produce an unhappy movement for feminists.

### **Organizational Killjoy Moments: Challenging Hierarchies and Hegemonic Feminism**

In this section, I would like to highlight several organizational *killjoy moments* including gatherings and conferences that took place within the women's movement and at VSW. I refer to these as *killjoy moments*, as discussed by Sara Ahmed (2009), as pivotal events which contested hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power bringing forth organizational change. Ahmed (2009) specifically recognizes politicized women of colour and Indigenous women who point out forms of racism and exclusion within feminist politics as "killjoy feminists".<sup>233</sup> hooks (2000) and Ahmed (2000) describe how the proximity of the racialized body causes tension and anxieties for white subjects by unsettling happiness. Ahmed (2009) explains:

Happiness becomes a condition of membership: you have to be happy for them...You cannot speak about racism; that's too unhappy as it causes them to lose their right to happiness, resting as it is on an ego ideal of being good and tolerant. You certainly should not speak of whiteness, which would implicate them in the force of your critique. You have to stay in the right place to keep your place." (p. 48)

Ahmed (2009; 2010) emphasizes that *some bodies* are constructed as negative and are encountered as being negative. Frye (1983) explains that "it is often a requirement of oppressed people that we smile and be cheerful. If we comply, we signify our docility and our acquiescence in our situation" (p. 2). Therefore those that are oppressed must show and demonstrate signs of happiness and gratefulness and hence those that do not may be perceived as negative, angry, hostile, and unhappy. What emerges from Ahmed's and Frye's analysis of the killjoy feminists can be further supported by Ahmed's

(2000) previous work on *Strange Encounters*, as well as Thobani's (2007) theory of exaltation and Hage's (2000) White Fantasy in relation to the white feminist of the nation who is constructed as good, tolerant as well as exalted. This exalted feminist of the nation requires the absence of the killjoy feminist in order to function and perform the acts of exaltation while ensuring the reinforcement of hegemonic feminist happiness.

Ahmed (2010) introduces the concept of "happiness duty" (p. 59). She explains that happiness can be constructed as a duty that functions as a debt which is owed and must be returned in the form of happiness. This was very much a common discourse within the feminist movement and was deeply apparent throughout Vancouver Status of Women's trajectory as women traditionally excluded from VSW were taught to be thankful and to perform the happiness duty to predominately white heterosexual middle-class women. Ahmed (2010) emphasizes that bodies pass as happy, in order "to keep things in the right place" (p. 59). For those that become objects and symbols of the troublemaker or killjoy it is because they are willing to speak out about their unhappiness or they refuse to make others happy. "The feminist killjoy 'spoils' the happiness of others; she is a spoilsport because she refuses to convene, to assemble, or to meet up over happiness" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 65).

Ironically just as feminists have been attributed as the origin of bad feeling they themselves have also reproduced such bad feelings upon Other feminists, such as transgendered women, working-class/poor women, lesbians, women of colour and Indigenous women. They had constructed these women as ruining their space, their symbols, their politics, and their emotions. Hegemonic feminism demands certain forms of solidarity and social bonding which reflect essentialist knowledge creation and actions that primarily put *their* philosophy, values, and ideologies to the forefront as superior.

When the killjoy feminists within feminist spaces are seen to be disturbing the fragility of the space, spatial entitlements are then threatened because spatial happiness is undermined as it interacts with other forms of entitlements. Often what does not get noticed is what makes the killjoy feminist act in the way that she does. These are the effects of power relations. What are the invocations and deployments of power relations which produce the effects of excluding her, denying her reality, and omitting her experience? Ahmed also explains that killjoy feminists such as women of colour, lesbians or working-class feminists are seen to get into trouble because they are already read as being trouble before anything happens. Hence power relations of exclusion and representation are

already invoked prior to the possible deployment of these power relations across difference. In the trajectory of VSW, killjoy feminists who contest hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power get into trouble for speaking, as it is a form of defiance by not being thankful and maintaining hegemonic forms of happiness. Just as feminists have been seen to kill the joys of people by pointing out sexism, so have Other feminists who kill the joys of heterosexuality, white normativity, bourgeois class and other hegemonic power relations.

### **The Struggles of the [White] Lesbian Community within the Women's Movement and Vancouver Status of Women**

In Chapter 4, I discussed in detail the exclusions of lesbians and Indigenous women rights in the 1970s within the mainstream women's movement particularly as it arose during the Women Rally for Action in 1976.<sup>234</sup> Lesbians, predominately white lesbians, found themselves contesting consistently in the 70s and 80s the very heterocentric feminist organizing principles, sites, and strategies which omitted and silenced their experiences as lesbians. Both Flo and Charlotte, heterosexual middle-class Board members, considered VSW to be a very "straight" and heterosexual organization during its first era (1971-1982). Charlotte recalled that different women's organizations with lesbian members perceived VSW "as a very straight group...very, because we were born out of the Royal Commission Report". She also articulated how this form of heterosexism was then further reinforced as VSW engaged in legislative lobbying.

Charlotte recognized lesbian struggles and their experiences of homophobia:

It was hard for lesbians to raise the issue and feel safe speaking about it, because it was hard for their straight sisters to take it in and wonder how on earth they were still going to be able to work together and go home to their husbands... We were babies at this, right, you know? Talking about discomfort with difference around sexuality and sexual preference was tough for people...lesbian-straight were issues that were fresh and new to the liberal...white women's movement.

Another white heterosexual middle-class staff, Mary, disclosed her own homophobia in the late 70s and how the organization engaged in pushing out one of its first out lesbian staff from the VSW workplace. Mary described how this white lesbian staff felt isolated and excluded within VSW. This situation of exclusion was further exacerbated when VSW found out that it was being discussed in the larger community as a homophobic space for lesbians. Mary stated:

She found it difficult, she found herself isolated, she found she had split loyalties...because she was the only lesbian on staff, she felt that the power dynamic was treacherous for her because her lesbian community outside of VSW saw VSW as being straight...and she'd been

putting down VSW and I was cranky about that so we had fights at staff meetings. Um...It comes up [at the staff meetings] and it quickly became like a wildfire cause it speaks to sexuality as a deep issue. It was very personal, very deep. Things get all electric very quickly, it was very bad scene.

Mary further reflected on her own active homophobic participation and asserted "I shouldn't have done it. As I look back I think that was really dumb. She felt that the straight women ganged up on her and she couldn't come back in there anymore; she in fact quit very soon thereafter. So she felt attacked by people and she was". Mary articulated the need to protect VSW as a space both symbolically, spatially, affectively and politically from "being trashed" by a lesbian who experienced and spoke up about VSW's homophobic ideologies.

Mary recalled another situation where a previously identified straight woman came out as a lesbian. Mary remembered this lesbian staff stating at a staff meeting that interactions with her within the organization had changed because she was now a lesbian:

She was aware of that oppression...so she raised the issue in a staff meeting and said that in fact we need to hire another lesbian woman so that she's not alone and isolated. And there was an adverse reaction to that and people said, 'no no no, we should *hire on merit*'...It shouldn't be sexual orientation.

This appears to be the beginning of discussions regarding the possibility of hiring feminists who have traditionally been excluded not only within Vancouver Status of Women but also within other feminist spaces of organizing. This will be further discussed in Chapter 7 in the section on affirmative action.<sup>235</sup> The next section shifts into challenging white superiority and white entitlements within VSW.

### **Displacing White Feminist Entitlements**

During the late 1980s and the early 1990s, several non-white women enter the organization as staff members and board members who consistently and constantly challenge those that had been traditionally *naturally* welcomed there and who had constructed this nationalist site as home. White women needed women of colour to join the organization as passive feminists, in order to be perceived as inclusive and diverse. Yet, as politicized active racialized women joined the organization they were experienced as negative figures for wanting change. As discussed earlier, politicized racialized bodies were seen as Ahmed describes, "killjoy feminists", who were, "some bodies [who] are assumed to be the origin of bad feeling, as getting in the way of the good feelings of others" (Ahmed, 2009, p.

48). They were seen as disrupting unity and fracturing the movement because they spoke out against the racist talk and culture within white women's everyday/every night discourses.

Sydney, a white working-class lesbian, recalled attending an assertiveness training workshop that focused on white privilege and racism. She described her frustrations and responses to killjoy moments as women of colour exposed their rage and anger:

It was supposed to be on building unity from our various points of oppression...like the South African model. We're all oppressed, we all have something to bring to the table. We [white women] spent half a day getting ripped apart again by people of colour. It was awful and I just thought, that's it, I'm never going to another one...I'm tired of being the *enemy*. I'm not, I'm an ally. I know I have privilege, I accept that, but I don't want to be ripped apart, it's hard enough, you know.

Sydney's description of the experience of getting "ripped apart" can be understood as killjoy moments of challenging white entitlements, she stated, "you're guilted out, you're told you're responsible for everything, and you're held responsible for one person's pain, and they rip you apart with their pain...you're damned with it, it's a *horrible, horrible feeling*". She was extremely resentful of women of colour calling white women on their entitlement and privilege, she saw herself being used as a "therapeutic vehicle". Sydney explained:

I don't want your pain worked out on my body. I'm full of my own pain. I have lots of stuff to carry, it's too hard. I'm already a white ally, I just want to establish from there, and that may seem selfish, that may seem self-concerned, but you know, I have my own life to carry, I have my own life to get through. And it was one after the other after the other, and I just broke down sobbing.

This narrative by Sydney highlights several key themes which speak to white entitlement and the 'killjoy' experience upon the white feminist subject who becomes deeply resentful of women of colour expressing their rage and disentanglement against white hegemonic feminism.<sup>236</sup> Sydney admits and reflects on how it was much easier to create such unhappy feelings when the enemy was outside (patriarchy), but when the 'enemy is inside' (ie. white women) then it was much more complex. White women were not able to see the very same discourses that they had been part of when they saw themselves as victims or as angry feminists who challenged patriarchal hegemonic spaces, symbols, affects, and political entitlements.

Ahmed (2010) articulates how certain bodies are encountered as being negative, she explains:

Does bad feeling enter the room when somebody expresses anger about things, or could anger be the moment when the bad feelings that circulate through objects get brought to the surface in a certain way? Feminist subjects might bring others down not only by talking about unhappy topics...but by exposing how happiness is sustained by erasing the very signs of not getting along. Feminists do kill joy in a certain sense: they disturb the very fantasy that

happiness can be found in certain places. To kill a fantasy can still kill a feeling. It is not just that feminist might not be happily affected by the objects that are supposed to cause happiness but that their failure to be happy is read as sabotaging the happiness of others. (p. 66)

Unfortunately, in this case the feminist killjoy of colour is attributed as the cause of unhappiness and her anger is read as targeting the happiness of white women rather than what the women of colour is unhappy about. She becomes what Ahmed (2010) describes as "affectively alien" because she affects others in the wrong way and her "proximity gets in the way of other people's enjoyment of the right things, functioning as an unwanted reminder of histories that are disturbing, that disturb an atmosphere" (p. 56).

Particularly, during the first (1971-1982) and second (1983-1991) eras, white women within VSW were fearful of women of colour disrupting their entitlements. This resulted in keeping women of colour in precarious and non-leadership positions of power which would not threaten the white feminist entitlements. Nilima, a woman of colour lesbian staff, explained:

They [white women] seemed like really strong political women. Don't mess with them but if you had a strong woman of colour come into their space...I mean I was young so I wasn't seen as someone threatening, right? But a strong woman of colour coming into that space would totally...I'm not sure if they would have been able to deal with that, you know, or were favourable to that.

Nilima's articulation speaks to Ahmed's (2000) concept of the stranger who is kept out and the stranger who is welcomed into the *home* or national space. The proximity and construction of the stranger invokes degrees of colonial spatial anxieties that require the destabilizing of the national space of *home*. Ahmed (2000) considers what happens to the construction of nationhood in the context of multiculturalism and particularly asks:

...what happens to the nation when 'strange cultures' are not only let in, but are redefined as integral to the nation itself? Therefore, the strangers would not simply be those who are already recognized as out of place, and as the origin and cause of danger. Rather, in the multicultural nation, the strangers would come to have a place in the nation. (p. 97)

Kinross remembered feeling displaced as a white working class lesbian and resentful of women of colour's *take over* of VSW and the women's movement. Kinross elaborated:

I felt marginalized by the women's movement from a class perspective, and...[pause] I felt really actually resentful because the women's movement had never taken on *class*...then the women of colour come along, and they are able to put their issue into a place in the movement where...they're able to eventually make people start listening to them and acknowledging their marginalization and acknowledging white women's responsibility....I *did* feel like women of colour issues were going to *displace me out of my movement*. That I was somehow going to be found out-that I was going to lose my role, my leadership role...I felt like that was at risk.

As the interview continued Kinross deepened her reflections and acknowledged that she was holding herself back from further disclosure about this dilemma and realization, "I feel like I'm not acknowledging the resistance I had to...[pauses, hesitates] integrating women of colour...into organizations, I feel like I did have real resistance doing that". This powerful statement brings forth a profound articulation of Kinross' struggles within feminist spaces as spatial and affective entitlements were being encroached upon. This feeling of loss and displacement would have an impact on her political entitlement through the power symbol of *Kinesis*.

Kinross further expressed that she felt that women of colour would not value the organizational or women's movement capital that she had accumulated over the years:

They [women of colour] were never going to be grateful for anything that I did...they didn't want to know anything that I knew. They didn't want to hear anything that I had to say and they sure didn't think they could learn anything from me. So...that was a resentment that I had of them...and I had to protect myself....I knew I was not the person to be there...able to work with...a new form of *Kinesis* which was inclusive of women of colour. I knew that *my emotions* would be very problematic in that process and that it would go badly for me and it would go badly for the paper.<sup>237</sup>

Kinross recalled the late 1980s as a period when women of colour organizing was strengthening in the city of Vancouver, *Kinesis* was being challenged regarding its content, racism, and the lack of presence of women of colour within *Kinesis* and VSW. Kinross recalled the Women of Colour Group requesting to meet with *Kinesis* personnel and providing specific suggestions (see Appendix C.1).<sup>238</sup> This Women of Colour Group was frustrated with *Kinesis*' assumption that women of colour were not feminist, as well as racist tokenism and language within the paper. The Group made a number of specific requests which included: that articles on all issues should solicit women of colour writers; articles about women of colour should be written by women of colour; increased participation and representation of women of colour and their communities in *Kinesis*, including the Editorial Board.

Additionally, a month prior, the *Kinesis* Editorial Board Meeting minutes indicate that white women did make assumptions that, "women of colour are less likely to have a *feminist analysis*". Another white woman stated as recorded in the minutes, "when she approaches women of colour she assumes the woman has *different politics and allegiances*...[that] her politics are therefore unknown, [invoking] a *distrust* in terms of being a *different brand of feminism*".<sup>239</sup> The minutes also stated, "with women of colour there's an element of *don't know* (their politics) and *nervous about differences*". Ahmed's (2000) conceptualization of fearing the stranger is articulated in these

discourses of Otherness while also being pressured by the Women of Colour Group to find ways to welcome the stranger as the origin of difference. This proximity of strangers not only invokes colonial anxieties of difference by white national subjects within VSW but also produces modalities of resistance which contests white racist entitlements and hegemonic feminism. By the end of the 1989-1990 fiscal year, VSW publicly announced through its annual report, "*Kinesis* has traditionally been a paper where the editor, production workers, writers, readers, are predominantly white women. VSW and the women who produce *Kinesis* are dedicated to changing this".<sup>240</sup>

Hence, 1989 and 1990 are pivotal years for VSW as it experienced multiple and simultaneous confrontations from external and internal women of colour in precarious and unpaid positions who challenged the organizations' white normativity and racist culture.<sup>241</sup> Emerging approximately one year after the meeting with the Women of Colour Group, the *Kinesis* Women of Colour Caucus was created, but not without a *fight*. The organization was challenged to begin to invest in structural shifts of power that later facilitated the implementation of policies and structures to equalize power, particularly through the *affirmative action* and *inclusion with influence* policies discussed in detail in Chapter 7. Cindy, a working-class lesbian of colour, recalled the white women's defensiveness and opposition around the creation of the *Kinesis* Women of Colour Caucus. Cindy explained:

I wanted a caucus because I wanted women of colour to come, to at least come and be at *Kinesis*. And that took several meetings...it was me and the current Editor going at it with each other. I remember it was really really hard, and at one point - and we were both crying. I think the first thing the Editor asked "well why do we need that?" And I said "well", and I remember not having an answer because I wasn't expecting an answer like that, or response, and I was just like "so that women of colour can be here, it's a place for us to gather and organize".

Cindy's narrative demonstrates how much resistance there was to the formation of the Women of Colour Caucus. The creation of this Caucus was extremely necessary for beginning the process of inclusion for women of colour but it was seen as undermining the current exclusive culture of *Kinesis*. Cindy further illustrated the discussions that followed:

The Editor point-blank said to me, and we're both crying and upset and angry and she said, "so what that means is that, you want me to be out of a job and not to be the Editor", and I looked at her, and I went, "yes, that's right". I hadn't thought of it. I hadn't thought that, right? But for her, that's what I think what the fear was...is that women of colour are going to come, and where are all the white women going to go, right?

Arising from Cindy's narrative and the archives is the entry point of the unmaking and unsettling of home for white women. These processes which destabilize white feminist entitlement in VSW are

embedded in the deepening of colonial encounters and encroachment of women of colour upon the white spatial and political entitlement. As Vera, the current Editor at the time recalled, "so many women of colour were stepping forward, saying, claiming the space within *Kinesis*".

Vera remembered her anxieties as a white woman *Kinesis* Editor who was responding to these assertions by women of colour including the demand for affirmative action. She asserted "you wouldn't necessarily know from looking at the minutes of our meetings that I am in fact the Editor who was totally on board for the affirmative action hiring around *Kinesis* positions". Vera indicated her struggle with the creation of the Women of Colour Caucus:

The Women of Colour Caucus which was difficult... I experienced that as really difficult... Uhm, [*hesitates*]...[*silence*]. I never really understood the relationship... and what I mean by that is, it seemed as though there were women in the Women of Colour Caucus of *Kinesis* who weren't actually connected to *Kinesis*...But in retrospect, I realize that's how that had to happen....that's actually how that change is going to happen. But at the time, I can just remember thinking, "these are not my friends"...and "they don't like me, and they see me as the problem".

What gets to the forefront of Vera's narrative is that over time happy objects such as Vera can become unhappy. Ahmed (2010) explains "that all objects become affective as points of conversion...good and bad feelings accumulate 'around' objects, such that those objects become sticky. Objects become ambivalent in the conversion between negative and positive feeling states" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 44). The Women of Colour Caucus was constructed as disturbing an important symbol of entitlement, *Kinesis*, which was also very much attached to political, affective, and spatial entitlement. Women of colour are constructed as 'affect aliens' because they are the ones who convert good feelings into bad feelings. They do so by killing the joy of the organization.

During the summer of 1990, the *Kinesis* Women of Colour Caucus ensured that it was institutionalized within the structure of *Kinesis* while continuing to challenge white hegemonic feminism through structural changes. An important *Kinesis* Editorial Committee meeting captured historical difficult discussions of organizational change in the composition of the staff and the content of *Kinesis*.<sup>242</sup> Discussions at this meeting included racialized Editorial Board members asserting that barriers exist regarding women of colour's recruitment, retention, and lack of (writing) support within *Kinesis*. The Editorial Board additionally discussed accountability and transparency about *Kinesis*' current struggles with its readers. Another woman of colour commented as recorded in the minutes:

It was felt strongly that work against racism should be a public process. People need to pick up the paper and know this process is going on. It is important to document the herstory and

evolution of the paper inside itself. Important also because of what is going on in the women's movement. Record of the process shouldn't be limited to 'Inside *Kinesis*' nor does it have to be a woman of colour doing all the reporting. As well, writing about the process in *Kinesis* will be voicing a commitment to change by being public and accountable. (p. 1)

This meeting also discussed the position of *Kinesis* Editor as the first affirmative action hiring position for a woman of colour. I discuss the making of VSW Affirmative Action policy in detail in Chapter 7. Also raised by a volunteer woman of colour Editorial Board member is the concern regarding 'who is telling whose story'. The minutes indicated:

This is a big issue and sometimes comes in the form of bylines, or who is writing about who. *Kinesis* has a long herstory in this area and is making progress. It is all part of the problem of our lack of connections with women of colour in their communities. 'As told to' is used well. But frequently it is the case of white women writing about women of colour issues. We need more women of colour involved as writers and getting them to suggest stories. (p. 2)

The Editor responded as recorded in the minutes that the main issue is the lack of writers and the "problem of the structure of politics" where "white Canadian women go to Third World countries with the purpose of telling Canadians what is going on out there. Obviously these are filtered views of what is happening, but if not used, will anything be written on these countries?" (p. 2). Here the debate focuses on whether it is even an option not to cover these stories if they are not written by women of colour. Someone responded, "for white women to travel to Third World nations is very privileged...It takes away the voice of women's experiences in those countries. There is racism in writing. As well, we don't want to reinforce that political structure." (p. 3)<sup>243</sup>

It is also relevant to mention several pivotal conferences which took place in the margins of the mainstream women's movement during the 1990s. These alternative conferences contributed to challenging the mainstream women's movement not only because it centered on non-white feminists and their content, visions and aspirations but it also provided the space for racialized politicized feminists to articulate their differences amongst each other.<sup>244</sup> Divali and Zeenat recalled the Invisible Colours Film Festival which was an important international Film Festival in 1991.<sup>245</sup> Zeenat described this festival as "the first big really high profile thing, got the same flack in the media, it outraged the whole of Vancouver, it was hugely controversial as it featured the works of racialized artists as film makers and not white women". Divali explained that Invisible Colours created much controversy specifically from white women as they saw such gatherings as explicitly excluding them.

Divali was on the Advisory Committee of Tapestry, another pivotal gathering of racialized women. Tapestry was organized by the Immigrant Women and Racism Committee of VSW, it also conjured controversies in the women's movement. Zeenat recalled:

The first ever women of colour only gathering, which became a huge controversy in the community. It was in the mainstream newspapers, it was everywhere, the Vancouver Sun got in on the critique, it was about how dare women of colour exclude white women, [it was seen as a] racist gathering...

In spite of this racist backlash, Zeenat explained that Tapestry brought hundreds of racialized women in conversation, "it was women of colour and Aboriginal women working side-by-side....that was the beginning of the articulation of differences between Aboriginal women and women of colour politics... it gave us that chance for the first time to actually have that dialogue."<sup>246</sup> Another important anti-racist gathering for Aboriginal women and women of colour was organized by VSW and WAVAW<sup>247</sup>, Looking within to Reach Out: Anti-racism Work in Women's Organizations.<sup>248</sup> This was an important conference where Indigenous women contested being categorized into the title of women of colour and spoke to the distinctiveness and specificity that separate Indigenous women and women of colour in relation to Canada as a colonial nation. Dua (2008) asserts that that Indigenous Peoples and people of colour are differently positioned in relation to the nation and therefore emerging solidarity work must not undermine Indigenous struggles. She cautions:

First, such undifferentiated claims of solidarity erase the particular ways in which First Nations people face racism - through the processes of ongoing colonization.... Secondly, such claims of commonality erase the differences between how people of colour have been racialized and how First Nations peoples have been colonized. Third, understanding the historical and contemporary differences between the processes of racialization and the processes of colonization requires addressing the thorny issue of how people of colour have been positioned as settlers. (Dua, 2008, p. 31)

As can be seen from the above discussions of these gatherings during the 1990s, they were incredibly empowering and they recognized the contributions of those that had traditionally been kept in the margins in precarious and token roles within mainstream organizing spaces. Yet, these gatherings were seen to undermine the mainstream women's movement, and the fact that white women were not included was constructed not as empowering but as exclusive and as *reverse racism* both within white women organizations and mainstream society. What was the fear and why? Divali articulated part of the answer:

I think that in a way, these white women were trying to make change but also were freaked out by seeing what all of this would mean...they knew that they would lose ground and they

would lose face and what's more, that their politics were suspect, right.... and that the feminism in the way that they understood it was completely inadequate.

Embedded in these narratives and VSW archives is white women's fear of losing ground and the entitlements of what has come to be home and that their shortcomings would be discovered.<sup>249</sup> More profoundly their spatial, affective, political, and symbolic entitlements would be threatened and exposed for what they were, which was reproducing national practices and discourse of being exclusive, hegemonic, and essentialist.

Other gatherings, forums and conferences internationally, nationally, and locally such as those of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW)<sup>250</sup>, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), and United Nations conferences in Nairobi and Beijing were also tremendously relevant to an organization such as VSW. VSW was highly influenced by *Kinesis* who was covering such gatherings as well as the issues, concerns, tensions, struggles, and dialogues born out of such spaces of critical dialogue. Hence, VSW was unique as an organization due to *Kinesis'* presence and role as an alternative newspaper covering emerging feminist and social justice issues locally, provincially, nationally, and at times internationally. Additionally, as social justice organizations interacted at gatherings, conferences, rallies, and through other coalition, VSW both influenced these organizations as well as was influenced by them. Dialogues, conflicts, recommendations, strategies, and education emerged from these sites of gathering which then trickled into organizations and larger movements nationally.

For example, in the 1990s, VSW played an important role in supporting women of colour and Indigenous women in leadership positions within the mainstream women's movement while actively contesting white hegemonic feminism. Specifically, through its participation in NAC, VSW nominated the first woman of colour President of NAC and lobbied for affirmative action of Indigenous women and women of colour staff and committee members. Later in the early 2000s, VSW also played an important role in supporting the inclusion of transgendered individuals within NAC. Additionally, VSW's understanding of intersectionality contributed to CRIAOW's theorizing and publications on *Intersectional Feminist Frameworks* in the mid 2000s. Therefore, VSW's organizational trajectory demonstrates this unique feminist organization as a *killjoy* that not only challenged and confronted hegemonic State policies but also hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power within the women's movement.

## Contesting Ableism with VSW and the Larger Women's Movement

Another important killjoy moment that I would like to discuss revolves around the Angela Davis event organized by VSW in February 2000 at the Vancouver Vogue Theatre. This VSW fundraising event was powerful and exciting for the feminist, social justice, and academic community of Vancouver. Soon after the event VSW received a letter from a well known feminist disability advocate stating her concerns of the event's lack of accessibility (Meister, 2000). The reception that followed Angela Davis' talk was not accessible to audience members with mobility disabilities. Both this letter and VSW's response were printed in *Kinesis* (see Appendix D.1 for VSW's response letter).<sup>251</sup> VSW's Coordinating Collective response stated:

Amidst the excitement of preparations for this monumental location, we (VSW) admittedly made an oversight by holding the reception in an area that was inaccessible. The irony of the situation is that VSW is committed to issues of accessibility, taking care to ensure that all our programs are held in venues which meet the needs of those with varying abilities. There is, therefore, no excuse for this occurrence...<sup>252</sup>

Following the VSW response, two additional letters were received which found VSW's response to be "offensive", "dismissive", "insulting" and tokenistic.<sup>253</sup>

To say that this was an 'oversight' serves to exemplify the ableist perspective that the CC [VSW's Coordinating Collective] tries to deny with its Public Relations statement 'VSW is committed to issues of accessibility'. If so, how is it that in my three years at VSW I never witnessed nor heard anything that supported this claim. Further, during my tenure my opinion was not sought, nor to my knowledge, any other women of the disability community. Whose definition of accessibility is the VSW using? If myself and these other women have been consulted perhaps VSW would have realised that a TTY with few operators and a door entrance with a 2-3" lip, despite an elevator is not accessibility but tokenism. (Letter A to VSW, p. 1)

Both letters found what VSW named as an "oversight" to be disrespectful and the need for VSW to take "a close look at what deeper ableist attitudes this 'oversight' may be indicative of" (Letter B, p. 1).

One of the letters demanded that VSW sincerely apologize to women with disabilities and demonstrate "a real commitment to issues of accessibility as defined by women with disabilities themselves" (Letter A, p. 1).<sup>254</sup>

VSW responded to both of these letters by welcoming the criticisms and reasserting its commitment to ending all forms of oppression against women, including women with disabilities.

For many years, VSW has been one of the few women's organizations to call attention to disability issues among our peers, and among policymakers and funding agencies. The Coordinating Collective acknowledges that VSW's verbal commitment has not been reflected in our own organization, both in the physical accessibility of our space and in many of our programs. We are taking steps to address these issues.<sup>255</sup>

VSW explained that they have entered into several partnerships with key disability organizations and feminists to bring about institutional change, while also integrating technologies to facilitate women with disabilities participation in the organization.<sup>256</sup> VSW concluded the letter by stating that it would continue to examine its internal structures, physical space, programs and services by ensuring that they are more accessible and reflective of the organization's mandate to end oppression of women. What emerges from these correspondences is VSW's lack of responsibility and responsiveness to issues and concerns of women with disabilities. Legitimate complaints are brought forward which highlight VSW's tokenistic approach to such concerns. At the same time these complaint letters are very much situated with white normativity and do not speak to the intersectionality of disability within multiple locations. Specifically, deriving from these intersections are racialized, whiteness, gender, and disability tensions which are unspoken and result in *race to innocence* discourses as theorized by Fellows and Razack (1998).

I specifically recalled during my time at VSW when the coordinator of a well known disability feminist organization called VSW to question why our affirmative action policy only focused specifically on Indigenous women and women of colour and not women with disabilities. We engaged in a friendly discussion of how do we in the first place separate disabling processes attached to race, class, and sexuality. I shared as a queer women of colour with a disability that in BC disability organizations' continue to centre whiteness within their mandates, staff composition, and vision. I recalled asking her "how do you see disability, what is the colour of disability?" "Do you see disability as only among white feminists?" I also told her that we had just interviewed a woman of Japanese descent who is hard of hearing and we had hired an ASL<sup>257</sup> interpreter for her interview. Can we then assume that if we speak of Indigenous women and women of colour that they do not and will not have a disability. She agreed with me and said yes in fact she had constructed disability within whiteness. I reiterated to her that the majority of people in the world with disabilities are in fact not white.

### **Indigenous and Women of Colour Relations: Deepening the Colonial Encounter**

During VSW's fourth era in 2007 for the first time in VSW history, all permanent staff positions were occupied by Indigenous women<sup>258</sup>. This had been one of my aspirations<sup>258</sup> for a very long time which I projected onto the organization. I was determined to ensure that all the permanent full-time

positions would one day be held by Indigenous women who then would be in positions of power and leadership to make decisions about the direction and future of the organization. I had completely over romanticized this situation as white middle-class women in the past had done with women of colour. As the narratives and archives demonstrate, white women were shocked when women of colour revealed differences of opinion and political positions. There was some familiarity with white women's and women of colour's responses but it is also imperative to recognize the differences because of how we are differently positioned in relation to the nation.<sup>259</sup> I speak of these differently positioned disparities and discrepancies later in the conclusion. In this section, I engage in taking the responsibility to share a pivotal event and process at VSW from a self-reflexive location as an anti-colonialist critical feminist researcher. My intention is to focus on colonial discourses and relations rather than look for outcomes, truths, and solutions.

As conflict rose significantly between the three Indigenous staff, all the Coordinating Collective members, white women and women of colour, did not have the capacity or could not create the capacity to respond to the current conflict and support the staff.<sup>260</sup> Historically, Indigenous and people of colour relations have been denied the space to envision non-paternalistic and non-tokenist relations. At the same time people of colour have been complicit in reproducing national discourses and practices which have crystallized differently positioned colonial relations with Indigenous Peoples that impede healthy relations.<sup>261</sup>

I came to a difficult realization that I had robbed the Indigenous women working at that time of all the differences and specificity including the potential for conflict and tensions that come about in all relations of power. Had I reproduced hegemonic power relations that once impacted women of colour as imposed by white women who wanted women of colour to be non disruptive and not to kill the joy of the organization? I realized that it was possible that I would want the three Indigenous women to be the "thankful happy Indians" and to ensure organizational happiness. How quickly we reproduce these nationalist practices upon bodies out of place. Hence, it was much easier to reproduce historic nation-building discourses of racialization and essentialism rather than subvert them. Specifically, it was easier to reproduce what white women had done in a similar position. Yet, how would this precise moment in the organization's trajectory play out differently? And so I

embarked on a journey that was not available to women of colour in the past but was available to me...an opportunity, a responsibility.

I realize that Indigenous women's presence as VSW decision makers derived from VSW's aspiration and hope as an end result. Yet, such aspirations lacked the necessary thinking through of the complexities, the ethics and the complicities of power that would be invoked and deployed. The romanticizing of Indigenous bodies within VSW's space did not recognize the arising dilemmas that would emerge from an organization that was born out of the RCSW, a colonial project that fabricated VSW as a national site where white women held positions of power and later women of colour. When conflict arose between the Indigenous women, why was the organization surprised that differences existed, what had we assumed, what had we reproduced? Had we assumed something similar to what white women had assumed of women of colour staff, that there would be no conflict, that there would be no difference, and that they should just be happy and smile and not destroy this imaginary happiness? If we had over romanticized the hiring and making of spaces within VSW for/with Indigenous women, then had we robbed Indigenous women of the very same things we had critiqued white women of doing to us? Yet, we were learning that as women of colour we were differently positioned from white women. I knew it would be much easier to reproduce what white hegemonic feminism had taught me but my racialized trajectory and relations with Indigenous women allowed for the re-envisioning and hope that history need not repeat itself in this situation.

When the conflict arose in VSW amongst the Indigenous staff, I was no longer a staff at VSW nor was I on the Coordinating Collective (Board). In fact, I was in the in-between phase of the six-month policy wait period before joining the Coordinating Collective after being a staff member. I was asked by the staff to step in and support them mediate the conflict.<sup>262</sup> It was much easier to turn the other way and blame them as had been done in the past. I remember calling a past Coordinating Collective woman of colour from the late 1980s and asked her what had happened when women of colour had conflict amongst themselves, what did the white women do? She responded which she reiterated during her interview, "the white women walked away, they left it for the one woman of colour on the Board to deal with the women of colour staff. I recall how I was set up and how it was a difficult situation".<sup>263</sup>

I thought through those words to provide me with the strength to build the capacity to not reproduce oppressive historical colonial responses and encounters. After the Coordinating Collective approved that I could be a resource and help facilitate a discussion amongst the three Indigenous women as a non-Indigenous woman of colour, I came to a deeper understanding of what Lee Maracle had once emphasized to a group of women of colour, "one must always engage in responsiveness and responsibility". I knew I could not walk away as this was also my struggle and that I was part of these colonial legacies. Most importantly I had also been partly complicit in creating such a space and conflict. Therefore when we understand our complicity in these colonial encounters and anxieties, we can also have the strength not to walk away, blame, or be paralyzed in our own guilt or cowardness.

I also came to understand that such conflicts and negotiations arise due to the women's movement, the nation and the organization's investments in the myth of unity and limitations of identity politics which robbed women of their specificity and unique political, social and emotional standpoint. This erasure is precisely what I critiqued in Chapter 4 on the Royal Commission on the Status of Women which reproduced nationalist and colonialist processes of exclusion, racialization and nation-building. So the binary of either being complicit or non-complicit is narrow and inadequate. Lawrence and Dua (2005) clearly illustrate the failures and complicity of anti-racist feminist theorists and activists in reproducing the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples. In this particular situation the organization was not able to engage resulting in anti-racist feminists' complicity. Yet, specific women of colour did engage in active responsiveness and responsibility with a clear understanding and investment in *not* reproducing past failures.

I also came to understand how one cannot occupy an ambivalent position as a woman of colour where you are not white but you can find yourself in the hierarchy of power relations based on class, race, ethnicity, language, education, and entitlements. Furthermore, by carefully considering how and why relations of power intersect to produce a particular domination over, above, around and within Indigenous spaces, and bodies, it becomes imperative to reflect on how one becomes possessed by the nation through the very dispossession of Indigenous bodies and histories. As Ahmed et al. (2003) urge us to consider "when the movement of some takes place through 'fixing the bodies of others', or when staying put takes place through displacing others?" (p. 6). Hence, what is exemplified throughout VSW's organizational trajectory in relation to the participation of Indigenous

Peoples is very much intertwined with the reproduction and contestation of power relations which sustain and reinforce nation-building discourses of citizenship, belonging, entitlement, and home.

### **Conclusion: Differently Positioned Entitlement across VSW's Organizational Trajectory**

This chapter presented historical colonial encounters and junctures within VSW demonstrating entitlement and the making of home within nationalist practices of nation-building. The four modalities of entitlement emerging from the narratives and archives are highly visible both within the women's movement and the organization as well as within the nation. Spatial, affective, symbolic, and political entitlements are in constant negotiation and interaction with each other and have been used as responses to claiming, reclaiming, and the denial of entitlement both within the nation and social justice organizing.

Participants acknowledged the different degrees and intensities of entitlement and its relationship to home not only in relation to space, land, territory but also to the emotions, symbols and politics attached to the making and sustaining of home within national discourses of whiteness. At the same time, many white participants discussed their fears of displacement and loss of home within VSW and partly within the women's movement. I discuss several killjoy moments which illustrate this displacement and defensiveness while also emphasizing the struggles and strengths of racialized women in carving their space within VSW as unhappy objects. Also arising from several narratives is Ahmed's (2009) conception of the "killjoy feminist" who disrupt and destabilize white women's sense of home shifting the symbols and politics while threatening the affects of happiness attached to home.

Additionally, this chapter demonstrates what Hage (2000) has articulated as the discourse of Anglo decline and displacement which draws on the *worrying nationalist* who is deeply invested in discourses of White Nation fantasy exhibiting white supremacy. Similarly, worrying nationalist feminists feared racialized women's presence and leadership within the women's movement and VSW. This fear of displacement and Other stranger danger anxieties produced nationalist hegemonic responses of essentialism, exclusion and racialization.

Narratives particularly of white feminists within VSW provide an important articulation of the sense of losing spatial, symbolic, political and affective entitlement, as women of colour were moving into *their* spaces within the nation. Hage (2000) speaks specifically to the symbolic and spatial

entitlement when he states, "familiarity is particularly associated with practical spatial and linguistic knowledge. When the nationalist feels that he or she can no longer operate in, communicate in or recognise the national space in which he or she operates, the nation appears to be losing its homely character" (p. 40). Hage further expands by illustrating the image of the dominant national subject "as someone with a *managerial capacity over this national space*. One cannot define and act on others as undesirable in just any national space. Such a space has to be perceived as one's own national space." (p. 42). For example, Kinross discusses her fears and anxious feelings of women of colour invading her space; here, spatial entitlement invokes emotions and attachment of home as symbolic and affective entitlement which facilitate political entitlement as exemplified by the exalted feminist subject of nation. Hage (2000) suggests that, "just as much as the nation is imagined as a homely construct, the nationalist body is also imagined to inhabit it in a specific way such as it can cast its managerial gaze on the home" (p. 45). This managerial gaze on the VSW as home repeatedly surfaced in narratives which brought forth the specific modes of entitlements.

Also emanating from the archives and narratives is the assertion that white women through their entitlements took certain risks to facilitate the inclusion of women of colour and Indigenous women into VSW space. It is only through their spatial, affective, symbolic and political entitlements that they are able to demonstrate and invest in such changes. At the same time it is important to reaffirm that non-white women were always resisting and challenging such spaces to make the necessary changes. The white women who demonstrated *alliance* towards racialized women were faced with two choices of either reproducing or not reproducing white supremacy in the organization. Both these choices required the invocation of their national/organizational accumulated entitlements and capital in order to carve or not to carve spaces for the Other. Yet, not to carve such racialized spaces would appear racist, hence discourses of welcoming the stranger in a more *inclusive* manner would then appear non-complicit in white hegemonic feminism.

Zeenat illustrated how the role white women played in legitimizing her as *Kinesis* Editor and within VSW even when white women did not fully comprehend the changes and what it would mean. Zeenat goes on to explain how such legitimization brought forth power as strength for her, she justified this discourse by explaining the interconnections of contradictions, resentment, and gratefulness that such power relations produced:

I always knew, that I had *strength* when [this white dominant staff] stood behind me and I resented that deeply. Because I was grateful for it but I also knew that my power was limited by it. That I was only really allowed to be truly the rebel and the radical and the change monger and the troublemaker, as long as the white woman backed me. And then I would have a stamp of approval. My legitimacy is based on some white woman standing behind me. That is the limitation of the anti-racism we were able to do.... we never changed the world and that's why we're struggling.

For some of the participants, even though they felt they had autonomy as racialized politicized staff, when I probed them further, they concluded that white women in decision-making administrative positions were fundamental to backing them up and supporting them. Many agreed that had they not had that support, then their autonomy and power would be at risk. What I have described above is an excellent example of how the positionalities of different groups of women intersected and performed different modes of entitlement as troublemaker, killjoy feminist, and enabler across multiple sites of organization, women's movement and the nation.

White women in VSW who facilitated the entrance of racialized women in positions of leadership did so from their accumulated entitlement and managerial capacity within/over the nation. This entitlement is multifaceted and complex as it includes spatial entitlement of letting in the Other by welcoming the stranger in guarded space. It also involves affective entitlement where one begins to challenge the feelings and affects of home within this spatial environment with the knowledge that certain policies would no longer sustain the naturalized affirmative action of white women for the last 20 years within this particular organization. Thirdly, it involves the challenging of symbolic entitlement as experienced by white women and not experienced by racialized women. And lastly political entitlements begin to shift, as white women begin to share, exit and change the political voice of the landscape of the women's movement. What comes alive in such situations is the *matronizing* rather than patronizing discourse demonstrating that without some white women using their entitlement within the nation to facilitate the entrance of racialized bodies within the space; such bodies would never have entered. White women remain the decision-makers controlling these spatial, symbolic, affective and political complexities of VSW until the late 1990s.

At the same time as white women further increased their consciousness-raising regarding whiteness, imperialism and other power relations, many were seen to be allies or building coalition across difference. Such alliance building was demonstrated through using one's power or sharing one's power to facilitate change to happen. Yet, this remained embedded within the discourse of whiteness

as power - as the one who lets in, who allows, who hires, who mentors, and who shares knowledge. I argue that within this framework, as important as it has been historically and remains in terms of equalizing the accumulation of national capital, it has not shifted the power structures and the dominance of white feminists within the larger movement as the giver, provider, and maker of space. *They* are the ones who must be thanked and be grateful to, as *they* allowed difference or diversity to enter into *their* home and space.<sup>264</sup>

It is critical to recognize that whoever fought for whatever rights, that it was always within the framework of accumulating national capital which is embedded within imperial legacies of land and resource theft as well as the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. That ultimately for non-Indigenous people, the struggle for rights through equality discourses remains entrenched in the continued reassurance that Canada remains occupied. Therefore, if this occupation is what facilitates the accumulation of national capital within a settler society then the struggle for rights is very much intertwined in the ongoing occupation.

### **Researcher's Concluding Self-Reflections on Entitlement**

Entitlement for me emerged as a powerful concept during my years as a Faculty at UBC Okanagan and as President of a national feminist organization - the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW).<sup>265</sup> The overlapping of both these events in my life produced a heightened awareness of white entitlement. As a faculty, I was constantly questioned about my presence in multiple spaces on the campus, including "why I parked in the faculty and staff parking lot", "why was I touching the equipment in this classroom", "who was I", and "where was I from". I found myself wearing my University ID permanently on my body in order to legitimate my presence and role on the campus. What aggravated me the most was the naturalized entitlement of white people to interrogate me about my presence in multiple sites. How does one feel entitled or come to feel entitled to question the presence of the Other in spaces that appear to be guarded and reserved for only white national subjects?

At the same time, my nomination as president of CRIAOW, was seen by some as disrupting the natural flow of entitlement or white feminist lineage, particularly as there were white women who had been part of the organization prior to my entry point and who felt that they should legitimately be the next president. The idea of the racialized body jumping the queue and dislocating white feminists

is not only a common story within national organizations but also within larger discourses of the nation. I was seen as having jumped the queue, I was the youngest woman of colour to be president of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and the first queer woman of colour president. White women's sense of entitlement within the organization was demonstrated by their belief that they rightfully had the natural ownership to be seen as manager and leader of this national organizational site. This was a difficult time for me which was full of complicated learnings. Although I was on the board of Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) and at one point the president, I never felt ownership or entitlement in CRIAW. I always felt as a *guest*, who was given a pass to *play on their* playground and this pass could be revoked any time I was seen to misbehave or as a producer of unhappiness. I never felt I belonged there at CRIAW and I began to consider why this unbelonging felt so familiar to the lack of belonging I experience daily as a *citizen* of Canada. This outsider feeling was a sense of disempowerment that was significantly different from what I experienced at Vancouver Status of Women.

I recalled sharing the following with a participant when she asked about my entry point into VSW:

My first day at VSW as a staff, I walked in and I was greeted by three black lesbian women...I had never experienced this in Vancouver before, nor did this exist in other organizational spaces in Vancouver...it just didn't exist. It doesn't exist today. So it was an amazing experience. I reaped the benefits of what women had fought for. VSW became like *home* for me. My mother was there, my grandmother volunteered, my nieces hung out...it was a special place. But now I'm thinking that when I'm making home for me it's important to consider how comfort for me can mean excluding others. This developed entitlement over the years is precisely what facilitated the taking on of this research. Without that sense of entitlement about Vancouver Status of Women, it is very unlikely that I would have done this research.<sup>266</sup>

The lack of entitlement that I feel in the women's movement was very contradictory for me. The only place I've ever felt ownership and entitlement spatially, affectively, symbolically, and politically has been at VSW. As I write this chapter of the dissertation, I am conflicted by my making of entitlement at VSW, a place that developed into *home* for me during my time there that had traditionally been home to white women and likely never home to Indigenous women.

The lack of entitlement and outsider status within the larger Canadian women's movement that many of the participants described is very much embedded in nation/colonial building discourses which produce racial hierarchies of belonging and entitlements. These narratives of *colonial encounters* invoked and deployed effects of power relations born from such encounters. This is most

apparent for Indigenous participants who articulated home outside dominant Western ideologies of home. As Moreton-Robinson (2003) argues, "Indigenous peoples relationship to home as one depending on the invisible relation between the collective body and the land....[The] dispossession [experienced is] not because of physical migration but because of 'staying put' while being in exile from the homeland" (p. 11).

I argue that the arriving and making of entitlement by white women overlaps with racialized women's making of entitlement but it is significantly different. White women's entitlement is naturalized, sustained and accumulated differently. Most significantly, white national entitlement is embedded in differently positioned colonial encounters which legally carved white normativity, culture, and law within Canada as a colonial settler society. Racialized women also accumulated national entitlements as a form of national capital but that trajectory of accumulation varies significantly from those of the white national subject due to processes of legitimization and the value of the capital vis a vis the currency. Important differences include how such capital is fought for and how it is differently related and reinforced. As Hage (2000) affirms:

No matter how much national capital a "Third World-looking" migrant accumulates, the fact that he or she has acquired it, rather than being born with it, devalues what he or she possesses compared to the "essence" possessed by the national aristocracy. The latter are those who...only have to be what they are as opposed to those who are what they do. They are nationals and behave nationally because they are born nationals, as opposed to the other groups who have to behave nationally to prove that they are nationals. (p. 62)

I found that differently positioned entitlements are rooted in Hage's explanation of the accumulation of national capital, the managerial position and the different modes of passive and governmental belonging. White nationalist feminist subjects experience governmental belonging which is situated in naturalized and legitimated entitlement as managers of the nation and *home*, whereas racialized national subjects experience passive belonging which is the belief of belonging to the nation through the legitimization process of *behaving nationally*.

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<sup>210</sup> See Ahmed (2009; 2010) regarding the killjoy feminist who disrupts the joy and happiness of privileged feminists.

<sup>211</sup> Lovena was born in Canada and Divali was not born in Canada. Hence, regardless if the place of birth was Canada, these two women of colour participants both did not feel that they belonged here in Canada.

<sup>212</sup> See Graham (1998) who problematizes the concepts of "organizing women of color" and "inclusion/exclusion". Graham argues "that the activities and practices of the mainstream organization embedded in a complex of relations with funding agencies, public policy makers and so on actually produce the definition of women of color as 'unorganized'" (p. 377).

<sup>213</sup> "Unlearning Racism" workshops were common in the 1980s which were primarily organized by white women "allies" and focused on increasing awareness of white privilege and racism with the women's movement.

<sup>214</sup> See Prasad and Prasad (2002) and Holvino (2008).

<sup>215</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4 on the making of VSW and its relationship to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women as a colonial project.

- <sup>216</sup> Puar (2007) demonstrates how discourses of sexuality and race intersect with and against markers of identity and citizenship.
- <sup>217</sup> Ela articulated this informal entitlement in Chapter 5 when she discussed the daily influence she had upon the *Kinesis* Editor, this influence was not legitimized as she was a precarious queer racialized woman worker.
- <sup>218</sup> ITTC, is the acronym for 'Indigenous to this Continent'. ITTC was an Indigenous contract staff from the third era.
- <sup>219</sup> Hage's theorizing of national capital accumulation draws on the work and concept of aristocracy as brought forth by Bourdieu (1990).
- <sup>220</sup> The field of national power as Whiteness (Hage, 2000).
- <sup>221</sup> "While the naturalisation of the dominant capital works to undermine the legitimacy of any other aspiring capital, the naturalisation of the privileged hold the dominant group has on the dominant capital aims at creating symbolic barriers to its accumulation by the less capital endowed groups" (Hage, 2000, p. 62).
- <sup>222</sup> How one reproduces dominant hegemonic national formations within the women's movement is based on our intersectional positionalities along the axes of power and power relations. Yuval-Davis (2006) explains that "such positionalities, however, tend to be different in different historical contexts and are often fluid and contested" (p. 199). She further explains "women are not just individuals, nor are they just agents of their collectivities...should take account of the multiplexity and multidimensionality of identities within contemporary society, without losing sight of the differential power dimension of different collectivities and groupings within it" (Yuval-Davis, 1996, p. 23).
- <sup>223</sup> Drawing on Thobani's (2007) theory of white national subjects as exalted subjects.
- <sup>224</sup> See Ahmed's *Strange Encounters* (2000) regarding protecting the home and national space from the stranger.
- <sup>225</sup> Ahmed (2000) also discusses this fear of the stranger who is recognized as non-belonging and in need of expulsion in order to keep the purified space.
- <sup>226</sup> Another symbol that remains intact within feminist spaces both in academic and non-academic feminists spaces is that of McClung, Murphy and Jamieson who are seen as 'founding mothers' of Canadian feminism within contemporary time, even though they were also seen as imperialist feminists, reproducing racist discourses of eugenics and morality (Devereux, 1999).
- <sup>227</sup> Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) explain that "women do not only teach and transfer the cultural and ideological traditions of ethnic and national groups...very often they constitute their actual symbolic figuration. The nation as a loved woman in danger or as a mother who lost her sons in battle is a frequent part of the particular nationalist discourse in national liberation struggles or other forms of national conflicts when men are called to fight 'for the sake of our women and children' or to defend their honour at home" (p. 9-10).
- <sup>228</sup> Ahmed (2000) carefully presents an analysis of encountering the stranger through discourses of recognizing, embodying, and knowing strangers. She explains who the stranger is both expelled as the origin of danger but some 'strangers' are celebrated as the origin of difference.
- <sup>229</sup> Agnes MacPhail (1890-1954) was the first woman elected to the Canadian Parliament. "Canadians can be radical, but they must be radical in their own peculiar way, and that way must be in harmony with our national traditions and ideals" (Speech for the Canada Club, Toronto, March 4, 1935).
- <sup>230</sup> Five women who in 1927 lobbied to include women as persons through the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of *Edwards v. Canada*. The five women were: Emily Murphy, Irene Parby, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Edwards.
- <sup>231</sup> Attached to the symbol of "Bread and Roses" is the poem: "As we come marching, marching in the beauty of the day, a million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray, are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses. For the people hear us singing: "Bread and roses! Bread and roses!" As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men, for they are women's children, and we mother them again. Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes; hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses! As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead Go crying through our singing their ancient cry for bread. Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew. Yes, it is bread we fight for -- but we fight for roses, too! As we come marching, marching, we bring the greater days. The rising of the women means the rising of the race. No more the drudge and idler -- ten that toil where one reposes, But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and roses! Bread and roses!"
- <sup>232</sup> Discussed in detail in Chapter 7.
- <sup>233</sup> Ahmed draws on feminists who have been constructed as killjoy feminists, such as Audre Lorde (1984), bell hooks (2000) and Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2003).
- <sup>234</sup> Also important during this time period is the organizing of the National Lesbian Convention in Ottawa in 1976. The convention focused on concerns and struggles within lesbian communities across the country, including "dyke culture, lesbian in small communities, therapy, media, lesbian mothers, lesbianism/feminism, lesbian autonomy/pride, and wages for housework" (*Kinesis*, December/January 1999, p. 11).
- <sup>235</sup> Mary stated that there were efforts within *Kinesis* by the late 1970s "to be more open to lesbian issues, very consciously actually...there was an insert in *Kinesis* ...and that was the first time [we presented] a radical lesbian perspective. It was a special edition piece".
- <sup>236</sup> Sydney further added, "women of colour have to understand, if they're going to have allies in the room, they cannot take out their pain (on white women). They may say we have some issues with you, but maybe you have to work it out in structured ways....Everywhere you go, they're [women of colour] all angry. In my friend's organization they're angry, in NAC they're angry, they're all angry. Look, I'm angry as a feminist. I've been oppressed, I'm angry. I have no problem accepting that on the basis of their colour, they have a gazillion instances that have demeaned and degraded and humiliated them, I have no problem accepting that. What I have a problem is, I can't be the therapeutic vehicle for you to work it out".
- <sup>237</sup> Kinross recognized that when she left *Kinesis*, she recalled telling the incoming white lesbian Editor of *Kinesis* "I'm really glad that I'm not the one who's going to be the Editor through this period of time...as women of colour get more involved, because I don't think that I would do a good job at that. I think you are much better at...dealing with those issues than I'm ever going to be."
- <sup>238</sup> Also discussed in Chapter 5. The meeting takes place in 1989 a few months before the Editor resigns.
- <sup>239</sup> Editorial Board Meeting Minutes, (February 14, 1989).
- <sup>240</sup> "Kinesis Editorial Front: The editorial board 'continues to improve the paper's content, in particular through its increasing commitment to report on the issues, struggles, and achievements of women of colour- from the perspectives of women of colour. *Kinesis* has traditionally been a paper where the editor, production workers, writers, and readers are predominantly

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white women. VSW and the women who produce *Kinesis* are dedicated to changing this. *Kinesis* is also committed to becoming more accessible to its readership" (VSW Annual Report, 1989-1990, p. 8).

<sup>241</sup> The Immigrant Women and Racism Committee had been established the year before and continued to pressure the organization to make changes.

<sup>242</sup> The *Kinesis* Women of Colour Caucus is officially formed and holds its first official meeting in September 1990. As recorded in the minutes: "This group... is a place for women of colour at *Kinesis* to get together, make connections, talk about *Kinesis*. It has the right to caucus with autonomy and would like to make reports to the board... This group is a way to draw together past/present volunteers and future ones who have experienced barriers at *Kinesis*. A way to identify barriers and work to eliminate them with the rest of *Kinesis*." (*Kinesis* Editorial Board Meeting Minutes July 31, 1990).

<sup>243</sup> The minutes also state, "[The Editor] did not want to do a total moratorium on articles authored by white women about women of colour." (Editorial Board meeting minutes, July 31, 1990, p. 3).

<sup>244</sup> VSW Annual Report, 1989-1990, recognizes Bonnie Waterstone as a key staff for the highly successful public education series "Gathering Strength/ Gaining Power". This public education series "built strong connections with Native groups including the Indian Homemakers, the Professional Native Women's Association, the United Native Nations, and the Hey-Way-Nogu Healing Circle." (VSW Annual Report, 1989-1990, p. 5). The series also included Native Women Speak on Self-Determination.

<sup>245</sup> The Festival took place in Vancouver in the fall of 1991 and was organized by the National Film Board of Canada.

<sup>246</sup> Tapestry took place on March 21 and 22, 1992. It was described as, "the most important public event organized by VSW in this past year - a two-day gathering of over 1,000 women of color and immigrant women from throughout the lower Mainland," (VSW Annual Report, 1991-1992, p. 3).

<sup>247</sup> WAVAW: Women Against Violence Against Women.

<sup>248</sup> This Anti-Racism Gathering took place on April 12-13 1997. VSW Annual Report states, "VSW also hosted an Anti-Racism Gathering for Aboriginal women and women of colour working in women's organizations. More than sixty women attended the powerful two-day event which identified some of the issues facing aboriginal women and women of colour working in the women's movement" (VSW Annual Report, 1997-1998).

<sup>249</sup> Divali explicitly recalled the time when she was asked to do an anti-racism workshop for VSW to a predominantly white women audience: "I remember thinking 'why is this having such an impact on them, why? Do they not know this stuff?' And I think that's what women of colour, when we go into those spaces, I think that's what the reaction often is.... do you not know this stuff, this is the world you've been living in, and you helped create and how can you not know this? That kind of amnesia.... They lose their alibi when women of colour and First Nations women are there... So I think that even though they were trying... some of them were obviously trying..but I think personally it was very hard for them to accept this. It was very hard, I could see that. And I could see that one of the ways they wanted to deal with it was to befriend women of colour who were outside. That would be one way to allow them to carry-on doing what they had done while also keeping some women of colour close enough to say 'look, they're here'".

<sup>250</sup> CRIAW's Annual Conference entitled Making the Links: Anti-Racism and Feminism took place from November 13 to 15, 1992 in Ottawa. It was described as a pivotal in influencing the women's movement across Canada (Zeenat/Anemki refers to this in the interview) - Anemki speaks to this conference as the space where she met one of the VSW staff. This national conference was an important entry point for feminist attention to Anti-Racism at the national level. Such gatherings then allowed for participants to go back to the organizations and bring forth important discussions and reflections, conflict and struggles which came out of these conferences.

<sup>251</sup> Meister (2000) and The Coordinating Collective (2000) [Letters to the editor]. *Kinesis*, March 2000, p. 3.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> VSW Archives. CC meeting minutes - April 27, 2000. Two additional letters received in response to VSW's ableist actions at the Angela Davis event, as well as regarding VSW's response.

<sup>254</sup> VSW Archives. CC meeting minutes...Letter.

<sup>255</sup> VSW CC Meeting Minutes. VSW response letter dated April 27, 2000. See Appendix D.1.

<sup>256</sup> Partnerships included working with BRIGHT Place for Deaf Women of BC to meet the needs of deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing women, and undertake an accessibility audit of the organization. Additionally, ensuring that disability advocates sit on VSW's building committee to ensure that VSW's new space is physically accessible. Additionally, VSW had by then installed an independent line for our TTY machine with its own listed phone number. "We are in the process of purchasing a ringer and an accompanying strobe light for the machine, and all staff will be trained in its use" (VSW Letter, p.1).

<sup>257</sup> American Sign Language.

<sup>258</sup> The Indigenous women staff were from two specific Nations which I do not disclose to avoid personal identifiers but they varied in age and life experiences.

<sup>259</sup> These difference between white and non white subjects are articulated by Ahmed (2000), Hage (2000), and Thobani (2007) in their discussions of the stranger, Other and national subjects within imperialist and nation-building discourses.

<sup>260</sup> May 28, 2007, CC meeting minutes.

<sup>261</sup> See Lawrence and Dua's (2005) writing on *Decolonizing Antiracism*. Also, see Thobani (2007).

<sup>262</sup> Ostrander (1999) points out that women of colour often took the responsibility of mediating and facilitating conflict in organizations. This speaks to the "tenuous positions of women of colour in the larger society...and the skills and experience they had acquired as a consequence of being in these positions" (p. 638).

<sup>263</sup> Divali.

<sup>264</sup> See Ahmed (2000) articulation of the proximity and welcoming of the stranger.

<sup>265</sup> I taught Women's Studies courses at UBC Okanagan from 2005-2006 in a predominantly white and heterosexual institution and city. At the same time I had been involved with CRIAW as a Board member since 2004 and in 2006 became the President.

<sup>266</sup> Researcher's self-reflections in discussion with a participant.

## Chapter 7: Organizational Governance and Policies: Processes of "Equalizing Power"

This chapter provides an in-depth examination of VSW's governance and decision-making structures, as well as policy development across its organizational trajectory. I draw explicitly on organizational archives such as meeting minutes<sup>267</sup>, annual reports, and interview narratives to illustrate the organization's attempts to equalize power through its governance structures, decision making processes, and organizational policies. I examine the making, resisting, and implementing of these structures, policies and processes with the intent to explicate VSW's unique intersectional history within the women's movement in Canada and the larger nation-state.

As power relations are invoked and deployed bringing about organizational anxieties rooted in the intersections of colonialism, patriarchy and capitalism, these relations demand organizational negotiations and responses. The specific organizational responses that I examine in this chapter focus on the complexities of a Board of Directors and the shift towards a collective structure, as well as decision-making processes, such as Robert(a)'s Rules of Order and the shift towards consensus decision making. Additionally, I investigate in depth the making of the Affirmative Action personnel policy and VSW's *inclusion with influence* principle. I conclude by briefly discussing VSW's Statement of Principles and Values which have further sustained VSW's governance structure and Affirmative Action Policy. I have chosen specifically to focus on the above mentioned governance structures and organizational policies because details on these areas of organizational standpoints remain rarely discussed within feminist organizations and organizational studies scholarship. Moreover, this research finds that the making and implementation of the Affirmation Action Policy within VSW produced the most pivotal structural shift in the organization's politics and the bodies which performed these politics.

### Feminist Organizations

Feminist organizations are sites where the practice of social and political change takes place based on women's issues and experiences. According to Adamson et al. (1988) and Alter (2007), because feminists understood and experienced bureaucracy as an organizational form that is hierarchical, authoritarian and discriminatory, they developed structures which were alternative to

traditional bureaucratic forms. Such oppositional and alternative structures would reject ways of organizing that were hierarchical, bureaucratic and competitive (Acker, 1995; Adamson et al. 1988).

I concur with Ferree and Martin (1995) that we can no longer easily classify feminist organizations into the simple binary of bureaucratic or collectivist forms because they often are a mixture of both elements in their structures and practices. It is imperative that feminist organizations not be constructed within a binary of bureaucratic/collectivist but rather be acknowledged as shifting on a continuum throughout their organizational life cycles. Feminist organizational structures are multiple and diverse. They range on a continuum from those that tend to be more bureaucratic to those that tend to be more collectivist. Furthermore, because of Canada's heterogeneous socio-historical political economic geographical landscapes, a diversity of organizational structures are needed to create systemic political and social change. Within contemporary sites of feminism, there is an acknowledgement and deeper understanding that there is no idealized and one-size-fits-all feminist organizational structure. Therefore, by recognizing that different organizational structures provide specific and distinctive roles within the movement, a deeper appreciation is developed for the multiplicity of feminist organizations and the implications for invoking intersectionality across histories, locations, time and geography. I recognize feminist organizations as organically transgressing and transforming under diverse climates and contexts.

Jan Thomas' (1999) *Continuum of Feminist Organizational Structures* explores three different feminist organizational structures within a continuum: *feminist bureaucracy*, *participatory bureaucracy*, and *collectivist democracy* (see Table 7.1). This model is useful as an entry-point to discuss feminist organizational structures. In this model, organizational structures are evaluated based on the construction of the division of labour, degrees of decision-making power, mechanisms to give feedback, and processes of collectivity. These organizational structures reflect choices regarding decision-making power distribution and the importance of organizational growth. According to Thomas (1999), when organizational growth is seen as a priority, feminist organizations often experience the loss of autonomy.<sup>268</sup>

Figure 7.1: Continuum of Feminist Organizational Structures<sup>269</sup>

FEMINIST BUREAUCRACY	PARTICIPATORY BUREAUCRACY	COLLECTIVIST DEMOCRATIC
High division of labor Power with individual or Board of Directors	Minimal division of labor Structured input from staff Ultimate authority not with whole	Low division of labor Critical decisions by whole

Note. Reprinted from "Everything About US is Feminist: The Significance of Ideology in Organizational Change," by J. E. Thomas, 1999, *Gender and Society*, 13(1), p. 107.

According to Mills, Simmons, and Mills (2003), mainstream theorists of organizational theory refer to bureaucratic organizations as those with “elaborate division of labour, under the hierarchical structure of authority, and which operate according to explicit rules and procedures” (p. 50). In particular, bureaucracy has been associated with organizational efficiency with a particular focus on the ability to process a large number of organizational factors within a relatively short time. Therefore, through processes of routinization, specialization, formalization, and standardization, bureaucratic organizations reduce duplication and significant costs, often at the expense of the workers’ and workplaces’ well-being (Mills et al., 2003).

Alter (2007) explains that a feminist bureaucratic organization is “an organization in which all important decisions are made by an individual or small group at the top of the hierarchical, pyramidal structure” (p. 97). Authority in feminist bureaucratic organizations ultimately rest with individuals by virtue of their position in the organizational hierarchy, such as an Executive Director and Board of Directors. This can result in increased tensions due to institutionalized privileges and authority over the worklives of other women with less power in the organization. Because such organizations tend to be more hierarchical in structure with a specific focus on the outcome rather than process, they tend to downplay power relations and *assume all is equal or neutral*.

In the middle of the continuum, participatory bureaucracies are feminist organizations which ensure that the staff collective is informed and empowered, while participating in critical decisions (Thomas, 1999). The organizational rules of participatory bureaucracies tend to be fairly formalized and the rewards are distributed based on position. Additionally, although the division of labour exists formally through job descriptions and policies, in participatory bureaucracies they tend to be rarely

implemented (Thomas, 1999). These organizations tend to engage in bureaucratic ways of working due to large budgets and a high number of staff.

Democratic/collectivist feminist organizations as discussed by Alter (2007) and Thomas (1999) are non-hierarchical and function by means of process while attempting to preserve collaboration among all members and equal attention to means and ends. Feminist collectives tend to be more democratic and may also adopt particular bureaucratic principles in order to meet their mandates and deliverables to the larger community and/or funders. These organizations emphasize participatory and non-hierarchical principles in their structures, decision making processes, division of labour, and accountability (Alter, 2007; Thomas, 1999). They also find themselves on a continuum of collectivity with different degrees and intensity of collectivity across their life cycle. Thomas (1999) indicates that growth is not a priority but rather process, mentoring, and consensus decision-making are seen as strengths for members of collectivist democratic organizations.

The feminist collective tends to engage in a shared division of labour, where all staff engage in direct service delivery. Additionally, decision making power is shared with the entire collective where the structure of Board of Directors or Executive Director is absent (Thomas, 1999). Women working in such collectives report that empowerment of workers, increased commitment, and decreased turnover are the main strengths of such feminist organizations (Thomas, 1999). Feminist collectives engage in democratic management by empowering staff to have a certain amount of control over their own worklife and workplace. This level of collaboration and participation allows for the staff to invest in the organization in a more sustainable manner. Additionally, these organizations attempt to share power and emphasize organizational process as well as outcomes, mentoring, and consensus decision-making. They increase efficiency by allowing day-to-day decisions to be made quickly by staff while critical decisions are made more slowly with feedback from the entire organization (Thomas, 1999). Yet, as will be discussed later in this chapter, feminist collectives are also sites and structures which reproduce hierarchies and hegemonic power relations.

## **VSW Governance and Decision Making Structures**

### **Board of Directors**

VSW's first newsletter in early 1971 indicates its emergence out of the conference on the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in January 1971 which is discussed extensively

in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. At its first meeting, an executive was elected which was made up of a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary, a Treasurer and 7 members at large with several Committees.<sup>270</sup> By mid 1972, the organization had implemented a Board with a President, Vice President, Corresponding Secretary, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and members at large. Committees included: Public Relations, Research, Speakers Bureau, Education, Programme, Finance, Membership, and Newsletter.<sup>271</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, after much struggle, VSW was finally incorporated as a Society under the Society Act on May 4th, 1973.<sup>272</sup>

Vancouver Status of Women's current constitution<sup>273</sup> states that the purpose of the society is:

To form a non-profit, non-partisan, educational organization; to promote action on the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada; to foster public knowledge of the rights and status of women in Canada; to facilitate communication between individuals and groups concerned about the status of women.<sup>274</sup>

Regarding the election of officers, the Constitution indicates that along with the elected officers, "there shall be four appointed officers selected from amongst the employees of the society by the said employees and they shall be members-at-large".<sup>275</sup> Charlotte, a staff from the first cohort of staff hired at VSW, explicitly recalled how this change came about. Initially, staff did not attend Board meetings other than the Ombudswoman staff. Charlotte explained that the staff wanted to work collectively with the Board because staff were already working collectively through "shared decision-making...we solved problems together, we made decisions about where the organization was, you know, day-to-day stuff that was going on".

Charlotte recalled the Ombudswoman returning from a Board meeting extremely frustrated because the Board members were not hearing the staff's concerns or feedback. As tensions increased between the Board and staff, particularly because VSW for the first time had staff personnel and this was a new experience that had to be negotiated, developed and learnt, VSW officially made the changes in the Constitution.<sup>276</sup> In 1982 VSW described itself as differing from other community organizations in that:

The four staff members participate equally with the ten elected members in all Board business and the Board operates as a collective with no formalized 'Executive' hierarchy - ie: responsibilities including chairing meetings and taking minutes are assumed on a rotating basis....The staffing structure of this agency has been described as a collective in that work is equally divided, there is no hierarchical structure and all salaries are equal. As a collective, staff shared general agency tasks which are designated on a weekly basis at staff meetings in addition to handling specific tasks related to their job.<sup>277</sup>

Hence, by the early 1980s, VSW was shifting towards a more collective structure of governance.<sup>278</sup> By adding four permanent staff positions onto the board as officers, these staff saw their power as decision-makers and their ability to influence increase significantly.

### **Roberta's Rules of Order**

During the 1970s and 1980s VSW predominately used Robert's Rule of Order loosely at its Board, staff, and committee meetings which some participants referred to as *Roberta's Rule of Order*. Roberta's Rules of Order was a more informal, flexible, alternative and modified version of the constricting format of parliamentary procedure (majority rules) involved with Robert's Rules of Order. Robert's Rules of Order or Parliamentary Procedure is a set of rules for conducting meetings and decision making.<sup>279</sup> According to Susskind (1999), it is presumed that Rules of Order would "assist an assembly in accomplishing the work for which it was designed" while "restraining the individual" with the goal of meeting the interests of the group (p. 5). The method used for decision-making is in the form of *moving motions* where a motion is a proposal to take a specific action on an issue by voting. This was largely based on a voting system where the majority of votes would indicate the result of the motion. Susskind (1999) further explains that Robert's Rule of Order does not allow or facilitate for participants to speak their mind but rather they are "forced to frame suggestions in the cumbersome form of motions" (p. 3). Of course being a women's organization and attempting to resist bureaucratic ways of working which was experienced as unsatisfying, VSW adopted Roberta's Rules of Order as a way of contesting the parliamentary method by developing a hybrid form of consensus.

During VSW's first era, Barbara and Laura, recalled only using Robert's Rules of Order at the General Meetings (including the Annual General Meetings). As for regular Board meetings, Barbara explained "we tried for consensus, and eventually if we didn't have consensus then we'd have a vote". Sydney articulated that by the mid 70s "the women's movement...did not work with the Robert's Rules of Order, we worked with Roberta's Rules of Order...remember we threw out all the rules". Sydney described that in her experience Robert's Rules of Order was "restrictive" and "contained" but Roberta's Rule of Order was more flexible which allowed for the "opening up...complexity...or really expressing yourself". As most participants from the first and second eras described, although VSW's governance structure remained as a Board, VSW did engage in more collective ways of working informally via Roberta's Rules of Order or closer to consensus decision making processes.<sup>280</sup>

VSW and *Kinesis* engaged in several organizational reviews and planning in the late 1980s by evaluating its structure and staff/Board relations regarding trust, collective action, and accountability. In 1984, the *Kinesis* Editorial Board was established as the decision-making body to review and plan each issue while also providing feedback in the production of *Kinesis*.<sup>281</sup> During the fiscal year of 1989/1990 VSW underwent an extensive organizational review which identified key areas of improvement. This review came about because VSW was receiving both internal and external critical feedback regarding the need to open up the organization and shift away from white normativity.<sup>282</sup> According to Srivastava (2008) white normativity is embedded in the *culture of whiteness*. She describes the "culture of whiteness" as the "values, everyday discourses, knowledge and institutional practices that shape white privilege" (para. 2). VSW's 1989-1990 Annual Report communicated with its members, donors, and funders regarding this upcoming organizational structure change:

The Board of Directors will be replaced by a coordinating collective made up of representatives from issue/working committees at VSW (including *Kinesis*), and a community-based advisory group consisting of representatives from other women's organizations throughout the Lower Mainland will be established. VSW is excited by the potential of the new structure to more effectively involve all facets of the organization and the community-at-large in charting VSW's future goals and objectives.<sup>283</sup>

As the board began to formally shift towards a collective structure, Divali, recalled Board discussions focusing on decision-making concerns in VSW, as well as concerns regarding who held power within an organization which reflected the dominant presence of white women. These concerns spoke to the tensions arising due to the lack of representation, voice and power from the larger community. AJAY indicated:

[VSW] wanted to move away from a traditional Board of Directors rule and they were trying to think of the nature of the board that they were. They weren't really a working board and they weren't really a policy board. They were a little bit of a in-between. In particular women who were on, from the *Kinesis* Editorial Board, or the Immigrant Women and Racism Committee, were saying we want to be part of the centre of the power of this organization, and if that's the Board, well we don't want to be a board, we want a new kind of structure. So, that led us to looking at the idea of a *Coordinating Collective*.

AJAY explained that transforming into a collective structure and "adding" on non-white members was not sufficient to shifting the organization. VSW came to the realization that it ultimately had to question where power laid within the organization. After many long discussions and struggles, the organization felt strongly that the permanent positions of the organization would need to be held by non-white women. AJAY recalled "... a lot of really brave women standing up and saying, this is not

authentic, and it's not real, and if I'm here in the Coordinating Collective I don't really have power if I'm not on staff; staff have power". She further explained that the discussions continued "month after month...till the message got through to sufficient numbers of people that we said, ok, we believe the *locus of power is here [with the staff positions]*, and we need to figure out how to open that opportunity up".

Clearly, a distinction was being made between diversifying the Board/Coordinating Collective and diversifying the staff composing. This distinction spoke to a clear recognition that the "locus of power" lay with the permanent staff as key decision and policy makers which largely influenced the final decision of the Board/Coordinating Collective. This "locus of power" reflected the power to design and implement policy, as well as the control of decision making processes (Manning, 2003). Therefore, those who develop policies have significant power in how these policies may be applied differently to different individuals. Manning (2003) explains that the control for decision processes is very much situated in accumulating organizational power. Further, access to and control of information is a source of power for those involved with the potential for abuse, particularly when "a lack of access to information and knowledge creates differences in the distribution of power" (Manning, 2003, p. 78). Full-time staff at VSW disproportionately had more access and control of information and in particular they participated in problem solving, policy making and strategic planning. Further, they had a tremendous influence on the Board or Coordinating Collective as well as other political organizers in the community differently from those that were not full-time staff.

At VSW's Annual General Meeting on October 17, 1990, the VSW Board presented VSW's Proposed New Structure (see Appendix E.1). The Structure would have a Community Advisory Group which would have a voice but no vote and they would have quarterly meetings as representatives/ambassadors to the larger community. The Coordinating Collective would be the decision-making body and include representation from all other committees. Committees would include: Immigrant Women and Racism, Fundraising and Finance, *Kinesis* Editorial Board, Single Mother's Resource Guide, Family Law, and Referral Service. By then, slightly under 50% of representation on the VSW board were racialized women who were involved in political work in different capacities and also in different communities. Yet, the staff composition remained entirely white. As the number of politicized racialized women increased on the board, VSW began to witness

the changing culture of the organization in regards to what issues would be addressed by the organization.

One example of this organizational change can be highlighted at a particular Organizational Planning Day in late 1991 where VSW focused on the future of the organization while responding to issues of racism and classism as well as other exclusions in a strategic planning manner. It is clear that racialized women's (immigrant women and visible minority women) concerns and issues were becoming a priority for the first time, as voiced primarily by the Immigrant Women and Racism Committee and *Kinesis' Women of Colour Caucus*.<sup>284</sup> One of the goals of this Planning Day was to address issues of concern as experienced by impoverished women, immigrant women, women of colour, and single mothers through public education, networking and lobbying. Additionally, it is clear from these meeting minutes, VSW was deepening its intersectional analysis regarding racialized immigrant single mothers living in poverty and their lack of access to government and non-profit services.<sup>285</sup> During this Organizational Planning Day, several internal goals and objectives were identified, including developing an analysis that recognized "the interlocking, global nature of issues".<sup>286</sup> VSW also identified the following internal goal:

End domination by white women, increase number of women of colour and immigrant women on staff, increase accessibility. Objectives: (1) develop and implement Affirmative Action Policy.... by January 1992; (2) expand fundraising abilities to enlarge staff-create permanent Community organizer position-Finance and Fundraising Committee by April 1992; (3) improve dialogue with immigrant women's and women of colour groups-get feedback on changes within VSW; (4) cosponsor events with immigrant women's and women of colour groups.<sup>287</sup>

### **Coordinating Collective**

By 1993 VSW's structure as an organization (see Appendix E.1) included the Coordinating Collective as the main decision making body which focused primarily on policy development and organizational decision-making.<sup>288</sup> Zeenat referred to this structure as a "modified collective":

Can't say we all have equal power, we didn't. The staff met all the time, the staff did all the work, the staff knew everybody and they knew everything that was going on. We were the ears of the community we knew what was going on. We had more power than anybody in the organization... so we had a *modified collective*...we recognize the power of people who were paid to do the work and having more information.

This modified collective of VSW has also been described as a hybrid collective where VSW partly engaged with specific bureaucratic processes particularly because the staff collective are managing the place, as well as due to relations with funders. Staff did hold significant influential and decision making power within the Coordinating Collective.<sup>289</sup> But they were expected to play that role by

gathering information and bringing forth relevant proposals to the larger Coordinating Collective. It can be concluded that VSW has never been a *pure* collective where all members on the Coordinating Collective were involved in making decisions in all aspects and labour of the organization.

Lillian, a Coordinating Collective member during VSW's fourth era, remembered a time during her tenure when the staff collective capacity was very low and staff work relations were conflictual. Coordinating Collective volunteer members had to step up and coordinate the organization, Lillian recalled, "having to respond to human resource needs and conflict resolution, while meeting the financial needs of the organization and programming". As a Coordinating Collective member responsible for the organization, Lillian described the constant worry about the "financial security of the organization and the ability for it to carry out its work and fulfill its mandate as a society and to its membership". All participants discussed how organizational anxieties largely focused on the loss of funding which often pushed the organization to restructure its staff composition and programming.

Therefore, as much as VSW strived to function as a collective there were always external pressures that imposed hierarchical power relations upon the organization. Funders and governments continue to forcefully push a hegemonic culture of documentation onto non-profit organizations. VSW experienced these pressures across its organizational trajectory from federal, provincial and municipal government funders such as Canada Manpower and Immigration, Status of Women Canada, Ministry of Women's Equality, Gaming, and the City of Vancouver. As Ng (1990) discusses, state funding confines and affects community organizations as a method of social control.<sup>290</sup> Ng demonstrates how increased labour intensive documentation and reporting amplified tensions between/amongst the board and staff. This further supports a hierarchical structure in order to meet the demands of accountability and effectiveness required by the State and funders in her study of an immigrant women's organization. Ng emphasizes that "such new funding arrangements had rendered a previously egalitarian and more or less collective work organization inoperable and created a new form of organization" (p. 170). Therefore, as larger power systems of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy are reinforced by the State and other hegemonic structures/apparatus, collectives such as VSW experience less autonomy to be self-determining.<sup>291</sup>

Lillian discussed her understanding of VSW's Coordinating Collective on a continuum of bureaucratic to collective organizations:

In summary of the last 5 years, VSW is not totally a collective, somewhere maybe three quarters over toward the collective but I think we'd call ourselves a collective but I don't think we actually use the tools and the processes of- but I mean it's tricky because there's so many definitions of what a collective is so...I think part of it is that we haven't totally identified what kind of a collective we are.

This also speaks to the organic nature of all organizations but in particular for a collective organization that has the flexibility to shift gently along this continuum of organizational structure. The flexibility of collectives ensures that they are able to survive under numerous pressures including the following: (a) funders demanding that a Chair or Executive Director be identified; (b) the lack of collective and consensus decision-making training; (c) complex personnel issues including increase burnout; (d) lack of participation and low numbers on the Coordinating Collective; and (e) decreased staff hours and staff positions. For Lillian it was important for an organization to collectively decide and identify not only the type of collective structure but also the particular model of consensus being used.

From the late 1990s until 2008, VSW's organizational Coordinating Collective recruitment package states:

VSW's Coordinating Collective (CC) is the organization's 'Board of Directors'. We, however, do not use the latter term as it is derived from a hierarchical and patriarchal structure. The collective is composed of representatives from each of our standing committees: Finance & Fundraising, *Kinesis* Editorial Board, Programming, Volunteer Development and Personnel as well as all full-time staff. Other committees may be struck from time to time according to the needs of the organization. The opinions of each member of the Collective, including staff, have equal value. Similarly, the consequences of decisions, are equally shared by all members. All decisions are made by consensus. In addition the Collective:

- makes decisions which guide the overall work and direction of the organization as a political, feminist body in the larger community.
- is responsible for the financial viability of VSW and of *Kinesis*
- sets policy and gives direction to staff and committees
- hold staff and committees accountable for actions or inactions
- Collective members are elected by VSW's membership at an annual general meeting held in September of each year and are therefore accountable to the membership and larger community.<sup>292</sup>

### **Consensus Decision Making**

Since the late 1980s, VSW had already shifted towards institutionalizing the consensus decision-making process, yet at times the 1980s Board meeting minutes would illustrate that a motion was moved and passed rather than a clear model of consensus. Coover, Deacon, Esser, and Moore (1977) work on consensus decision making (CDM) was a commonly used resource manual for organizations using CDM, including VSW:

Consensus is a process for making group decisions without voting. The agreement is reached through a process of gathering information and viewpoints, discussion, persuasion, a

combination of synthesis of proposals and/or the development of totally new ones. The goal of consensus process is to reach a decision with which everyone can agree. Consensus at its best relies upon persuasion rather than pressure for reaching group unity (Coover et al., 1977, p. 52)

The advantages of CDM are also articulated as "having voice and power in the decision-making process; the win-lose mentality is eliminated; each woman has ownership over that decision because she was part of the process; it produces more intelligent decisions by incorporating the best decisions of everyone" (Coover et al., 1977, p. 53). The disadvantages are also discussed in relation to taking more time and appearing less efficient. VSW produced several documents on CDM, including *Consensus: Why it's Worth it: How to do it*. This document states "consensus decision-making is used widely in the women's movement and has been used in the BC & Yukon Association of Women's Centres since its inception. It has its roots with Quakers and the peace movement and also grew from early feminist analysis directed towards sharing of power and moving away from a win-lose dynamic".<sup>293</sup>

Consensus relies on the group values, commitment, and process, as well as a willingness to examine one's power, personal values, judgment and behaviour. Consensus requires decision making processes that ensure everyone has the opportunity to be informed and bring forth their position and be heard. These CDM processes often result in being more informed about the decision than non consensus processes due to having had the opportunity to express options, concerns and objections. It is also very common to postpone decisions to allow for the group to become more informed about the topic with the intention of becoming more invested in the decision. Moore and Woodrow (1999) suggest that consensus-based decision-making in organizations requires a strong expectation of participation in decision-making while also having an ownership of the decision and its implementation. This also requires that the group in this case the Coordinating Collective of VSW consider the interests of its membership when making decisions. According to Moore and Woodrow (1999) consensus building processes which require its members to be creative when visioning proposals have more sustainable and successful implementation which also promote not only ownership by all members but also contributes to each member's satisfaction and well-being. They further explain:

When all participants accept a package of proposed solutions, they have reached a consensus decision... consensus does not necessarily mean unanimity - after searching long and hard for ways to make an agreement acceptable to all, a group may decide that the interests of one or a few stakeholders cannot be met without leaving other stakeholders worse off. At this point, the group might decide to accept overwhelming support as its final result. (Moore & Woodrow, 1999, p. 600)

It is clear that working with consensus takes time; it is a skill that one develops and learns through challenges and negotiations while considering sharing power. Sonia explicitly understood collectives as structures committing to "power sharing [and] responsibility sharing". She further articulated that "the collective is an attempt to challenge hierarchical power structures". As in all spaces of organizing, power imbalances also emerge in collectives. Using consensus decision-making does not mean that power relations are not present but rather it does provide the process to identify and respond to power differences if the organization is committed to doing so. The over-romanticizing of collectives and consensus decision-making must be analyzed and thought through in order to identify and examine the invocation and responses to power relations. For example, research participants identified that having a longer organizational history, having been in permanent staff positions, speaking English fluently, having a higher level of education, having the ability to articulate when speaking, and other positions of power and privilege interact to manipulate the consensus decision-making process.

By the early 2000s, VSW developed the document, *Overview of Consensus Decision-Making* which provides a summary of consensus as it applies specifically to VSW. This document states "consensus can run much deeper than just decision making. The values of consensus can weave deep within you to become part of your core values and your everyday interactions with others".<sup>294</sup> This document identifies ways to assess the quality of the consensus decision-making process and the end result. For example, it asks the following important questions:

Are the people making the decision, and all those affected, satisfied with the result? To what degree is the intent of the original *proposal* accomplished? Are the underlying issues addressed? Is there an appropriate use of resources? Would the group make the same decision again?

Further discussed are key ingredients to CDM as well as a carefully detailed step-by-step CDM process.<sup>295</sup>

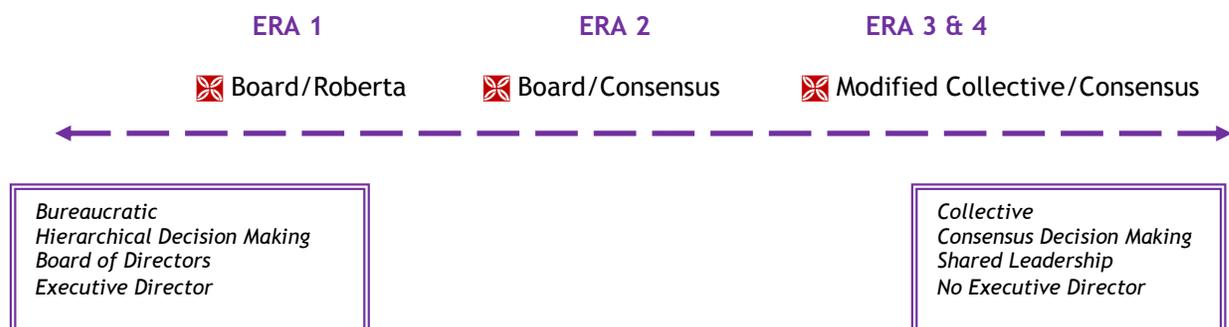
During a Strategic Planning meeting in December of 2002, the Coordinating Collective members articulated their understanding and practice of consensus decision-making:<sup>296</sup>

[CDM] values all individual voices, contributions and concerns...[when] we take the time to dialogue and participate with inclusion through/using various tools to reach a decision. The process requires that all be committed, responsible and accountable to the decision made through agreement, choosing to stand aside, go along or block.<sup>297</sup>

This would mean that decision-making processes would involve everyone feeling valued as well as the valuing of others. It would also demand accountability which would involve how we felt at the end of the process. It can be argued that CDM processes have the potential to nurture healthy relations amongst all involved contributing towards a climate of trust.<sup>298</sup> Consensus decision-making was discussed as requiring flexibility which results in a deeper and more complete understanding while increasing participation. The Coordinating Collective members also brought forth the complexities and cautions of working with consensus. Hence, the failures are not actually CDM but rather the practice and the investment that is required for ethical CDM to take place responsibly and responsively by all involved within their own specific capacities in that moment.

Also at this same meeting, VSW reviewed its CDM culture and protocols, including verbal and non verbal signs such as *twinkling* (twinkling of fingers) as a demonstration of agreement/consensus; *peaking* (hands over head in shape of a tree) when the discussion became exhausted and it was time to regroup; *point of reference* was used to formally interject and provide additional necessary information; lastly, *point of information* was a way to request for additional information on the topic. These verbal and non-verbal CDM communication tools facilitated the making of more informed and responsible decisions. Lillian indicated that VSW's CDM culture would require a level of investment in practice and consistent engagement in order for CDM to be effective. Hence, according to the Coordinating Collective meeting minutes and various narratives, VSW was not always strong in engaging with these originally agreed CDM protocols implemented by Coordinating Collective members from the early part of the fourth era.<sup>299</sup> Based on the above discussion and analysis of VSW's shifting governance structure and decision making process, I present Figure 7.2 below as a summary.

**Figure 7.2: Positioning VSW's Governance Structures Across the Eras**



Note: ☒ represents VSW on the continuum across the eras (1971 to 2008).

Having analyzed the data both from narratives and meeting minutes, it is apparent that the organization and individuals working with CDM benefitted in many ways by having engaged in this collaborative process of decision making. I would argue that the act of engaging and working through CDM not only provides the practice of reaching higher quality agreements across power differences but also offers the space for learning how to communicate constructively while creating meaningful and relevant information across multiple frames of seeing and hearing. As Innes (1999) states “consensus building is very much the tool for the fragmented, conflictual societies of our time because it offers the opportunity to create shared perceptions, values, and actions when it is done effectively” (p. 672). For VSW, CDM provided the means of making important organizational and community choices that may not have been possible otherwise. Further, several participants found that the outcomes of CDM included more than the implementation of organizational decisions but also the production of valuable knowledge and relations amongst differently positioned women.<sup>300</sup> The next section examines participants’ reflections on such knowledge and relations.

### **Participants' Reflections on the Complexities of Collectives and Consensus Decision Making**

Research participants carefully expressed the complexities of collectives and CDM as the process of invoking power relations across differently positioned individuals. Sydney stated:

The thing about collective and consensus is that different people are accorded different statuses in the group, so no matter how you may voice, you may not be heard...Different people have more status within the group and they will be heard...So collective, you can't just say, "oh it's run on a collective or consensual model and therefore it's all equal". Nothing in this world is ever equal. There are always power imbalances, and so even within the collective structure you have the power imbalances of the status accorded to each member of the group.<sup>301</sup>

Teesha explained that CDM was grounded in having an understanding that the discussion presents "diverging opinions" while allowing "people the opportunity to see different perspectives and not necessarily automatically align themselves with the most confident voice...". While for Anemki Wedom it meant "everybody having the opportunity to be informed to make good decisions in order to have a consensus". Hence, key aspects of CDM prioritized the role of decision making as being informed, sharing information, and the ability to engage in discussion as diverging opinions were expressed.

The process and acts of sharing power was very much central to the collective organizational structure. Zeenat explained:

*Sharing information was a huge part of sharing power.* What I had learned is people who don't share information, hoard power. People who share information, share power. Telling people constantly that I was hearing [them], what was going on, having conversations constantly...calling people up, connecting people, that was a way of sharing power. Those things are like huge to me. Not hoarding and being private, secretive about anything. Being very very transparent, that was a huge part of sharing power, by which everybody got a sense of, and could participate more.

The constant sharing of organizational information, facilitating skills development and encouraging the participation as well as contribution of Coordinating Collective members' knowledge was key to the ethics of nurturing a collective. Zeenat argued that such processes strengthened the Coordinating Collective, hence enabling the creation of a "sense of ownership". She explained:

Until then many people would come in, and saffron<sup>302</sup> that place and everybody was a volunteer. What we brought in was a new idea of the modified Collective, whereby recognizing different skills and power in the room, you are actually empowering people. *By saying you are not equal, you are actually creating equality.* Because you recognized the differences. Recognition of differences was key to the change of politics and what enabled us to feel ownership. As soon as different is equal, then you're part of it. As soon as the differences become part of it, you are part of it.

Therefore, as the structure of the collective and CDM interacted with various other internal and external relations, it facilitated VSW's capacity to re-envision a non-hegemonic discourse of difference and equality.

Yet, without the strength, commitment and time of Coordinating Collective members, it would have been difficult to make collective decisions that envisioned alternative counter-hegemonic relations. Savannah, a staff during VSW's fourth era expressed her frustration regarding the need for VSW to revisit accountability and "holding each other accountable in the Coordinating Collective. I am not okay with people on the Coordinating Collective...never showing up. I'm not okay with that". She further articulated that she resented the patronizing attached to the lack of accountability, and exclaimed that "liberation is work, it is work. It means that you, on top of the work you already do right now, you have to do more work...if you want something to change, then you have to do this [the work]".

Thus far, the narratives exhibit the strengths and cautions of collectives and CDM. Importantly, the consensus process can sometimes mask power relations by trying to create a romanticized notion of equality while reproducing hegemonic power relations. Differently positioned

people have power at a multiplicity of levels which they deploy differently. Although consensus can be used to coerce, manipulate and silence, it can also have the capacity to share and equalize power relations by facilitating silenced voices, skills and knowledge to surface.

Ristock (1991) explains that the feminist collective has been constructed as ideal and she urges feminists to acknowledge it as a site of contradictions, confusion and frustration for many women. An important limitation of feminist collectives is its attachment to *sisterhood is global* by striving to create an idealized homogeneous collective identity. The consequences of this process of homogenizing crystallizes its structures as static and without context/history while reinforcing processes of exclusion. Additionally, Strobel's (1995) research found feminist collectives to require a high level of participation with much intensity. As a result, those members who cannot maintain this intensity, particularly those with children or multiple jobs, are often excluded from organizational processes and leadership roles.

A further tension or limitation which consistently haunts feminist collectives is the complexities and contradictions of leadership and authority. Traditionally, feminist collectives have been applauded for their assumed shared leadership and lack of authority. Yet, Ristock (1991) and Srivastava (2006) recognize the dangers of manipulation and inequality present in informal leadership sites such as feminist collectives. In the case of VSW, participants interviewed indicated that level of education, speaking in English without an 'accent', organizational memory, and more articulate Collective members were most able to influence and manipulate the consensus decision making process. Hence, it is critical that the collective as a whole as well as the individual collective members address power relations as they arise by engaging in critical organizational/self reflection in relation to the power being invoked, and by asking how/when/why/who most benefits from the consensus decision making process.

AJAY came to understand the strength of consensus as the ability to reach an agreement about a decision. She stated:

I came to understand that the ability to facilitate that agreement was a very powerful skill... communications skills, how articulate you are, how you can argue circles around other people then, you'd have a lot more power to, to, to facilitate that agreement, or that decision, that outcome that you want.

She also discussed that this would often mean achieving "the outcome that you're looking for as an individual". She explained that this was facilitated by the information accessed ahead of time and how that information was shared.

During my tenure as a volunteer Coordinating Collective member, I became explicitly aware that consensus decision making can become about the powerful people in the room and their ability to exploit the situation. I knew of this clearly because I was complicit in having done so. After many years as a staff member in several leadership positions at VSW, as well as my own privileged positionalities, I recalled moments when consensus was about what *Benita* thought. This is extremely complex because it was not only my own doing but also how other Coordinating Collective members played into invoking my power, often due to demonstrating respect. As I engaged in critically challenging myself individually as well as the organization regarding what feeds into increasing decision-making power within a collective for some individuals, I began to specifically examine how and why my power was invoked in relation to others in the room.

During the interview with Sonia, we engaged in a dialogic discussion<sup>303</sup> where I, the researcher, illustrated my process of becoming aware of my role and relationship within the decision making processes, as well as its connection to this research:

One of the reasons this research is important to me is because in the last two years I started to pay more attention at how at times I controlled the consensus process and I would use my very privileged backpack of ...organizational memory. I knew that people who I had hired or brought in would give me a type of respect and at times I used that...I knew that the education I had, speaking in English, not speaking with an accent played out. I started to really pay attention to power that way...I understood that I could manipulate the consensus process and get the agenda to move towards what I wanted. And so, I then started talking a bit more to collective about this...asking for help, "I need help, I need to figure this out. What are the things we can do?" I was trying to make changes.

Manning (2003) introduces the term *manipulated consensus* which is "power through the construction of meaning" (p. 79). In this situation, those in positions of power are seen to be more knowledgeable; and others defer to those in positions of power or reflect the voices of those in power rather than give their own feedback. According to Manning, those who do not see themselves as leaders assess their own power based on the complexity of factors such as "self-esteem, role in the organization, relationship with leaders and peers, years of experience, opportunities to use power, the outcome of those opportunities" (p. 79-80). Manning offers an explanation of the dilemma attached to those in

positions of power who must negotiate between taking responsibility and taking away responsibility from others.

Grace, a Board member from the fourth era, explained the balancing necessary for engaging in consensus decision-making for someone who holds accumulated organizational power and capital. She articulated that consensus decision-making is very much about acknowledging how one shares power while also accumulating power over time. Therefore, the challenge she refers to is for the feminist to critically balance her accumulated history, skills, and privilege as power, while also trying to be "really inclusive and bring new people in" and learning to work with "the new people who don't know how to work collectively and who haven't gotten there in their analysis. Yet now we are all working together. How do you balance those two things?".

Consensus is most powerful when we are most aware of how power relations are being invoked, deployed, and negotiated while ensuring there is the room to contest and invite other knowledge from collective members. This realization often translated into learning when and how to pull back from discussions and decisions in order to facilitate others' involvement and ownership. Having an increased awareness of how the consensus process is being manipulated or nurtured based on certain privileges and accumulated national/organizational capital allows for the engagement with ethical CDM. Most importantly, it requires taking on the major responsibility on oneself to speak to it - power, and ask for help while recognizing when others have the courage to speak instead of you.

During my first year as a PhD student, I was fortunate to share time with Jeannette Armstrong who taught me about the En'owkin decision making process of the Okanagan Nation. Her teachings allowed me to further consider alternative practices of decision making process. Armstrong (2005) examines the En'owkin decision making process which has traditionally been used as an informal technique of critical examination drawing on the tensions and dynamics created by polarities of perspective in closed group consensus making. En'owkin is grounded within the foundational commitment that an entire community must be engaged in order to attain sustainability as a result of the natural process of survival.

I find Armstrong's contribution to bring about a deeper understanding of organizations as organic sites which demand constant nurturance, evaluation and re-envisioning. Armstrong explains that the En'owkin decision making process refers to the image of liquid being absorbed drop by single

drop through the head (mind) which refers to coming to an understanding through a gentle integrative process of knowledge in community. Within this decision-making process emerges the adaptation of "The Four Societies Process", where participants of an organization are divided into societies representing the perspectives of vision, traditions/land or place, relationship and action.

Armstrong explains that initially it is important to acknowledge that each individual, actualizes his or her full potential only as a result of being a physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual being and that those four aspects of existence are always contingent on external aspects. Second, she explains that each person is one element of a transgenerational organism known as a family. And through this organism flows the powerful lifeblood of cultural transference designed to secure the highest probability of well-being for each generation. Third, she emphasizes the family system as the foundation of a long-term living network called community. And finally, she explains that a community is the living process that interacts with the vast and ancient body of intricately connected patterns embedded to the land.

This interconnectedness demands our responsibility to everything we are attached to. When a decision needs to be made, an Elder asks the people to engage in this process by requesting that each person contribute information about the topic while implementing processes of clarification, incorporation of bits of information from different groups of people. This process is deliberately designed not to seek resolution in the first stage but rather to inquire and become informed. The next stage of the process challenges the group to suggest possible resolutions which requires an engagement of mindfulness regarding the concerns put forward. Each Society is asked to engage in their specific responsibilities regarding connection to the land, family and relationships within the community, security, sustenance and shelter. This decision making process may be even more useful, as suggested by Armstrong, with diverse groups because of the greater possibility of differing opinions. It is imperative that social justice and feminist organizations strive to envision multiple methods of reaching collective decisions while moving away from Eurocentric methods of decision making. The reality remains that CDM or Collective structures are rooted within Western knowledge systems with significant gaps that come later to haunt us in a detrimental way as it does not meet our generational community needs in a holistic manner.

## VSW Organizational Policies

Personnel policies began to be developed in a limited way during VSW's first era in the early 1970s as VSW began to hire staff. By the second era, VSW had engaged in several personnel discussions at the Board level, as well as through Personnel Committees, and put in place personnel policies regarding vacation, maternity leave, overtime, sick leave, sick leave for children, emotional health leave/care days, staff salary increases, hiring committees, job descriptions, and staff conflict resolutions protocols.<sup>304</sup> The Collective structure of the organization ensured that hiring committees were composed of a collective of four to six people and that the hiring decision was recommended for final approval by the Coordinating Collective.

Having never had an Executive Director at VSW and working from a collective model, VSW remained committed to an equal pay personnel policy for all the staff.<sup>305</sup> AJAY explained that every staff's work was "equally valuable", she further articulated:

My work was no more or less valuable than anybody else's, and in another organization that would be the Executive Director and they would be paid *considerably* more than all those other people...and so [we had] the equalization of salary combined with a collective work environment.

By the late 1990s, this policy had strengthened to ensure equal hours and equal benefits for permanent staff. Additionally, an equal rate of pay policy was in place for *all* staff (part-time, full-time, contract). There were some tensions around this policy due to the *Kinesis* Editor having to work different and longer hours to produce the newspaper. Discussions also arose during VSW's last era to recognize that equal hours may signify that we are all equal while not taking into account differently positioned staff who were racialized single mothers or grandmothers with additional responsibilities and expenses. This policy was also difficult to maintain during regressive funding cuts to the organization. For example, by late 2008, VSW was only able to maintain two full-time staff at this level of policy and was forced to have a part-time staff that did not receive the same benefits or hours. Yet, the rate of pay per hour always remained equal amongst staff throughout VSW's organizational trajectory.

Another important personnel policy developed in 2005 recognized the power dynamics that may exist when a board member became a staff or when a staff joined the Coordinating Collective. The interviews and archives indicate that prior to VSW's fourth era, the Board or Coordinating Collective had not identified a concern with carrying through of power across different governing

positions in the organization. In 2005, a six-months lapse policy after resignation was developed and would be required for Coordinating Collective members applying for a full-time position at Vancouver Status of Women or an outgoing staff who wishes to join the Coordinating Collective. The policy "was developed in order to ensure that the power that these positions invoked would not be immediately carried into their next position within the organization, as this would increase the potential for abuse of power".<sup>306</sup> Therefore, this policy attempted to reflect on the past experiences when board members and staff freely moved around these positions without much reflection on how it would impact the remaining staff or Coordinating Collective members with regard to power.

Zeenat, Kinross, and Vera recalled during their interviews the history of affirmative action deriving from the US and the impact of the Reagan era on this employment policy. Affirmative action was first introduced by the US President Kennedy in 1961 as an attempt to redress racial discrimination through active measures in relation to employment including promotions and salary increases, as well as education (school admissions and scholarships).<sup>307</sup> Affirmative action was developed in the US during the post civil rights movement as a temporary remedy in an attempt to "level the playing field" by providing employment access to what had been nearly exclusively occupied by white national subjects.<sup>308</sup> As the backlash increased against this policy, reverse discrimination became a popular discourse about affirmative action across North America. Particularly in the US, preferential treatment and quotas were made into expressions of contempt towards racialized groups, and over time several States in the US banned affirmative action.

In Canada, discourses of employment opportunities within governments began to emerge in the 1960s as governments experienced increased pressure from women and racialized groups. VSW's first engagement with the term affirmative action begins in 1974 when VSW wrote a letter in support of MLA Rosemary Brown's Private Member Bill "The Affirmative Action Plan Act" for the province of British Columbia.<sup>309</sup> The Act proposed an affirmative action plan for "any program, scheme, or schedule which leads to full equality between men and women in all aspects of employment and education, including hiring, promotion, superannuation, training and re-training, and access to jobs".<sup>310</sup> During the mid 1970s, the mainstream women's movement's fight and lobby for affirmative action legislation remained based on gender embedded in liberal discourses of 'equal pay for work of

equal value', 'sex discrimination', and 'equality and opportunity for all". Another document written by VSW regarding affirmative action states:

Although most of us dislike controls, guidelines and freezes, it appears to be the only way - whether the problem is the economy or the status of women. Attitudes are taking far too long to change significantly. It is a shame people must be faced with tough measures before they pay attention - but we feel that affirmative action is the only way to penetrate the 'closed shop' of the business world. While it is true that several voluntary programs have been implemented, e.g. Canadian National and Bell Canada - affirmative action must become far more common before Canadian women can expect to have genuine equal opportunity in the workplace.<sup>311</sup>

Also, during the 1970s, VSW archives include documents, letters, briefs and correspondence, that illustrate how discourses around affirmative action remained focused on equality between men and women regarding employment, wages, and occupational status. Other forms of exclusions around race, Indigeneity, class, queerness, ability, language, and citizenship status were not considered or seen to be included in the affirmative action struggle.

In 1978, the federal government promoted a voluntary Affirmative Action Program specifically aimed at the private industry, this was followed by a pilot program in 1980 focusing on Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and women.<sup>312</sup> In 1983, the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment was established "to address the lack of progress experienced through voluntary affirmative action programs".<sup>313</sup> VSW received a request for a written submission to contribute to this Commission from Judge Rosalie Abella in August 1983. VSW responded by submitting four briefs addressing part-time workers, affirmative action, and economic barriers experienced by women entering the labour force while also offering some recommendations.<sup>314</sup> The four briefs focus entirely on barriers based solely on gender and as experienced by the singular category of *women*.

### **VSW Organizational Journey Towards Affirmative Action**

Amongst VSW's Personnel Policies, I have chosen to particularly focus on VSW's Affirmative Action Policy because it is a profound legacy of VSW which shifted the organization significantly as well as influenced many other social justice organizations. Additionally, the majority of the research participants discussed this policy in depth making it central to the findings of this study. According to Sheppard (2006), affirmative action derives from "two very different blueprints":

One approach [of affirmative action] leaves the dominant structures and institutional policies and norms in place, while according preferential access to disproportionately excluded groups. Since individuals from racialized communities, women, Aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities, for example, are widely under-represented in workplaces and educational establishments, they are accorded special treatment to expedite their entry. Historically

excluded groups enter, with the help of special treatment, into the dominant and prestigious institutions of society. Once inside, they are expected to conform to established institutional norms and are judged according to those norms. It is not surprising that affirmative action often fails when this approach is taken. The risks of backlash, isolation, alienation and the pressures to assimilate are significant and costly. An alternative blueprint engages excluded groups in transforming institutional norms, policies and practices. The blueprint itself is then subject to change as under-represented groups redefined the objectives of equality and the pathways to eliminating racism. As institutional policies and practices change, inclusion can occur without special exceptional treatment because exclusionary dominant norms themselves are revisited, revised and eliminated. (pp. 43-44)

Sheppard discusses the complexities deriving from these two models and emphasizes the need to re-envision such policies accordingly based on the changing organizational culture and larger shifts in society.

The Affirmative Action Policy within VSW was in the making since the early 1980s when it is first briefly mentioned regarding volunteers, working class and lesbian women's exclusion within the organization's staff positions that predominately represented white middle class heterosexual women. As discussed in Chapter 6, VSW began to address how it reproduced homophobia which negatively impacted lesbian staff and board members. Affirmative Action discussions arose in the early 1980s around lesbian hirings. During the Board meeting on June 18, 1981, a discussion took place regarding upcoming hirings and a letter was received from an existing lesbian staff advocating for the hiring of lesbians in the VSW. This letter addressed to the VSW Board argues:

(1) That the organization hire 2 lesbians in a collective of six. Two so that they give each other support. A lot of membership is lesbian. There are few jobs that lesbians can have and be out. Our liaison with the women's movement would be easier 2) that the collective do a homophobia workshop.

A discussion followed regarding this proposal for a lesbian affirmative action policy within VSW. It was felt that there should be a willingness to consider hiring lesbians but it should not be an organizational "rule". It was also determined that it was best not to discuss the issue as the staff who wrote the letter was not present for this meeting. Yet, discussions continued regarding this staff:

It was felt that within the paper, [the lesbian staff] had mixed up her experience being a lesbian on the Staff of V.S.W. and a lesbian lifestyle experience. We felt that this could not be clarified in her absence. Also we were not clear on what [her] definition of a lesbian is. [A VSW heterosexual staff] said that she assumed that [the lesbian staff] meant that having a sexual relationship to a woman would define lesbian. [Another VSW staff] said that she thought it wasn't practical to set hiring criteria around sexual orientation.<sup>315</sup>

The discussion continued and the board proceeded with the following motion which is seconded and carried unanimously: "having read [the lesbian staff]'s statement, be it moved that the hiring committees for three positions outstanding at V.S.W. take the *best women* for the jobs".<sup>316</sup>

These minutes demonstrate the Board's need to move quickly with the hirings which was used as the reason to move ahead without considering the proposal of hiring two lesbians. The hegemonic liberal discourse of hiring re-emerges as "the best women for the jobs" and translates into continuing the hegemonic discourse of white straight middle class women as a naturalized process, presence and entitlement as discussed in the previous chapter. The narratives from Charlotte and Mary in the last chapter, as well as this Board meeting minutes demonstrate how the organization participated in acts of homophobia while also legitimizing the lack of lesbians at the leadership level in the organization.

Although VSW Board and staff were open to *consider* change, they clearly were not invested in making the systemic/structural change when they stated that they were not ready to make a policy (ie. a rule). Additionally, the conversation could not go forward with the excuse that the person most impacted was not in the room. This avoidance strategy was utilized to dismiss working on the issue and taking responsibility while also not considering the impact of homophobia had the lesbian staff been present. Kinsman (1994) discusses the complexities of heterosexual dominance or heterosexual hegemony as "located in power/knowledge relations" making heterosexuality normal, natural and respectable (p. 165). Kinsman's research demonstrates how homosexuality is constructed as a "sexual problem through a social and historical process of sexual regulation and state formation" which is clearly present in the above heterosexist discourse of lesbian exclusion within VSW (p. 172).

In the early 1980s concerns regarding class and volunteer exclusions surfaced. VSW received a letter of complaint from a VSW Volunteer who had applied for a position at VSW. The candidate stated her concerns regarding VSW's hiring policies that VSW hires women "on the basis of their academic or paid work experience" and she did not agree with this practice and further wrote "we stand behind the theory of affirmative action in the workplace for all jobs outside the women's movement but we do not put this into place in our own sphere".<sup>317</sup> Additionally, she did not agree with VSW hiring women from outside the women's community or VSW over the seniority of other competent volunteers within the organization; she considered this to be an insult. She recommended that VSW create a position which would be specifically for women with little or no academic qualifications or paid work experience and that this position be offered to volunteers first.<sup>318</sup>

The Board and staff responded to her concerns by formulating proposals and statements for discussion, including clarifying VSW's current hiring practices which was an open hiring procedure and

that the organization "seeks diversity in our staff recognizing that we deal with a cross section of women (diversity of ages, life experiences, etc.)".<sup>319</sup> The Board clearly understood that the volunteer was asking for an affirmative action policy for VSW volunteers. One of the Board members explained:

We've had discussions about hiring persons from a specific group in the past. We've resolved that we shouldn't adopt a policy of giving preferential treatment to a woman because she is from a specific group. We don't want to have it written in stone that any position are reserved spaces. We can write up our own hiring policy and point out in it that experience around VSW is something that should be discussed in any hiring.<sup>320</sup>

The discussion continued and shifted towards reaffirming Vancouver Status of Women's past hiring practices as good practice: "we've trusted our judgement so far. And almost always we've hired the right person for the job".<sup>321</sup> It was decided that a policy committee would be needed to determine the criteria for hiring job-ready volunteers. These meeting minutes provide a conversation amongst predominately white educated women within VSW responding to a letter which critiques VSW's composition and hiring processes.

What is being challenged in the above situation is the over-representation of straight, white, middle class, educated 'respectable' women as well as the lack of affirmative action hiring processes, specifically for volunteers. The construction of middle class remains within white culture/representation bringing about discourses of white superiority as the women negotiated what appears to be "just not right, or troubling". Skeggs (1997; 2004) explains how respectability was embedded within discourses of class as a marker of morality which is present in the above discussions by middle class white women invoking power relations based on heterosexuality of who did not belong and who was not worthy. Further, these discourses illustrate how certain groups become consolidated as the problem and lacking morality. Skeggs (2004) asserts that it is important to make visible how certain groups are fixed and held in place (lesbians) in order for others to be seen to be mobile, innovative, and valuable (white middle class heterosexual women).

A few months later, the same complaint letter urged the Board to develop important policies to further build governance and personnel capacity within VSW. The Personnel Committee developed a number of hiring proposals which primarily focused on volunteers as a preferential group. They further added "we recognize that we do not assume that we hire women who are the 'same' as us, and that we hire the best woman qualified to carry out the job under these guidelines".<sup>322</sup> Here, "the best woman qualified" can be interpreted as according to *us* and *our values* which translates to *same as us*.

This policy document further indicates a point system, "where a VSW volunteer has a potential of receiving 20 points; other women's movement volunteering is valued at 10 points; and paid women's movement work at 5 points for a total of 35 points for that particular part of the evaluation of the hiring committee".<sup>323</sup> While these policies opened up positions for volunteers, they also institutionally made VSW an insular organization in reproducing *same as us* in relation to whiteness. This policy was later recognized as an employment barrier and was further criticized as it was seen to be excluding women who had not been associated with the organization, particularly Indigenous women and women of colour.

The Committee also referred to affirmative action and explained that at this time they did not have an official proposal on this issue but that they will further discuss it. The Committee's discussion included:

A total change in VSW priorities which would make one VSW staff job and outreach job available to [a] *specific community*; a decision at a hiring that we are going to hire a woman from a certain community; and decision at a hiring that a certain number of points would go to the credit of the person from a certain community. Needless to say, this discussion assumes a serious concern to avoid *tokenism*, etc. this committee is intending to maintain itself as an ongoing standing committee and the topic of affirmative action will be discussed further.<sup>324</sup>

The above quote presents the struggle and inability to engage in concrete discussion of affirmative action across historically marginalized communities within VSW. The hegemonic discourse remains within the 'neutral' yet vague language of "certain community" without referring to specific groups of women who had been excluded from VSW. These examples discussed above demonstrate the dominance and superiority embedded in hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power across class, race, and sexuality as a reproduction of national discourses of exclusion and belonging.

The Board began to have preliminary discussions in early 1987 regarding concerns that the organization was becoming too insular when only internal applicants (including current Boards applying for positions) are interviewed and the need for "bringing in new blood".<sup>325</sup> Staff voiced concerns that women of colour were applying but they were not being considered for interviews. The justification given for not considering "new blood" (ie. racialized blood/non-white blood) was that the current policy hired first and foremost women with women's movement involvement and who were volunteers at VSW.<sup>326</sup> There was a general agreement that the Hiring Policy needed to be re-evaluated with a focus on the following topics: affirmative action for women of colour and for women returning to the

workforce; board members applying for jobs; board policy development; board members' awareness of VSW's policies; staff leave of absence; and staff termination.

By the late 1980s during VSW's second era, if VSW hired non-white women, it did so only for the part-time contractual and temporary positions which had little or no benefits. These precarious positions came about through government job creation programs particularly Unemployment Insurance (UI) top up grants available to non-profit organizations.<sup>327</sup> Such neoliberal economic policies of employment constructed and deskilled immigrant women and women of colour's labour as flexible and precarious. Critical race feminist scholars have examined the complexities of devaluing immigrant women of colour's labour in Canada (Arat-Koc, 1999; Das Gupta, 1999; Lee, 1999; Ng, 1993; Thobani, 2000b). Embedded in these processes of deskilling and devaluing of labour are the complexities of State policies such as professional accreditation systems, requirement of *Canadian experience*, job creation programs and UI Top Up funding within larger globalization and economic restructuring discourses.

The State reproduces gendered racialized institutional processes through employment and immigration policies to ensure that immigrant women of colour remain in precarious "menial, part-time, insecure positions" of underemployment or unemployment (Man, 2004, p. 135). Narratives and archival data demonstrate VSW's complicity in sustaining such neoliberal practices of keeping immigrant women of colour in precarious unpaid positions of labour within feminist work, while non-immigrant white women occupied the most secure positions within this feminist organization which facilitated their economic advancement. Research participant Diwata explained white women's positioning within VSW and their accumulation of human and national capital as a site for launching their careers. Hence non-immigrant white national subjects experienced significant career advancement which further facilitated their accumulation of national capital. I argue that racialized women as volunteers, board members, and in UI Top Up positions particularly during VSW's second era, provided significant labour toward the survival of the organization by producing unpaid or underpaid labour.

Yet, the presence of these State policies are contradictory because as Nilima asserted, it is unlikely that racialized women would have been hired without the UI Top Up positions, as they were the only entry point of paid work into the organization. She explained that such positions, "played

quite a significant role...UI Top Ups gave us experience and expertise in particular areas in that sector. I mean definitely with me I benefitted from them". For Zeenat, her first position at VSW was through an UI (Unemployment Insurance) top up position, which facilitated her entry point into the organization and eventually into an affirmative action permanent staff position.<sup>328</sup> UI Top Up positions played a contradictory role due to keeping marginalized workers in precarious employment positions, yet they also opened the door for a number of Indigenous women and women of colour at VSW and other social justice organizations.

1989 and 1990 were two pivotal years where VSW engaged in significantly difficult discussions regarding organizational restructuring in relation to its structure, programs, and priorities. This was largely driven by external and internal pressures to contest white normativity and supremacy within VSW.<sup>329</sup> VSW's Immigrant Women and Racism Committee members, some of whom were also on the VSW Board, continued to pressure VSW to be more inclusive of non-white women and their struggles, as discussed in Chapter 5. Divali, a Board member in the late 80s, remembered affirmative action discussions at the Board level where VSW was being challenged to:

Really change...for making the connection that, as long as it didn't change internally that it wouldn't be able to change outside. Both [another woman of colour Board member] and I really argued against this idea that you can keep women of colour at arm's length and think that you are doing that work.

During the same period of time, the *Kinesis* Editorial Board begins to have increased discussion regarding racism in relation to guidelines, language, style guide, and skills sharing because of pressures from the larger community and in particular from the Women of Colour Group.<sup>330</sup> During an Editorial Board meeting in February 1989, the group discussed "Racism: Formal/Informal Networks"<sup>331</sup> which focused on the possibility that women of colour and working-class women do not identify as writers. It is clear from these minutes that *Kinesis* is aware of some of its struggles to include women of colour writers and communities. There is also a realization that *Kinesis* staff, particularly the Editor, are the main recruiters of writers and that they predominantly search for writers who cover the Editor's preferred stories. A number of assumptions are made during this meeting, including constructing women of colour as strangers and the difficulties of approaching strangers. Additionally, there is the assumption that the majority of women of colour have not heard of *Kinesis* and therefore would not want to write for *Kinesis*.

Further discussed at this meeting in February 1989 was that women of colour are less likely to have a "feminist analysis" and that they have "different politics and allegiances" which are unknown.<sup>332</sup> It was articulated that because women of colour's politics were unknown, they could not be trusted and that they had "a different brand of feminism".<sup>333</sup> This "unknown" feeling and distrust of women of colour was exemplified as an element of not knowing the stranger and their politics while bringing forth a nervousness about differences which situated women of colour outside the feminist community.

Ahmed's (2004b) theorizing of collective feelings and emotions provides an understanding of this lack of trust that is *felt* by white women within VSW. Ahmed (2004b) states:

How we feel about another - or a group of others - is not simply a matter of individual impressions, or impressions that are created anew in the present. Rather, feelings rehearse associations that are already in place, in the way in which they 'read' the proximity of others, at the same time as they establish the 'truth' of the reading. The impressions we have of others, and the impressions left by others are shaped by histories that stick, at the same time as they generate the surfaces and boundaries that allow bodies to appear in the present. The impressions left by others should impress us for sure; it is here, on the skin surface, that histories are made. (p. 39)

Emotions and feelings of distrust expressed by the white women during this particular meeting work to reproduce and re-establish boundaries of exclusion and inclusion with real material effects. Therefore, what emerges from this discourse is how affective entitlements secure VSW as a collectivity through the bodies of Others. Yet, not all bodies at this meeting align with each other or against Others; clearly, the minute taker, a mixed-race member appeared to be frustrated by some of these racist assumptions. She particularly responded to the comment "that white women ask more for help than women of colour for advice on their writing" by carefully articulating that, "the ability to say you don't know what you're doing is a very important thing, and it's harder for women of colour to say this to a white editor... [it is] safer for white women to ask for help".<sup>334</sup> She attempts to speak to white women's values and comforts within *Kinesis* which is not accessible to women of colour.

As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, the Women of Colour Group met with *Kinesis* on March 1, 1989 and lobbied for changes to the newspaper's content, writers, and coverage, including expanding its readership (see Appendix C.1: Women of Colour Group Meeting with *Kinesis*). By May 1989, a new Editor was hired and the Women of Colour Group continued to put pressure on *Kinesis* via women of colour *Kinesis* Editorial Board members. Meeting minutes from March to June 1989 demonstrate increased concerns which challenge racism, white supremacy and Eurocentrism within the content and

coordination of *Kinesis*, including women of colour board participation, tokenism, writing, outreach, and production ideas.<sup>335</sup> Specifically, at the Editorial Board meeting on June 10 1990, a woman of colour Editorial board member sends her regrets and communicates several critiques and frustrations due to the racist culture of *Kinesis* by discussing the last issue of *Kinesis* as an example.<sup>336</sup> She points out certain omissions and appropriations that are racist which she finds:

To be extremely!!! OFFENSIVE!! The words of women of colour were invalidated by this omission; the words of women of colour were made invisible and unheard once again....I found it disturbing and offensive that this story ended on such a note that concerns of women of colour were minimized by the last paragraph.<sup>337</sup>

She further exposes the writing style and language that sustains racism while also questioning the by-lines used based on 'who's telling the story'. She brings forth serious concerns regarding the white culture within *Kinesis* which displaces, omits, and misappropriates racialized women's language and quotes. She writes "don't change the words of a direct quote of a woman of colour!"<sup>338</sup> She ends the letter by writing on the issue of Editorial Board recruitment:

I feel EXTREMELY isolated as one of the 2 women of colour on a board. I feel, and AM, tokenized. This board should reflect the population of the community - 50% of women of colour/50% white women. Therefore, women of colour should be approached for Editorial Board memberships. I feel that unless the membership of this board changes to include more women of colour I will be leaving. Soon.<sup>339</sup>

Important *Kinesis* Editorial Board meeting minutes capture historical difficult discussions of organizational change in the composition of the staff and the content of *Kinesis*. Debates regarding forming a Women of Colour Caucus began at a meeting in July 1990 meeting, and after much opposition, the Caucus was officially institutionalized in *Kinesis* in September 1990.<sup>340</sup> During this same meeting there was a clear agenda item "Editor: women of colour". A queer woman of colour active in making change within *Kinesis* content and leadership stated:

A lot of women of colour don't read *Kinesis* for political reasons. Women of colour want what white women have and will not give up to women of colour - positions of privilege, such as the editorship. The herstory of *Kinesis* has no women of colour in paid staff positions. It will show a genuine commitment to change by having a woman of colour as Editor. It needs to change.<sup>341</sup>

The minutes noted, "this is not suggesting that [the current Editor] quit her job. We need to put an affirmative action policy in place. If the policy is that the next editor be a woman of colour, it makes a clear statement".<sup>342</sup> These minutes document the making of the VSW affirmative action journey as a process that required recruitment and training prior to hiring, while ensuring that "the work environment not [be] an all-white one, so that women of colour will want these paid positions".<sup>343</sup>

Therefore, for the *Kinesis* Editorial Board at that time, it was important that the hiring of a non white woman not reproduce "another case of tokenizing and [setting] up a woman of colour for failure".<sup>344</sup>

Vera, a white lesbian *Kinesis* staff, recalled her concerns about affirmative action in relation to tokenism<sup>345</sup> because of a difficult experience in another organization previous to VSW:

You hire somebody because you think you got to do something like that but you're asking them to completely adapt to your culture, your little organizational culture. You don't even know what you're asking them to do but that's what you're doing. It is so screamingly token although you totally don't want it to be that....God damn it, it is. And, really it doesn't work, and it's really not a good thing to do to that person.

Vera also explained that for white middle-class able-bodied organizations, there is a need to "think through" what it entails to hire outside this hegemonic norm. She illustrated that it meant "realizing you don't get to stay who you are, if what's important is change...that means you actually do have to change".<sup>346</sup> Vera came to the realization that within *Kinesis* there needed to be "a pretty big stepping aside...like getting out of the way...white women needed to get out of the way". She asserted that the challenge lay in "the difference between stepping away and abandoning". Vera articulated:

That's the difference between stepping away and willing to go through what you needed to go through to stay, to have a different relation of what stepping away, because you are so fucking uncomfortable because you are not *it* anymore. *And it's not that you want to be it, it's that you were it, and now you are not it.*

By the end of 1991, the *Kinesis* Editorial Board began to reach consensus regarding affirmative action and the language that would support this policy in its near future.<sup>347</sup> This was a profound moment for *Kinesis* as Canada's National Feminist Newspaper and for VSW.

At a Personnel Policy Committee meeting in February 1992 made predominately of racialized women of colour Board and Committee members, the organization launched into articulating its Affirmative Action Policy based on race for the first time.<sup>348</sup> Several factors bring about this Affirmative Action Policy, these include internal pressures onto *Kinesis* Editorial Board particularly from the *Kinesis* Women of Colour Caucus<sup>349</sup> and external pressures from immigrant and women of colour groups that have continuously lobbied for change within white feminist organizations. Lastly, change also came about because of particular board members on the Coordinating Collective who were advocating politically for such changes in organizational entitlement. By March 1992 a policy was developed demonstrating VSW's attempt to ensure the hiring of women that have traditionally been underrepresented or excluded in staff positions (see Appendix E.2). VSW would attempt to ensure that women were not tokenized or isolated as they occupied these permanent staff positions.

VSW members expressed in the Personnel meeting minutes "clearly VSW has been correcting a historical imbalance, trying to get representation from communities we serve and keeping in mind that women not get isolated".<sup>350</sup>

It is apparent from the Personnel and *Kinesis* Editorial Board meeting minutes from 1990 to 1992, that the struggles, tensions and negotiations continued for white women as they demonstrated their discomforts and dissatisfactions regarding a race affirmative action policy. As the anxieties surfaced, so did the dialogue and work of negotiating power relations embedded within colonial encounters and legacies of this organization. Specific concerns which arose included the language of affirmative action as possibly being problematic and that the term *preferential hiring* may be possibly more suitable; other concerns were isolation and tokenism. As the meeting minutes demonstrate, the discomforts regarding race often resulted in decentring racism and recentring whiteness across class, sexuality, and ability without recognizing that processes of racialization do interact with these positionalities.

Ahmed (2009) contributes to a deeper understanding of the above discourses when she wrote:

The word racism is very sticky. Just saying it does things. Constantly, I am witnessing what the word racism does. We speak of racism in a paper, which we give at a research meeting to an audience made up of other project teams. I can feel the discomfort. We stop. Someone asks a question about class. It happens over and over again. We speak about racism, and they ask questions back to us about class. It is not that class does not matter. It is just that they put class in the place of race as the object of shared attention....They displace the attention. Discomfort shows the failure to fit. (p. 47)

As several non-white women entered VSW as part-time staff members and unpaid board members, they consistently challenged those that had been traditionally welcomed there and who had constructed this nationalist site as home. As racialized women joined the organization, mostly because white women needed to have them join the organization in order to be perceived as inclusive and diverse, these women of colour were experienced as negative figures - as "killjoy feminists" - which I discuss in Chapters 5 and 6 (Ahmed, 2009, p. 48). These feminists were seen as disrupting the normativity of space, symbols, emotions and politics, because they dared to speak to the intersections of racist talk within white women's everyday/everynight discussions.

For white women such as Vera, AJAY and Teesha who with time understood the importance of an affirmative action policy, they recognized that change was necessary.<sup>351</sup> AJAY explained:

We understand within Vancouver Status of Women the power locus lies in full time staff, so we had to make a change there. So how do we do that? How do we do that responsibly....so then

we come to affirmative action. Then we start the debate about what is affirmative action? What might it mean to us and what it would look like. What I remember were a couple of things. There was a shared idea, a shared belief amongst all of us, that affirmative action was *about fixing us and our structure*, not who were waiting to come in. So affirmative action simply opened the door to a whole group of eminently qualified, in fact, more qualified because they were bringing new ideas and difference that we needed...It was recognizing that there were plenty of women out there that had those skills. *What we had was a barrier and affirmative action was to drop that barrier....*[what] we felt was reinforced every time we did a hiring, because as soon as we put it into place, the resumes that we got were fantastic.

AJAY described that when she was hired during VSW's second era in the early 1990s "everybody on the staff was predominantly middle class white women...other women had come in under UI grants, other women were invited to be volunteers". She recalled the "painful discussions of understanding that the power rested in the full-time positions at Vancouver Status of Women". As for Teesha, she understood affirmative action as "attempting to encourage a group, not just to apply but to be a part of the organization...".

AJAY recognized the complicated process which took VSW to that place of 'unmaking' white entitlement as it was crystallized within the permanent staff positions for several decades prior. She explained that it took months of difficult discussions "till it got through, till the message got through to sufficient numbers of people that we said, ok, we believe the locus of power is here [with the staff], and we need to figure out how to open that opportunity up".<sup>352</sup> AJAY also affirmed that it was not only about race, "it was never that singular. It was always about women with disabilities...sexual orientation". Hence, it was also about ensuring the intersectional locations of racialized feminist in relation to class, sexual orientation, disability, and other marginalized positions within a dominant white women's movement.

As the organization implemented its Affirmative Action Policy in March 1992, white women fully realized that they would be displaced in a way that they had never experienced within VSW and the women's movement before. Affirmative action would ultimately shift the culture of white normativity and the long standing spatial, affective, symbolic, and political entitlement attached to VSW as *home*. This displacement examined in depth in Chapter 6 includes being displaced physically, economically, socially, and politically resulting in a particular loss of naturalized entitlement and national capital. For example, this loss of entitlement as brought forth by the Affirmative Action policy signifies the physical as the loss of space/home; the political as the loss of decision making power; the emotional as the loss of *homey* feelings of inclusion and belonging; and the symbolic as the

loss of *familial* symbols. This period of VSW's history embodies the deep realization of *when de facto affirmative action was white*. This research not only tells this powerful story of when white women occupied all positions of power within VSW but also when they did not. Hence, VSW's trajectory not only begins to shift towards non-white women across differences of class, age, sexuality in permanent full time positions but also away from part-time, temporary, contract and UI top up positions.

The first affirmative action hiring of a woman of colour was a contract position as Community Organizer of Tapestry.<sup>353</sup> As indicated on this posting in early fall of 1991, this contract was open to women of colour with the qualifications of having "an interest in working with different communities of immigrant women and women of colour; familiarity with issues around violence against women, including feminist perspective; and ability to work collectively, as well as alone; experience in planning and running events would be an asset".<sup>354</sup> Two women of colour were hired to job-share the position of Community Organizers of Tapestry. Their presence within VSW shifted the composition of VSW's all white staff while also engaging in coalition building within the communities of colour through co-sponsoring events.<sup>355</sup>

Soon after in February 1992, VSW posted its first affirmative action hiring based on race for the *Kinesis* Editor, a permanent full-time position (see Appendix E.3). Vera recalled:

There could probably have always been a circumstance where if we had done an open hiring, you might have gotten a candidate who was a woman of colour, who just aced the whole fucking thing but there was a really good chance that the person doing that would have been white, for all the historical reasons. They've [white women] always been the one who's been given the opportunity... who know how to play the game, who know how to speak the language and so on, and they were the ones who wrote the job descriptions. So you're the one who wrote their job descriptions, so of course they're going to ace it. You have to understand that the landscape *has* to change, it's not just the position that has to change but the whole territory has to change.

Vera's narrative explicates the culture of white supremacy which had historically sustained white normativity within this feminist organization. She details the processes and practices that concur and reproduce powerful nation-building discourses of White fantasy and master narratives as discussed by Hage (2000), and Thobani (2007). Furthermore, Yuval-Davis' (1996) theorizing of women as national subjects actively transmitting and producing white culture can be applied to Vera's articulation of how white hegemonic feminism thrives within feminist organizations.<sup>356</sup>

### **VSW's First Affirmative Action Full-time Permanent Position Hire: *Kinesis* Editor**

VSW's first permanent position affirmative action hire posting of February 1992 indicated, "women of colour and First Nations women are strongly encouraged to apply. Affirmative action principles will be in effect for this hiring" (see Appendix E.3).<sup>357</sup> It also stated in the qualifications section "broad-based knowledge of women's issues and women's groups in British Columbia and across Canada, with a particular awareness of the struggles of women of colour and working class women".<sup>358</sup> VSW 1991/1992 Annual Report discussed its ongoing organizational development work and identifies two important priorities: the improvement of volunteer participation; and the improvement of participation by women of colour, immigrant women of colour and First Nations women. VSW as a feminist organization born out of white heterosexual middle-class ideologies, publicly and institutionally deepened its investment through an affirmative action policy in order to contest white hegemonic feminism and interrupt white normativity.

VSW asserted "in an effort to improve the participation of under-represented women in VSW, we have adopted a policy of affirmative action for women of colour and First Nations women in VSW".<sup>359</sup> Affirmative action hirings would be supported by policies in relation to training development and increased community links. VSW's Annual Report further illustrated:

Over the course of the year VSW utilized these policies in a number of hirings and, as a result, two out of the three core staff positions are now affirmative action positions. We have recognized that the changes which we hope to see will take some time and a continued commitment on the part of all staff, volunteers and members of VSW.<sup>360</sup>

The Personnel section of this Annual Report announced the significant changes of those occupying staff positions which were now predominately held by non-white women for both part-time and full time positions.

AJAY recalled the first affirmative action hire of a lesbian women of colour, "I remember fighting with people once [she] was in place. I remember people expecting her to fail, expecting her to be less than she was...Not credible". There had been much stigma attached to affirmative action hirings in North America as discussed earlier. For example, during the late 1980s US President Reagan explicitly removed many affirmative action policies. Those who were hired under such policies were constructed as unqualified and were further marginalized within workplaces. As AJAY discussed earlier, part of this stigma stripped brilliant women of their political historical making as feminists but affirmative action policies facilitated and centred such brilliant knowledge and skills to come into the

spotlight. Had it not been for such affirmative action positions, racialized women would not have accessed strategic positions within VSW.<sup>361</sup>

Zeenat recalled this stigmatized climate as she stepped into VSW's first permanent affirmative action position:

*White women had had 17 years of affirmative action...I was very proud to be hired as affirmative action and at the same time, at that point Reaganonics and Mulronenonics were taking hold and the talk was all about affirmative action is tokenism and that it's not hiring the most qualified candidate for the job... "that you are tokens...that you're not good enough because you were hired under affirmative action" but for me it was a matter of pride. I knew I wouldn't have gotten this job if I had not been hired under an affirmative action policy. But to me affirmative action was not a tokenism thing because I owned it. It's not affirmative action that's the problem but it's how it is instituted, so this is how we came up with the term "inclusion with influence".<sup>362</sup>*

### **Inclusion with Influence**

By the mid 1990s, VSW developed a policy of *inclusion with influence*. AJAY, the last white woman in a permanent staff position, carefully articulated VSW's transition into understanding and commitment to the politics of inclusion with influence, "if we were to include people, we had to give them influence and that was really at the heart of it". She illustrated that "we did not want to include people as tokens...we really wanted to ensure that if women were to be included, room would have to be made for them to have influence. They couldn't be just given the seats and no voice". AJAY remembered how with time this led to an understanding that inclusion with influence had to be embedded through permanent staff positions. Hence, she asserted:

If we were trying to consciously change the makeup of our organization to include groups of women who had traditionally been excluded, then eventually those women had to be welcomed as permanent staff. It wasn't enough to be a volunteer, to be on the Coordinating Collective, to be a Grant worker. They had [to have] permanent staff positions.

Zeenat articulated the fundamental relationship between the Affirmative Action and *inclusion with influence* policies. She affirmed that *inclusion with influence* was an essential part of affirmative action:

The only way you can legitimately build affirmative action is if you are prepared to change the culture of the way you work, the culture of the organization... the way activism is understood, the kind of decisions you make, it's key, it's instrumental. Had I come into that organization and had there not been a commitment to shifting the culture...and changing the fundamental way we think about everything, nothing would have been possible.

To ensure that affirmative action would not produce discourses of tokenism and further racism and exclusion, VSW had to make certain that it had the capacity and willingness to support Zeenat.

Firstly, one important aspect was providing the training, support and mentorship from the outgoing Editor within this affirmative action hiring. Zeenat affirmed that the outgoing Editor:

Created the space for me to come in and take it, she supported me...she was so scared that I would fuck it up and at the same time she knew she had to let go. She had gotten to her unlearning racism point to a place where she had accepted she had to let go. I would have been a setup had [she] not been around. She would've set me up because I needed [her support]. So I do credit [her] with a lot.

The second aspect that Zeenat described as essential for her position was to ensure that VSW would support the creation of an alternative environment to white normativity and culture. For Zeenat this would happen through the presence and support of the Women of Colour Caucus. She illustrated:

So we have this little Women of Colour Caucus and I said, "I cannot do this job, I will not do this job unless there are other women of colour because I cannot do it alone"...I can't run the national feminist newspaper unless I know women, history, I know who was around, I have women of colour to support me and I have their backing. If they're not behind me, I'm not going to be the token.

Zeenat emphasized that by the time she agreed to take the position of *Kinesis* editor, not only had the Women of Colour Caucus increased to 25 members but also racialized queer women were gravitating towards *Kinesis* because of the visible change in leadership. She stated:

Everybody heard that there was a woman of colour at *Kinesis* working and possibly going in to a position of power and women came from all the different organizations. On-call workers at transition houses, artists and writers, budding artists and writers and we had university students. They came out in droves and half of them were out and half of them weren't and, came out in the group. Most of them ended up being lesbians. So, it was kind of interesting because it became a renaissance of a lesbian of colour... lesbians of colour coming together around race for the first time and not coming out into a white lesbian community but finding a home that was built around race and sexuality. We called it, "Not Just Another Page Collective".<sup>363</sup>

Zeenat identified *Kinesis* as a historically unique site of queer racialized women's political engagement and organizing. She explained that it was called *Not Just Another Page Collective* because "*Kinesis* had always seen women of colour as *just another page* and we wanted to be part of everything". It was imperative that "the consciousness of women of colour to pervade every story...to permeate and infuse the entire paper".<sup>364</sup> Hence, organizational policies such as inclusion with influence, the affirmative action policy, and the *Kinesis* Editorial Board policy drastically repositioned racialized women within VSW.

As discussed earlier the complexity and complications of affirmative action laid in how it was embedded and instituted within the organization. This required an organizational commitment to put

in place committees, personnel policies, and other organizational policies to structurally build capacity. Inclusion with influence became part of the everyday organizational culture and was adopted in VSW's 1993 Statement of Principles:

VSW strives to work collectively and to include, with influence, all women who share our principles of anti-sexism, anti-caste/classism, anti-homophobia, anti-ableism, anti-imperialism and anti-ageism. Inclusion 'with influence' means sharing power, work, responsibility and accountability. VSW believes that 'inclusion' is more than a matter of 'adding on' the contributions and work of women of colour, First Nations women, lesbians, women with disabilities, younger and poor women. VSW works towards actually shifting the basis of our thinking and the way we work.

VSW maintains that social change is only possible through a fundamental structural shift in society. VSW actively works for social change based on our analysis that makes the connections between destructive social, economic, political, cultural and ideological realities of global patriarchy. VSW exists to work actively to make women's reality central. VSW works against the invisibility of women in general and the specific invisibility of lesbians, women of colour, working-class women, First Nations women, women with disabilities, immigrant and refugee, and other socially and politically oppressed groups.<sup>365</sup>

Hence, VSW demonstrated an investment in developing a strong intersectional analysis of shifting away not only from gender based analysis but also from additive analysis. *Inclusion with influence* demonstrated the structural shift away from *adding on* women who have been traditionally kept in the margins of the organization or included in a tokenistic way. It did so by ensuring that decision making leadership positions with power were occupied by racialized women across class, sexuality, ability, language, citizenship, and family status. Inclusion with influence intersected with the affirmative action policy in sustaining the presence of particularly racialized women within VSW.

### **Lessons Learnt: Complexities and Considerations of Affirmative Action Policies**

In this section, I present the complexities and considerations of affirmative action policies as articulated by the participants of this research. These lessons learnt suggest the intricate making, working, and implementation of VSW's affirmative action from 1992 to 2008. Divali suggested that in the early days of affirmative action in the early 1990s, she would have liked to see the strengthening of the policy by building capacity within the organization. Specifically she stated:

Affirmative action was implemented by hiring women of colour but without doing the work inside the organization with the white women. The culture remained the same and the white women expected that the women of colour who came in, just fit in, and just do the thing the way that they had. So I don't think there was any kind of internal working with the white women to change the culture of the place and to change their politics. I think was very much about inclusion rather than change the structure, the culture and the politics of the organization. There was the expectation that women of colour would just kind of fit in and things would carry on as they were.

This can be further examined by Ahmed (2009), who states, "this model of diversity reifies difference as something that already exists 'in' the body of others (we are diverse because you are here). Our difference becomes their diversity" (p. 43-44). A number of participants interviewed described their struggles and tensions with the politics of inclusion and diversity and the need to ensure that inclusion happened institutionally at all levels of VSW.<sup>366</sup>

As can be seen from VSW's first and second eras, the appeal for inclusion of various ethnic groups was very much focused on 'looking and feeling good', which further obscured inequalities. Therefore, as Ahmed (2009) articulates, "diversity becomes about changing perceptions of whiteness rather than changing the whiteness of organisations" (p. 45). Contesting diversity as the "politics of feeling good" inevitably threatened and displaced white entitlement as presented in Chapter 6. AJAY recalled VSW's attempts to "equalize power" while recognizing its historical reproduction of white hegemonic feminism. She emphasized that "opening up" VSW "did not mean just inviting women to volunteer or do part-time jobs" but rather, "it meant people had to move out and make space at the centre".

Ela and Diwata argued that for affirmative action to be successful, it was necessary not only to engage with discourses of representation but also politics. Ela depicted:

Well, I think that the problem with the affirmative action policy is that the politics got lost, it became all a question of representation, and this is where I think identity is really problematic, you know. You wouldn't hire a working-class person just 'cause they were working-class. You would want to know that they actually had working-class politics.

Similarly, Diwata recalled a conflict that arose between herself and a white staff which was constructed by the organization as a personal issue but for Diwata she explained, "there's nothing personal here ...it is all political. We will continue to fight among each other here because we cannot look at it at the political level". Diwata clearly understood that the insertion of women of colour into an organization was not sufficient but rather a process had to be in place at the political level. Regarding hiring women of colour, she explained:

I said it's not enough for us to be hired as women of colour. What are we here for...tokens? I said this is pure and simple tokenism because you are not taking our ideas in. I said I've been doing this, I've been doing that but who cares about what I do, right. So it's still token....[our presence as women of colour] has to be raised in a political level. Affirmative action is political...and if they're saying that we just have to put women in the corner and that is enough, I don't agree with that. We have to have decision making, we have to really understand the needs of the women of colour. Understanding why there is affirmative action in the first place, right? So it's not just affirmative action and you put colour in there and everything will be fine and dandy.

Diwata felt strongly that there needed to be more complex discussions of affirmative action which transgressed beyond representation and towards a political and cultural organizational shift within VSW. Diwata added, "it has to shift and have some acceptance that we're there...and it should not be a patronizing type of attitude like we give you work so you should be *happy*. Also for us, as women of colour, it is our contribution towards social change. If there is no change and if we are not making a difference, all these things are just nothing to me". Hence, Diwata's narrative speaks to the dangers of focusing solely on representation which takes away the historical and future contributions of women's politicization and reproduces what Ahmed (2010) defines as "happy objects" who should be thankful for having been hired by not misbehaving.

Savannah concurred with Ela's and Diwata's emphasis on the politicization dimension of affirmative action where such hirings could not simply be based on representation. She asserted that it is important when an organization hires on the entry point of particular identities that it understands:

How those identities have been constructed and identify the particular ways that power plays out. There needs to be a more internal understanding, or internal consensus around how we're actually going to practice that policy because it's also regressive to assume that people with particular identities have a particular politics or consciousness.

Hence, there is a recognition that affirmative action does facilitate the entrance of historically marginalized subjects into certain positions while also acknowledging one's critical political engagement, understanding and analysis.

Moreover, such politics and knowledge further intersected with the organization's capacity to provide consistent mentorship, support, and skill development with the commitment of contesting white normativity. Lovena demonstrated her disappointment in "the previous generations not being there to really support, to step up, and stand behind having made the decisions that they did that brought VSW to where it was". By the time racialized women joined VSW at the end of the third era, the racialized politicized women in the cohort prior were largely absent due to accumulated burn out and health concerns deriving from overworking in the women's movement. Lovena further identified the need to remain alert to how affirmative action is most relevant based on new emerging tensions and struggles that come to the forefront.

Based on the analysis of the narratives and archives presented above, I argue that it is imperative to consider the multiple capacities which promote more ethical practices of affirmative action while remaining relevant to the current political climate of social justice movements. What derives from these narratives is an important emerging framework that can further contribute to strengthening an Affirmative Action Policy. I propose the following Affirmative Action model which takes into account the multiple components necessary for ethical affirmative action: representation, political analysis, organizational capacity (support and training), and mentorship. (See Figure 7.3)

**Figure 7.3: Model of Affirmative Action**



Stephanie, a part-time staff and Coordinating Collective member during VSW's fourth era, exemplified the importance of affirmative action policies as "absolutely critical" to social movement and organizational accountability. She explained that it is:

Absolutely critical that the people we're fighting for be also present in the room, and that we understand, based on our analysis and our own personal experiences, that there are numerous and multiple barriers to a person getting to a point where they can access the job...that we know that all of those barriers. Those of us with the privilege to be in the spots that we're in also know some of the ways of creating an open, accessible space. It's not a wide open affirmative action policy, by any stretch, it's not a wide open affirmative action space, somebody still needs to be able to present themselves, demonstrate a particular work history, come and present themselves in the interview, etc.

Stephanie explicitly referred to VSW's technical workings of affirmative action hirings and the use of a gridding system to evaluate applications on a more objective basis while taking into account qualifications, multiple representations, support required, and organizational capacity. Stephanie described:

That process of gridding, for example, I think the hiring process for VSW is spot-on, I still think it's one of the best...in terms of what I understand of other feminist groups. I think it's a model [that is useful]. It's precise in terms of there's a very good paper administration, accountability to who's done what, documents, and record-keeping...It is thoughtful and they bring out skills and analysis that aren't just about the specifics of the job, but fitting into a broader milieu of feminist practice.

VSW's personnel policy of the gridding system was implemented during the early period of the VSW's fourth era in early 2000 as a tool to more ethically evaluate candidates in a collective manner. This gridding system allowed for the allocation of points based on demonstrated skills, knowledge, experience, representation, and collective ways of working. The gridding system was a point system tool developed to assist VSW in the process of selecting potential candidates for interviews based on their job applications. It is composed of three parts Required Attributes such as feminist analysis or project coordination skills, Assets (ie. communication skills or conflict resolution skills), and Affirmative Action. Part of the hiring process included a discussion and commitment to working with VSW's Statement of Principles and Values. The following sections briefly highlights these principles and values which contributed to VSW's organizational culture.

### **Statement of Principles and Values**

By September 1993, VSW had not only implemented the two important policies of Affirmation Action and *inclusion with influence* but it also began to develop additional Policy Statements as a mechanism to respond to power relations both internally and externally. VSW witnessed its organizational culture transform as it developed a number of Policy Statements between 1993 to 1995 on Anti-Classism, Anti-Semitism, Anti-Jewish Oppression, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Imperialism. All the Policy Statements clearly recognized the intersections of oppression as a "matrix of oppression" which was ground breaking for a feminist organization in Vancouver.<sup>367</sup> Additionally, each of the Policy Statements included a preamble, definition of key terms, as well as the procedures for implementing the Policy in all aspects of VSW's work. For example, the Policy Statement on Anti-Classism states:

At the Vancouver Status of Women we believe that classism forms part of a complex matrix of oppression and as such cannot and will not be addressed in isolation. That is, because all forms of oppression are fundamentally interconnected, it is not possible to fight against any one oppression without understanding this context, at the same time that we strive to understand the specificity of [sic] each form of oppression.

VSW maintains that upper and middle-class white women and women of colour are classist. This does not mean that we can ignore race, sexual preference, sexism, Jewish oppression, ageism and ableism that women face. This is all interconnected. According to Audre Lorde, 'unacknowledged class difference rob women of each others' energy and creative insight'. Therefore we must create a space for all working-class women to explore and have voice in determining structural changes in the areas which impact their lives.<sup>368</sup>

VSW will incorporate measures against classism throughout the organization, including, but not limited to, the following: continue the ongoing process of identifying how classism manifests at VSW; incorporate workshops discussing classism into ongoing volunteer and staff training; review all work of the organization, such as programs, publications, and service work, to ensure that it reflects our commitment to ending classism; expand the newsletter/periodical

exchange project to ensure the availability of periodicals from the perspective(s) of working class women; expand the Resource Centre by gathering and maintaining materials relevant to working class women and our work to end classism; identify and foster relationships with other women working against classism; continue implementation of policy to ensure that only women who identify as working class/working poor write on issues of classism; use all means of outreach to raise awareness regarding our work against classism; incorporate anti-oppression workshops into ongoing training.<sup>369</sup>

VSW began to discuss the need to have a Policy Statement on Anti-Semitism in November of 1993 by recognizing the complexities of necessary dialogues between "Jewish women and non-Jewish white women/Jewish women and non-Jewish women of colour".<sup>370</sup> Preliminary discussions on Anti-Semitism and Jewish oppression<sup>371</sup> indicated "we should expect our work here to set a bit of a precedent...we are essentially charting uncharted territory here in Vancouver".<sup>372</sup> The document goes on to ask critical questions of how Jewish oppression is defined as well as the negative stereotypes attached to Jewish women. Where do Jewish women have power and why? How to address such complexities? This five page document discusses Zionism as well as Jewish and non-Jewish women who recognize and advocate for Palestinian rights. It also speaks to the tensions and relations between Jewish women, women of colour/First Nations women.<sup>373</sup> The section of the document on "conflict between Jewish women and women of colour" attempts to bravely speak to racial anxieties that surface in the women's movement.<sup>374</sup>

Another Policy Statement developed was the Anti-Racism Policy which was first drafted in February 1994.<sup>375</sup> VSW defined racism as:

The belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance (Audre Lorde). At the same time, we recognize that 'race' in itself is a social construction. Racism has three components: Conditioning (stereotypes, assumptions, pre-judgments, etc.); Discrimination (power to act, or not act, against or for another person or persons); and Ideology (eg: white superiority).<sup>376</sup>

The Anti-Racism Policy instigated complex discussions of anti-imperialism which brought VSW to draft in 1995 one of its final Policy Statement for that decade, an Anti-Imperialism Policy. This policy describes not only how VSW understood imperialism but also the emerging feminist analysis that accompanied this organizational discourse:

Imperialism usually refers to the historical and present-day exploitation and domination of indigenous peoples/lands and other peoples/lands of the non-Europe 'Third World' (Latin America, Caribbean, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, China and Oceania) by white capitalist patriarchies of Euro-America... While imperialism historically signifies the relationship of dominance and subordination between nations, imperialist practices and strategies have taken different forms in different historical periods.<sup>377</sup>

This Policy Statement on Anti-Imperialism articulates the relationship between anti-imperialism and feminist politics, as well as strategies by asking "what is VSW's imperial legacy? How has the organization/dominant feminist movement in Canada benefited from its emergence in an imperial culture? How has this influenced the way 'we' have approached Third World women/feminist politics and struggles?". It also explicitly acknowledges the struggles both within VSW and the women's movement in recognizing anti-imperialism as a feminist issue; "in Canada, how has this influenced Third World women's, and in particular, First Nations women's, attitudes towards/ability and willingness to identify with organized feminist movement?"<sup>378</sup> VSW refers to Mohanty's (1991) scholarship regarding the decolonization of Western feminism. Mohanty (1991; 2008) argues that it is imperative for Western women's movements to resist constructing the ahistorical Third World woman as traditional and backward.

In 2001 VSW added to the Statement of Principles its transgendered policy that welcomed transgendered women to VSW. This policy was developed in response to ensuring that transgendered women were not excluded from VSW's governance structures, programming and everyday services. VSW engaged in a process to deepen its understanding and make an informed decision on a transgendered policy by ensuring that the Transgendered Policy Working Group was in place to provide sufficient information via a reading package to all members of the Coordinating Collective.<sup>379</sup> On August 18, 2001, consensus was reached by the Coordinating Collective to adopt VSW's Statement on Transgendered Women (see Appendix C.2). By 2008, Vancouver Status of Women continued to invest in transgendered knowledge and attempted to revise its current policy to reflect this increased knowledge. VSW's definition of transgendered people had shifted to recognize the experiences of intersexed people and those who do not identify with either gender or with both genders, as well as those that identified as pan-gendered. VSW made a commitment to revise and complicate this policy by also including intersexed<sup>380</sup> people's experiences within VSW.<sup>381</sup>

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge that in 2002 VSW also invested significant amount of time and resources during its Strategic Planning Sessions towards re-envisioning its vision and mission. After much discussion regarding dominant women's movement discourses of 'equality', VSW officially removed the word *equality* from its mandate and changed it to 'self-determination' rather than *equality*. The conceptualization of the term equality remained heavily loaded within its history of

white hegemonic liberal feminism. Although the concept has been extremely useful in lobbying the term remains deeply embedded in essentialist discourses of *woman*.<sup>382</sup> Additionally, a new vision and mission of the organization was formulated and approved to reflect Vancouver Status of Women's current role and work within the women's community.<sup>383</sup> The approved vision is, "freedom and self-determination for all through responsible, socially just, healthy and joyful communities both locally and globally" and the new mission is, "Vancouver Status of Women works with women to ensure our full participation in the social, economic and political life of our communities".<sup>384</sup>

The organization also articulated how it would work in the community:

VSW undertakes education, advocacy and service work. VSW's activities include developing public education programs, resources, and materials; research; lobbying; outreach & providing information, self-help and referral services to individual women; initiating, facilitating, participating in social justice networks & coalitions; and engaging in feminist community building.

In addition a statement of values emerged in February 2002 to reflect Vancouver Status of Women's current organizational culture. Since 2002, the organizational values have been updated, they are: Acknowledgement of VSW's presence on Indigenous land; Accountability, Active Listening, Anti-oppression, Choice, Collectivity, Compassion, Diversity (inclusion with influence), Evaluation, Generosity, Holistic Well-being, Honesty, Humour, Laughter, Learning, The personal is political, Safety, Transparency, and Trust.<sup>385</sup> Attached to each organizational value is a statement on how VSW strives to implement that value. Forester (1999) explains that "developing organizational values based on individual values, commitment, goals and interests requires skilled facilitation that promotes joint learning, increased information, exploration of solutions, analysis of options, healthy working relationships and provisions for renegotiations in the future" (p. 463). Hence, organizational values are critical to organizational well-being as they demonstrate our shared commitments and responsibilities embedded in a sense of accountability to each other.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explore how a feminist organization such as Vancouver Status of Women responded to emerging issues of power relations through the development and deployment of specific organizational governance and policies that attempted to equalize power differences. I focus on VSW's shifts in governance structure, from a Board of Directors to a Coordinating Collective, while examining decision-making models of Roberta Rules of Order and consensus decision-making. I demonstrate that

power relations permeate all organizational governance structures as well as decision-making models and processes. I argue that collective structures and consensus decision-making models have a greater capacity to respond to power differences as they emerge within a social justice organization.

The findings and analysis presented in this chapter emphasize the strengths and limitations of feminist processes and structures while illustrating feminist collectives' unique positionality to build capacity in order to interrupt and negotiate power relations across class, race, sexuality, staff and other organizational positions. Feminist collectives, may, if they choose, have a greater capacity to further ensure that differences emerge and that they are named and articulated in order to build solidarity and foster alliances within/across collectives. Hence, by acknowledging that feminist collectives are not void of power relations and inequality, feminist collectives can be understood as sites with a greater potential to invoke important critical discussions of power and differences. The strength within feminist collectives largely lies upon its openness, courage, and endurance to engage deeply in a responsible and responsive manner at those critical junctures of tensions and anxieties when power relations are invoked.

In this particular case, the engagement in collective processes of working provided the capacity to challenge hegemonic feminism and emerging hierarchies of power, while developing personnel and organizational policies which attempted to disrupt and delegitimize hegemonic feminism. As hegemonic feminism and hierarchies were reproduced based on class, volunteer, lesbian, and racial exclusions, so did the contestations. By carefully presenting these tensions, struggles, disappointments, anxieties, resistance, and eruptions of power relations through the use of archival documents and interview narratives I analyze organizational responses through policy development and implementation. I trace the making of affirmative action through personnel discussions and policies as they emerged since the 1980s. I argue that policies which strive to equalize power disrupt hegemonic discourses of power relations, particularly as they are invoked as spatial, symbolic, affective, and political entitlements. I explain that affirmative action policies focusing on racialized presence within permanent staff positions were not only pivotal as an entry point for women of colour and Indigenous women, but that this policy institutionally and systemically displaced white women's entitlement within VSW spatially, symbolically, affectively and politically.

Most importantly, this chapter's findings demonstrate the intersectional discourses at play as governance structures, decision-making processes, and organizational policies interacted with each other, across VSW and *Kinesis*, to produce specific organizational responses, resistance and accountability. For example, the Affirmative Action Policy was developed and deployed within VSW's articulation of *inclusion with influence* which provoked the development of statement of principles on anti-classism, anti-Jewish oppression, anti-racism and anti-imperialism within the intersectional framework of "matrix of oppression". The transgendered policy as well as the Statement of Values emerged during VSW's fourth era because of the organization's strong analysis and base building from the past. VSW's implementation of policies in the 1990s was groundbreaking for the organization as well as its impact on the larger women's community, locally, provincially and nationally. Hence, the many organizational discussions at multiple levels of VSW articulated and analyzed in this chapter provide important narratives that have been traditionally omitted, silenced, and discarded as irrelevant.

Lastly, I would like to bring forth an important consideration and implication. I have demonstrated the power and mechanics of power associated with organizational structures and processes within VSW through the deployment of organizational rules and policies. It is precisely the structure, governance, and policies of an organization which shape the distribution of power. Ahmed (2006) emphasizes the importance of institutional speech acts such as policy and value statements as attributing organizational qualities and character. This concept of institutional speech act provides valuable insight into a deeper understanding of all the materials that create institutional interiority such as spoken words, writings and visual images. Often, organizational speech acts which declare the institution or organization as anti-oppressive or non-discriminatory are non-performative. Hence, organizations must be alert to recognizing the dissatisfaction of such non-performative speech acts which further hinder rather than enable action. Caution must be taken to ensure that policies do not lead to the bureaucratization of diversity, making diversity and equality work as auditable and measurable rather than ethical, sustaining and political. This bureaucratization of diversity and anti-oppression is in the business of *keeping things as they are* and reproducing historical hegemonic power relations of colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy. This further ensures that the accumulation of

organizational and national capital continue to augment disproportionately across differently positioned women.

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<sup>267</sup> Meeting minutes include those of the Board and Coordinating Collective, personnel and special ad hoc committees, as well as *Kinesis* Editorial Board meeting minutes.

<sup>268</sup> It is also important to consider whether a feminist organization frames itself primarily through its outcomes (services/deliverables) or through internal processes (consensus, collectivity, empowerment of staff).

<sup>269</sup> Reprinted from Thomas (1999, p. 107).

<sup>270</sup> VSW Archives. SWACC Newsletter, March 1971.

<sup>271</sup> VSW Archives. May 16, 1972: Status of Women Council Nomination.

<sup>272</sup> See Chapter 4 for more details. "President: Must be someone who has formally been a member of the executive; presides over all meetings of society; is a member of all committees except nominating committee; maintains liaison between staff and executive; is a spokesperson for the society; acts upon consent and approval of the Board of Directors. Vice-President: Presides over all meetings in absence of President; is responsible for programs at regular members meetings (4). Secretary: prepares and keeps custody of minutes for meetings of Society and Board of Directors. Treasurer: keeps an accurate record of all funds in conjunction with staff bookkeeper; makes disbursements upon authorization of the society; gives financial report upon request; submits books for audit at close of office. Members at large (6): Responsible for liaison between membership and executive; assist other officers in duties where necessary; assist in areas from time to time as defined by executive" (RBSC UBC, VSW Folder 9-7: Nominations and Elections).

<sup>273</sup> According to the Society's Act of BC, VSW last revised and filed its Constitution in 1983.

<sup>274</sup> VSW Constitution, p. 1.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>276</sup> It was very much about the founders of VSW as Board members' ability to make space for paid staff leadership and seeing their work also as legitimate, while feeling some displacement. This is discussed by the following research participants, Charlotte and Flo.

<sup>277</sup> VSW Archives. Management Review: September 14 and 15, 1982, p. 8-9.

<sup>278</sup> VSW Archives. Meeting Minutes. Interviews: Charlotte and Sydney.

<sup>279</sup> See Robert (1990) and Susskind (1999) for more on Robert's Rule of Order.

<sup>280</sup> Flo and Sydney.

<sup>281</sup> VSW Archives. VSW Organizational Review - November 24, 1988. The Editorial Board was further developed in 1986 by detailing Editorial Board member's responsibilities, roles, expectations, and criteria for membership.

<sup>282</sup> Out of this particular process of organizational development, "VSW undertook a series of planning meetings with volunteers, members, staff and Board to design a more accessible and responsive structure for the organization" (VSW Annual Report, 1989-1990, p. 9.). See also Ward's (2008) work on white normativity in organizations.

<sup>283</sup> VSW Annual Report, 1989-1990, p. 9.

<sup>284</sup> VSW Archives. Planning Day, November 30, 1991.

<sup>285</sup> VSW also recognized that "more women, especially poor and immigrant women, are losing custody of their children when it is contested and are receiving inequitable treatment through the legal system" (Ibid, p.3).

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> In addition there were several committees in place within this governance structure, these included: Finance and Fundraising, Resource and Referral, Programming, Publicity Committee, and the *Kinesis* Editorial Board. What was formerly known as the *Kinesis* Women of Colour Caucus was now *Not Just Another Page Collective* (VSW Archives, Current Structure of VSW, 1993).

<sup>289</sup> This was also discussed by AJAY and Kinross regarding staff having power in the organization.

<sup>290</sup> Ng (1990) explains, that funding requirements and procedures are constantly changing which make the process of applying and receiving such funds, as well as reporting increasingly complicated, conflictual, and time-consuming.

<sup>291</sup> See Chapters 5 and 6 for further discussion on the relationship between the State and immigrant women of colour labour.

<sup>292</sup> VSW Archives. VSW Perspective Coordinating Collective Member Package, 1999/2000.

<sup>293</sup> VSW Archives. VSW.

<sup>294</sup> VSW Archives. Overview of Consensus Decision-Making.

<sup>295</sup> VSW Archives. VSW. Overview of consensus decision-making process.

<sup>296</sup> VSW Archives. Vancouver Status of Women Strategic Planning Meeting -Planning Notes, December 4, 2002.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>298</sup> In addition at this meeting individual groups came up with the following definition of consensus: "a holistic approach to all voices and contributions being valued because individuals bring perspectives that the group needs to hear"; "working collectively to word a common goal(s), collectively established. Means we; each person, on the collective participate in decision making and is able to voice their views, suggestions and concerns. Everyone is valued as are the ideas and contributions. We reach agreement by exploring differences until we all feel 'consensed.'" (Here we can see the merging of consensus as action as a verb.) Another group suggests the following definition, "decision making that involves power sharing through equal voice. Enough information is provided by the one(s) initiating the required decisions so that we can dialogue until there is an understanding of an issue" (Ibid, p. 2).

<sup>299</sup> Lillian, Sonia, and Savannah.

<sup>300</sup> AJAY, Zeenat, Sonia, Vera, Lovena, Grace, Stephanie, and Teesha.

<sup>301</sup> Similarly, Zeenat recalled consensus as "a very complicated process, very difficult...obviously some voices had more power than others".

<sup>302</sup> "Saffron that place" meaning diversifying of a space with racialized people in a tokenistic way.

<sup>303</sup> The significance of dialogic between the participants and myself as well as the archives contributes to developing knowledges which more accurately captured the intersectional legacies of this organization. Yet it must not be forgotten that knowledge

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remains partial and situated. Ultimately these dialogue decentered dominant discourses while displacing and re-working how power is organized, challenged and reproduced. Furthermore the dialogic strategy generated from intersecting social locations is also discussed by Collins (1991) and Bhaktin (1981).

<sup>304</sup> VSW Archives. Personnel Policy.

<sup>305</sup> AJAY, Kinross. Meeting minutes.

<sup>306</sup> When the proposal was initially discussed, there was suggestions that a policy was also needed not only for CC members but also for contract positions at VSW. It was also decided that the developed policy should include a clause for CC discretion particularly this policy should not put the organization in jeopardy such as being short of CC members for quorum and governance, as well as shortage of staff. (VSW Archives. CC meeting, July 9, 2005).

<sup>307</sup> Eventually affirmative action was also applicable to women. "Affirmative Action History & Timeline (Civil Rights Act, Supreme Court Cases, etc)." Infoplease. © 2000-2007 Pearson Education, publishing as Infoplease. 09 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/affirmative1.html>>.

<sup>308</sup> The affirmative action policy was "implemented by federal agencies enforcing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and two executive orders, which provided that government contractors and educational institutions receiving federal funds develop such programs. The Equal Employment Opportunities Act (1972) set up a commission to enforce such affirmative action plans". The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia. © 1994, 2000-2006, on Infoplease. © 2000-2007 Pearson Education, publishing as Infoplease. 09 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/society/A0802658.html>>.

<sup>309</sup> RBSC UBC, VSW, 1-3 Affirmative Action 1975, p. 1.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid, The Affirmative Action Plan Act (1974).

<sup>311</sup> RBSC UBC, VSW, 1-3, Oct. 31, 1975, p. 2.

<sup>312</sup> Source, Fed online resource on Affirmative Action.

<sup>313</sup> See Judge Rosalie Abella's Commission's Report. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (2003). History of employment equity. Retrieved from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/lp/lo/lsw/e/we/information/history.shtml>.

<sup>314</sup> VSW Archives. Briefs Box.

<sup>315</sup> VSW Archives. VSW Board meeting on June 18, 1981, p. 2.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> VSW Archives. Letter of Complaint attached to VSW Board Meeting Minutes: November 18, 1982.

<sup>318</sup> VSW Archives. VSW Board Meeting Minutes: November 18, 1982.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>322</sup> VSW Archives. February 10, 1983 - Hiring Policy Proposal. VSW also developed a hiring committee policy which indicates, "That any hiring committee consist of two staff members and 1 board members. The staff members should be the person leaving the job and the other staff member who works most closely with that job. The *Kinesis* hiring committee is composed slightly differently in that includes 2 board members, 2 staff and 1 member of the *Kinesis* collective".

<sup>323</sup> VSW Archives. February 10, 1983 - Hiring Policy Proposal.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>325</sup> VSW Archives. Board Minutes; January 20, 1987, p. 2.

<sup>326</sup> Zeenat provided a good example of this reproduction of white feminist hegemony through the occupation and re-occupation of permanent positions within VSW. She stated, "the way that *Kinesis* Editors had always worked...this is what also maintains the hegemony of white women, is that you passed it on to someone who had experience and been a volunteer, who had learned the skills along the way, very few people had taken to journalism degree, they learned it on the job".

<sup>327</sup> See Chapter 5 for more on UI Top Up.

<sup>328</sup> Zeenat explained that "these UI top ups were temporary... you could apply through your UI. A UI top up is that you get a certain percentage of what you had been earning before".

<sup>329</sup> See Ward's discussion of organization's reproducing of white normativity.

<sup>330</sup> VSW Archives. *Kinesis* Editorial Board Meeting Minutes: February 14, 1989.

<sup>331</sup> A white woman member of the *Kinesis* Editorial Board shared as recorded in the meeting minutes. "She's observed its predominately white women who are interested in working on *Kinesis*, which reflect something and wants us to figure out ... why women of colour are not coming to *Kinesis*." The Editor at that time responds, "she doesn't know whether people identify themselves as a writer... that's an element in why women of colour stay away. White middle class women come to *Kinesis*." (Ibid, p. 5).

<sup>332</sup> VSW Archives. *Kinesis* Editorial Board 1989 Priorities Meeting Minutes - February 14, 1989. Attended by 7 Editorial Board members. p. 6

<sup>333</sup> Ibid, p. 6-7.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>335</sup> VSW Archives. *Kinesis* Editorial Board Meeting Minutes, March 15, 1989; May 10, 1989; June 19, 1990.

<sup>336</sup> VSW Archives. Letter to *Kinesis* Editorial Board from woman of colour Editorial Board member - June 10, 1990. I wish to focus on the processes of communication and responses to the concerns and not the content of the articles in *Kinesis*.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>338</sup> She asks that these critiques be mentioned in the "corrections" of the next issue while also providing apologies to women's whose words were misrepresented.

<sup>339</sup> VSW Archives. Letter to *Kinesis* Editorial Board from woman of colour Editorial Board member - June 10, 1990. p. 3.

<sup>340</sup> VSW Archives. Quoted according to the minute taker. [*Kinesis* Editorial Board Meeting Minutes July 31, 1990].

<sup>341</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> There is an article called the "Psychology of Tokenism: An Analysis" by Judith Long Laws from the Journal Sex Roles Vol. 1 No. 1. 1975 which was tucked away in VSW archives. Here she speaks about and analyzes a gender-class system where tokenism is defined as a form of inter-class mobility. "Tokenism is likely to be found wherever a dominant group is under pressure to

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share privilege, power or other desirable commodities with a group which is excluded. Tokenism is the means by which the dominant group advertises a promise of mobility between the dominant and excluded classes" (p. 51). Here she is speaking about mobility within discourses of mobility restrictions.

<sup>346</sup> Vera further stated, "it's all those unconscious beliefs that you have about how things should be done, how the work should be done, how it should be prioritized, what represents a skill, what represents responsibility, what represents taking care of a situation, all of that actually needs to be....you need to know that you've got those beliefs....[It is] a whole shaking of foundation and it's a very deep because it's even deeper than what your politics are.... you might have noticed that I didn't mention anything about politics, it's what you have absorbed from your culture, your branch of your culture that says what competency is, what articulateness is....let alone the content of those ideas".

<sup>347</sup> VSW Archives. *Kinesis* Editorial Board Meeting Minutes, October 7, 1991, p. 5.

<sup>348</sup> VSW Archives. Personnel Committee meeting: Affirmative Action Policy discussion - February 3, 1992.

<sup>349</sup> As discussed earlier, there were concerns that white women continue to write stories about Third World women and women of colour in Canada, as well as First Nations women. There was additionally a lack of mentorship and shared writing skills for women of colour and therefore many of the stories remained in the hands of predominately middle-class literate English-speaking white women.

<sup>350</sup> VSW Archives. Personnel Committee meeting minutes, March 4, 1992.

<sup>351</sup> As for Teesha, a white lesbian middle-class board member who supported the affirmative action, she recalled, "there's no question that the intention was to incorporate...a diversity agenda into VSW's mandate. And to do that, we understood, everybody understood that...well, I'm not sure I should say everybody. I understood that we needed to bring women of colour, First Nations women into positions that would be positions of power in the organization. So, the salary positions and the collective were, were the focus. And that's what we needed to do".

<sup>352</sup> AJAY.

<sup>353</sup> Following this hiring by February 1992, VSW posts four Job Creation (UI Top Up) positions which indicates that applicants must be on unemployment insurance and that, "we encourage applications from women of colour and First Nations women". Clearly not AA hiring but more towards preferential hiring, and remains within UI top up positions that are part-time and contract temporary positions (VSW Archives).

<sup>354</sup> VSW Archives. Community Organizers Job Posting.

<sup>355</sup> VSW developed new community ties by co-sponsoring Tapestry, the two-day gathering of racialized and immigrant women and with *Kinesis* community links project. [*Kinesis* created significant new ties with women of colour, immigrant and First Nations women's groups]. "With the assistance of the B.C. Women's Grants Programme and in cooperation with Tapestry collective, VSW hired two grant workers to organize this event and over the course of six months they helped to build important links with communities of women new to VSW" (VSW Annual Report, 1991-1992, p. 7).

<sup>356</sup> See also Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, p. 9.

<sup>357</sup> VSW Archives. Position Available: *Kinesis* Editor - February 1992. See Appendix E.3.

<sup>358</sup> See Appendix E.3 of *Kinesis* Job Posting for first Affirmative Action hiring position - February. 1992.

<sup>359</sup> VSW Archives. VSW Annual Report, 1991-1992, p. 9.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Research Reflection, "It is very unlikely that the road would have been unpaved and paved again to facilitate my own hire".

<sup>362</sup> Zeenat further concurred "there were policies being developed and people were talking, it was being couched in terms of affirmative action. And affirmative action was a policy that came out of the United States which at the same time it was starting to be instituted in Canada...the dialogue had started, Ronald Reagan was in and Reagan came out with a policy called politically correct. It took many years for that to actually take hold that that idea of politically correct was being formulated as a response to affirmative action. Because suddenly affirmative action was huge all over North America but we were behind in Canada. Toronto was a little ahead...".

<sup>363</sup> The Women of Colour Caucus changed its name to *Not Just Another Page Collective* with the mandate "to inform *Kinesis* readers of who they are, to invite new members and to create a safe space for women of colour and First Nations women writers" (Annual Report, 1991-1992, p. 1) This collective goal was to make the paper more accessible to racialized women and to create the space for these women to "express diverse realities and interests as well as encouraging publication of the work of these women" (Annual Report, 1991-1992, p. 7).

<sup>364</sup> Zeenat asserted, "we wanted to be on every page not just another page".

<sup>365</sup> VSW Archives. Statement of Principles, 1993.

<sup>366</sup> Vera, AJAY, Divali, Zeenat, Teesha.

<sup>367</sup> See Chapter 5 for a discussion on VSW's "matrix of oppression".

<sup>368</sup> VSW Archives. CC Meeting Minutes - October 4, 1993 - Policy/Procedure Development. Definition of Classism "represents a specific oppression where the rules, values, more, and ideals of one class are imposed upon another, within the hierarchy of class values. Within feminism it filters through from middle-class to working-class women, denying them a language, banning them from self-expression, labelling them as ignorant, stupid, coarse, bombastic, rough, uneducated, ineffectual".

<sup>369</sup> VSW Archives. Updated Anti-Classism Policy Statement, 1993.

<sup>370</sup> VSW Archives. Anti-Semitism Notes - November 1993.

<sup>371</sup> VSW defined Jewish oppression as "the hatred of and actions of hatred toward Jewish people as a religious or racial group. In Canada, one of the central issues identified by Jewish women is assimilation-survival as a group of people with a specific language, culture, history and tradition" (Ibid).

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> "All non-Jewish women are anti-Semitic or learn Jewish oppression. We maintain that women of colour and First Nations women can be/are anti-Semitic. We allow anti-Semitism simply by living here [in North America] whether we want to or not. We do not necessarily learn it at home, but we learn anti-Semitism. We learned the stereotypes and the ugly words for Jews. However, it is neither possible nor necessary to be morally exempt ('non-anti-semitic' or 'non-racist') in order to stand in opposition to oppression (i.e. be anti-racist, anti-Jewish oppression). That's what feminism and our exploration into the isms are all about" (Ibid, p. 4).

<sup>374</sup> Jewish women seem to have different expectations for women of colour and First Nations women than they do of white non-Jewish feminists. Jewish women often declare feminists of colour and First Nations women to be 'more' anti-Semitic than non-

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Jewish white feminists, even though white feminists are a majority group in the women's movement and in society as a whole, and have more direct links to privilege and power. Jewish women also often react to the struggle against racism brought forward by women of colour in feminist communities as a choice to select anti-racism over anti-Jewish oppression" (Ibid, p. 5).

<sup>375</sup> VSW Archives. Coordinating Collective Meeting Minutes Feb. 7, 1994.

<sup>376</sup> VSW Archives, VSW Policy Statement Anti-Racism, p. 1.

<sup>377</sup> "Colonialism is a specific historical form of imperialism that involves direct military, economic, and political control.

Portugal, Spain, Holland, England and France developed colonies in the Americas and in parts of Asia and along the coasts of Africa from 1450-1650s. Between 1870 and 1914 there was a resurgence of imperialism as European nations looked for raw materials, labour and markets in the context of the industrial revolution. By the late 1890s, the US had acquired a colonial empire including Puerto Rico, Alaska, Hawaii, a part of Samoa, Guam, a chain of smaller Pacific Islands and the Philippines". (VSW Archives. VSW Anti-Imperialist Policy, 1995, p. 1).

<sup>378</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>379</sup> VSW Archives. CC meeting minutes June 16, 2001. Also see Namaste (2005) book, *Sex Change, Social Change: Reflections on Identity, Institutions, and Imperialism*.

<sup>380</sup> See Preves' (2002) article, "Sexing the intersexed: An analysis of sociocultural responses to intersexuality". Preves' refers to the intersexed as those "born genetically ambiguous" (p. 523).

<sup>381</sup> VSW Archives. VSW Trans Policy Meeting minutes- September 18, 2008.

<sup>382</sup> See Chapter 4 for further discussion regarding the term *equality* as well, see Turpel-Lafond's (1997) critique of equality.

<sup>383</sup> VSW Archives. CC meeting minutes, February 28, 2002.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 8: Conclusions, Contributions, and Implications

This dissertation captures the making of Vancouver Status of Women, a feminist organization born out of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, within larger discourses of power. I study VSW as a site of colonial encounters embedded in nation-building discourses of racialization, belonging, and entitlement. By engaging in this comprehensive qualitative case study of VSW, from 1971 to 2008, I bring forth the complexities, negotiations, and changing dynamics of power relations and hegemonic feminism while considering intersections across race, class, sexuality, citizenship, migration, education, and ability.

Using an intersectional critical race feminist analysis, I examine the following questions within the specific trajectory of multiple and intersecting histories and locations of VSW.

1. What is the relationship between Canada as a colonial nation-state and the making of the feminist organization and culture? How are organizational discourses of belonging and entitlement related to nation-building discourses?
2. What organizational processes and policies have been developed and implemented internally by Vancouver Status of Women to respond to the complexities of power relations? How do feminists across time challenge and/or reproduce power relations?

As a feminist researcher invested deeply within feminist organizations, my accountability to social justice movements lies in my ability to uncover diverse alternative histories that challenge and disrupt the spatial and temporal location of hegemonic histories. Identifying oppositional histories and spaces rather than engaging in the dominant historical narratives of hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power provides the possibility of nurturing creative and sustainable ways of building transgressive and healthy organizations and communities, across multiple subjectivities. Hence this research opens up possibilities for other organizational interpretations and experiences within feminist organizations and the larger women's movement.

### Summary of the Study

This research engages in a qualitative case study of Vancouver Status of Women by analyzing data from archival documents and participants' narratives using an intersectional critical race feminist analysis. Archival research involved locating primary documents and engaging in archival/text-based research. Thirty-one women were interviewed who had worked in some capacity as a staff or

Board/Coordinating Collective member at VSW during the period of 1971 to 2008. Four VSW eras were defined to ensure that VSW and participants were represented across the eras. Participants' fluid and multiple positionings varied across age, race, class, sexuality, migration history, family status and education (see Table 3.1). Amongst the participants there was a great variety in age ranging from 24 to 82 years old and fifty percent of the sample identified as lesbian, of which 65% were racialized lesbians. Of the thirty-one participants interviewed, 13 were white women, 14 were women of colour, and 4 were Indigenous women. The participants' diverse narratives deriving from their intersecting social locations within the larger nation brought forth the complexities and struggles that emerged as they negotiated and responded to power struggles in the making and sustaining of VSW since its inception in 1971 to 2008.

I explore VSW's emergence from the Royal Commission on the Status Women (RCSW) in 1971. This emergence is recognized as first and foremost through a colonial project regulated and sanctioned by Canada, a colonial nation-state. By examining the RCSW as a colonial project, I argue that this Commission reproduced nation-building discourses of racialization, essentialism and exclusion. Archives and narratives interact to demonstrate how the ideologies of liberal feminism became embedded and reproduced within VSW, particularly during its first era. I illustrate how the RCSW as a form of archival power was both a counter-hegemonic and a hegemonic archive which became crystallized within VSW as a site that reproduced as well as contested nation-building discourses. O'Neill (2003) affirms the RCSW outlined "some of the realities in women's lives in the late 1960s that were crystallized in the collection of women's stories and the research that was undertaken for the commission's report" (p. 1).

I assert that the RCSW itself legitimized dominant white women's struggles and concerns and further concretized their spatial, symbolic, affective and political entitlements within the nation as a "national consciousness raising exercise" (Heather MacIvor as cited in O'Neill, 2003, p. 3). According to O'Neill (2003), "the commission and its report moved beyond symbolic politics by providing a conceptual framework for future research and advocacy, and second, by establishing a vocabulary for the development and articulation of feminist analysis and ideology to come" (p. 3). Therefore, this research presents the entry point for examining how national entitlements and belonging materialized for privileged feminist subjects which further constructed them as *exalted feminists of the nation*.

Participants articulated in detail their understanding of power relations in feminist organizations, particularly VSW. Participants' explanation and illustration of power demonstrated power relations as present in all relations and therefore interacting with each other to produce power as enabling, resistance, and exclusion. Power relations were also understood as interacting with the subjects' positionalities which included their lived experience and simultaneous identities in relation to the nation. I emphasize that it is in this specific context of Canada as a colonial settler nation that subject formations interrupt or reproduce power relations.

Materializing from participants' narratives on power relations were six categories power which are not distinct and separate from each other. These included power as communication and articulation, hierarchy and hegemonic feminism, influence, organizational role and accumulation of organizational capital, leadership and empowerment, and (cou)rage and anger.<sup>386</sup> Differently positioned participants understood power in a variety of ways informing how their multiple and simultaneous locations interacted with larger national discourses of citizenship, belonging and entitlement. Clearly, the intersectionality, contestation and reinforcement of power relations is linked to the space one occupies and one's decision making power within an organization. Most importantly, these categories of power demonstrate the accumulation of power in the form of national capital and entitlement.

Participants discussed power relation processes which brought to the forefront nation-building discourses of entitlement and disentanglement within VSW. Emerging from the participants' narratives, I propose a theory of the *modalities of entitlement* to explicate the reproduction and contestation of spatial, symbolic, affective and political entitlements (see Figure 6.1).<sup>387</sup> Spatial entitlement reflects the politics of spatial belonging and gatekeeping in the construction and reinforcement of home whether it be in VSW, the women's movement or the nation. It is the site of colonial contact zones and encounters which grants insider or outsider status to differently positioned national subjects. Affective entitlement is embedded in emotions of home, belonging and attachment which secure the exalted feminist's happiness. Hence, the displacement of affective entitlement produces affective anxieties not only of the loss, damage or invasion of the home and nation but also as a threat to the nation-builders and gate-keepers of the space. Symbolic entitlement represents investments in and attachments of the familiar, such as symbols, texts, slogans, signifiers, narratives, icons, and rituals

which sustain spatial and affective entitlements. And finally, political entitlement encompasses civic, electoral, welfare, and legal rights that designate politics of national belonging and citizenship.

Such modalities of entitlement secure or destabilize discourses of home for feminist subjects as they accumulate organizational capital and knowledge in the making of VSW as home. The concept of *home* as shared by participants brings about not only the comforting familiar but also colonial anxieties of theft and dispossession, as it is the ultimate site of colonial encounters within a colonial settler nation. Participants carefully articulated their process of the making, reproducing, and securing of home through spatial, emotional, symbolic and political belonging. Encroachments upon national subjects' entitlements by the stranger or Other produced colonial anxieties and fears of disentanglement and loss of home. Struggles and anxieties emerged for many white participants as they experienced the loss of different modalities of entitlement in the form of displacement particularly as their privileges were challenged by racialized women in precarious positions within the organization.

Through an in-depth analysis of VSW's shifts in governance and policies which attempt to equalize power relations, I demonstrate the organization's journey towards contesting hegemonic national practices. I illustrate organizational anxieties as they surfaced while emphasizing the processes and discussions to respond to these organizational tensions largely rooted in multiple forms of white heteronormativity and middle-class hegemonic feminism. I examine VSW's shift in governance from a Board of Directors to a Coordinating Collective while recognizing the changes in decision making structures from Roberta's Rule of Order to consensus decision-making. Archival meeting minutes and participants' narratives provide details of such institutional structures as well as important moments of institutional change with the goal of becoming a more inclusive organization. Ultimately, as indicated by archives and participants, the most powerful transformation was the contestation of white normativity within VSW at every level.

This feminist organization's lifecycle demonstrates the changing decision making structure through time. In 1971 when the organization was created, it functioned with a Board structure with staff having limited input. By the mid 1970s, when additional funding became available and more staff began to be hired, the organization found itself revising its constitution to include appointed employees as Board members with voting power. Hence, VSW continued to function as a Board with staff having decision making power until it became a Coordinating Collective in the early 1990s.

Consensus decision making processes were used during VSW Coordinating Collective meetings. Yet, within this feminist collective, the staff also functions as a collective depending on its capacity. They may play a more or a less active role in providing proposals to the larger Coordinating Collective. Additionally, the volunteer Coordinating Collective members (non-staff) do not directly get involved with the everyday functioning of the organization such as service delivery, programming and division of labour, unless they are part of a committee. Therefore, as can be seen through this organization, VSW does not invoke all the traditional definitions of a collective but did find itself on the continuum of collective structures, while drawing on bureaucratic processes as needed (see Figure 7.2).

Feminist collectives are constantly experiencing tensions which pull them towards either ends of the spectrum: either to become more bureaucratic or to become more collective. As these organizations engage in growth and respond to the demands of the community, they also may become more dependent on external funding sources. This dependency on outside funding sources results in a positive shift towards increased budgets and staff while decreasing staff burn-out. In the case of VSW, funders and financial institutions continuously requested for a more hierarchical structure with an Executive Director who could be held accountable rather than a Coordinating Collective. As much as VSW resisted this pressure, at times, it had to invoke an administrative power within one position to satisfy funding and financial pressures.<sup>388</sup>

By telling the story of the making of VSW's Affirmative Action Policy, I illustrate the intense conflictual struggles experienced by women of colour to carve spaces within a traditionally white organization. I demonstrate white women's initial opposition to the Affirmative Action Policy while presenting data from meeting minutes and narratives which describe how such oppositions were experienced by differently positioned women within the organization. Additional organizational policies were developed and implemented in the 1990s and 2000s to further challenge hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power. These include VSW's Statement of Principles, Inclusion with Influence, Statement of Values, and the Transgendered Policy. By studying VSW with the recognition of its historical emergence, I argue that this research is deeply engaged and invested in theorizing white and racialized women's access to differently positioned national entitlements within this one particular feminist site.

This dissertation explicates the relationship between Canada as a colonial nation-state, the making of VSW, and VSW's changing organizational culture. I investigate organizational discourses of belonging and entitlement in relation to nation-building discourses. Additionally, I examine organizational processes and policies developed and implemented internally by VSW in response to the complexities of power relations. This organizational case study brings forth the intricacies and contradictions of actively challenging, contesting, interrupting, as well as reproducing and enforcing power relations. It highlights power relations not only as repressive and constraining but also as resistance, enabling and contesting. Michel Foucault's model of power is the primary conceptual framework used for this dissertation and it allows the researcher to examine the making of power relations not only deriving from the State but also in all relations. Using an intersectional critical race feminist analysis, I argue that Vancouver Status of Women as a feminist organization contested and reproduced hegemonic nation-building discourses.

The research helps us to understand the contradictions, assumptions, agreements, processes and meanings which guided power relations within the organization as both counter-hegemonic as well as hegemonic. It reveals the intricate processes of responding and not responding to power relations in organizations and how such responses are always framed within the macro landscapes of the women's movement, the nation, and globalization. It demonstrates such an organization born out of nationalist Liberal discourses attempt to lobby and challenge state practices, while also reproducing nation-building discourses and practices of dispossession and exclusion.

## **Implications & Contributions**

This research contributes to discourses and scholarship of intersectionality, power relations, hegemonic feminism, nation-building, critical whiteness, racialization, and organizational theory. Specifically, a number of implications arise relevant to organizational culture and policies regarding power relations, not only for feminist, social justice and non-profit organizations but all institutions. The research explicitly contributes towards a more in-depth theoretical and methodological understanding of intersectionality within (1) organizational studies (2) nation-building theorizing (3) critical whiteness studies (4) the outsider within and insider researcher and (5) archival and qualitative research. Additionally, there are a number of substantive implications for Vancouver Status of Women, as well as other organizations and institutions.

Intersectionality as discourse, method and theory is at the core of this dissertation. The study of participants' multiple and simultaneous social relations as intersecting produced complex responses and negotiations to power relations within organizations. By historicizing the participants' journeys, migrations, and experiences, I argue that an intersectional framework provides the depth needed to better understand the embodiment of power relations as difference. As Yuval-Davis (1996) states:

Women are not just individuals, nor are they just agents of their collectivities...[it is important] to take account of the multiplexity and multidimensionality of identities within contemporary society, without losing sight of the differential power dimension of different collectivities and groupings within it. (p. 23)

Hence, differently positioned participants invoked, deployed, responded, and challenged hegemonic power relations differently based on how they embody race, class, citizenship, ability, and sexuality across the intersecting sites of VSW, women's movements, and nation, as well as larger global intricacies. How the intersectionalities of difference are constituted within organizations and institutions is key to the visibility and making of home and entitlement.

## **Theoretical Implications**

### **Organizational Studies**

The first theoretical implication of this research focuses on the scholarship of organizational studies, including organizational structures and policies. This research rejects organizations and institutions as neutral sites, rather I argue that within Canada they are constituted as colonial sites of encounters and power relations. When organizational studies has considered difference, it has done so within the limited discussions of gender-based inequities (Holvino, 2008). Holvino encourages organizational theorists to shift away from this gender-based analysis and engage with an intersectional analysis of race, gender, and class. Organizational studies' reliance on the liberal feminist paradigm has essentialized the experience of white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied women while applying such experiences to all women regardless of their intersecting positionalities. Therefore, this dissertation resists constructing women as a universal category and suggests interventions recognizing the diversity of women within organizations.

This dissertation challenges the white liberal feminist paradigm of exclusion and argues for alternative feminist frameworks by identifying other possibilities for studying the intersections in organizational theory and practice. I concur with Holvino's (2005) assertion for a reconceptualization

which exposes the intersections, “as simultaneous processes of identity, institutional and social practice in order to redress these silences in feminist organizational studies” (p. 1). Hence by researching the simultaneity of multiple power relations in a feminist organization, this research brings to the forefront the hidden and omitted stories at the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, class, citizenship, ability, language, nation, sexuality, and geography. By studying the social practices and relations of power between organizational processes/culture and their broader social, material, historical, and political context, this research demonstrates the complexities of the interconnections of the global as it trickles into organizations and onto the bodies of women. Intersectionality can be transformative in effecting social change within organizations by contributing to the development, content and delivery of programs as well as providing the analyses, designs and recommendations for public and internal policies (CRIA, 2006).

This research also implies that feminist organizations, including feminist collectives, are fluid and continuously changing over their organizational life cycle as they simultaneously engage with diverse elements of bureaucracy and collectivity. I argue that politicized organizations committed to an intersectional critical race feminist framework and working with more collective structures and processes, have a greater capacity to engage with power differences both internally and externally. I affirm that such feminist collectives have a greater capability to invoke transformation by advocating for deeper complex political analyses and organizational reflexivity regarding power relations, differences, and exclusions.

Feminist organizations, as well as other organizations, are grounded within global structural forces of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization. As I argue, they are complex sites of colonial encounters and proximities. In contemporary times, these forces are reflected within free-trade international agreements which aggressively dictate national policies of economic restructuring, which become embedded onto the bodies working in feminist organizations. This further invokes specific relations of power within/across feminist organizations as well as with funding agencies, members, donors, and other social movements. The impact of such a neo-liberal/conservative agenda upon feminist organizations challenges not only their resilience to survive but most importantly their ability to contest regressive ideologies, including hegemonic feminist ideologies.

The last organizational studies implication that I would like to offer is embedded in the contradictions of organizational policies and its relationship to the State. I recognize that organizational policies are important as mechanisms to strengthen organizations but it is imperative to differentiate between policies that reproduce State and national hegemonic practices and those that are counter-hegemonic. Organizational governance structures and policies are demanded by State apparatuses such as funders, financial institutions, and government structures (ie. the Society's Act) as requirements for maintaining non-profit organizations and their charitable status. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that the development of hegemonic policies by non-profit organizations present them as more *respectable* organizations in the eyes of the State, financial institutions and other hegemonic power structures.

Skeggs' (1997; 2004) theorizing of respectability and how value is allocated to certain bodies and not others can also be applied towards non-profit organizations. Clearly organizations that are perceived as developed, organized and respectable with an accessible documenting culture are constructed as transparent, accountable, and valued differently from those that do not have such a policy development culture. Yet, when such governance and policy culture goes against the grain of bureaucratic ways of working, organizations are seen as untrustworthy and unaccountable. In the case of VSW, the lack of an Executive Director and its Coordinating Collective governance structure has consistently and continuously constructed VSW as lacking leadership and accountability. Hence, I argue, that the development and implementation of governance structures and policies are not neutral acts of organizational culture. Caution must be taken as social justice organizations develop hegemonic policies which reward them by accessing respectability and funding from the State and other funders, while also embedding further into State hegemonic apparatuses of control.

### **Critical Whiteness Studies and Nation-Building Theorizing**

The second and third theoretical implications involve the intersecting theorizing of nation-building and critical whiteness studies. The study of VSW demonstrates the interconnections of organizational and national discourses in the reproduction of the Canadian nation as white and the Other as outsider to the nation. As Thobani (2000b) indicates, "in defining immigrants as responsible for racial, cultural and social diversity, the nation becomes homogenous in its whiteness" (p. 308). According to Rasmussen, Klinenberg, Nexica and Wray (2001) critical whiteness studies emerge from a

critical analysis and research of white skin privilege. They argue that the definitions of whiteness are always dynamic, changing and context-specific "but it is a social construction with real effects that has become a powerful organizing principle around the world" (Rasmussen et al., 2001, p.8).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the role of white women as nation-builders is very much intertwined with First Wave feminism's investment in the colonial project as *mothers of the race and nation* (Devereux, 1999; Valverde, 1992). Similarly, I argue that white liberal feminists during VSW's first and second eras were not only biological reproducers but also symbolic and ideological reproducers and transmitters of nation-building discourses.<sup>389</sup> These nation-building discourses were key to teaching not only about the dominant white exalted subject as the manager of the nation but also in constituting and managing the Other. Just as the nation-builders feared the overpopulation of Others and strangers, I demonstrate that white feminists also had similar anxieties of racialized immigrant feminists' presence and politics within VSW.

In Chapter 4, I argue that Royal Commissions are nation-building projects because they reinforce and sustain national practices producing the dominant national subject and the Other. The Commissions discussed in this dissertation cement and strengthen the founding *races'* languages, cultures, and ideologies. In particular the whiteness of the nation continuously emerges to ensure that Royal Commission recommendations and changes "would not fundamentally challenge the established racial order of the nation" (Thobani, 2000a, p. 18). This is precisely the discursive site of VSW's emergence. This dissertation illustrates the performance of being white in a feminist organization born out of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. This study provides important data from the narratives and archives demonstrating how white feminists responded to the presence of the Other as outsiders to VSW, the women's movement, and the nation. By historicizing whiteness throughout VSW's trajectory, I recognize the everyday experiences and conditions lived through *race* across what Hage calls the field of Whiteness. The entitlements attached to whiteness bring forth meanings that shaped relations of power not only between white women and racialized women but also among them.

The narratives of white participants demonstrate how within VSW, the women's movement and the nation-state, whiteness circulates as an axis of power embedded in discourses of entitlement. This dissertation offers a nuanced understanding of how different individuals who identified as white

understand and negotiate power relations within a feminist organization such as VSW while recognizing the interaction of their whiteness with other positionalities of class, sexuality, education, age, geography. In particular, as demonstrated, whiteness interacts with other systems of power to reproduce and maintain hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power. The research further contributes to the scholarship of how whiteness facilitates multiple invocation and performance of power relations including the distribution of power and resources within organizations.

I affirm that whiteness within feminist organizing including organizations and Women's Studies departments, remains dominant and normative. The colonial project of whiteness as discussed by Valverde (1992), Hage (2000), and Thobani (2007) and as demonstrated in this research, continues to be socially reproduced across multiple sites. Razack et al. (2010) state:

Whiteness is inextricably connected to the constitution of the Other....Critical race feminist theorists have long defined "whiteness" as a form of subjectivity that is socially constructed, historically contextual, and inherently unstable. The equation of whiteness as a social identity with the socio-political category of the West has been defined as particularly problematic for its furthering of colonial and imperialist projects. Critical race theorists have also noted that the economic and political power of the West has enabled white subjects to exalt themselves even as they have sought to define the nature of the Other. (pp. 10-11)

The effects of racism and Othering upon racialized bodies, knowledges, and experiences continue to produce consequences of racial exclusion and white superiority in the present not only within organizations but also within the Canadian nation-state. It is only a matter of looking into *who are* and *what are* the persons, content, histories and analyses present in women's organizations and women's programs today.

It is critical to further complicate the notion of whiteness as invisible and unmarked by historicizing the concept and idea of whiteness. I argue that white participants' material realities are positioned differently in society across time and space because they embody whiteness differently. This is an important consideration because many subjects that are constructed as white subjects today may not have historically been seen as white subjects of the nation as discussed in Chapter 4. In Canada, whiteness has been a profound and important status of the accumulation of national capital particularly through the production of labour.<sup>390</sup> Therefore, when engaging in a study such as this, it is necessary to acknowledge and address the multiple positionalities within the category of whiteness as they intersect to produce and mediate structural privilege and spatial, affective, political and symbolic entitlements.

I argue that the making of entitlement by white women is significantly different from the making of entitlement by women of colour. White women's entitlement is naturalized, sustained and accumulated differently. Most significantly, white national entitlement is embedded in differently positioned colonial encounters which legally carved white normativity, culture, and law within Canada as a colonial settler society. White women have historically accumulated national capital through various processes, but mostly through their participation as imperial agents of Empire building (Carty, 1999; Devereux, 1999; Valverde, 1992).<sup>391</sup> They further accumulated civic entitlements during the post-war period, as Llewellyn, Cook, Westheimer, Girón, and Suurtamm (2004) emphasize:

White women...were especially successful in obtaining the federal franchise. The declaration of women as "persons" under the British North America Act in 1929 and the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967 (reporting in 1970) [which] provided important legal entitlements for women's civic integration. (p. 8)

Hence, we witness the gradual accumulation of political entitlements of white women as civic entitlements, which remain intertwined with spatial, symbolic, and affective entitlements as facilitated by the nation, nationalist practices and national building processes of colonial Canada. Racialized women's accumulation of national entitlements embarked on a different colonial journey that varies significantly from those of white national subjects due to processes of legitimization and the value of national capital. I concur with Hage (2000) that differently positioned entitlements are rooted in the managerial positioning of different modes of passive and governmental belonging. White national feminist subjects experience governmental belonging which is situated in naturalized and legitimate entitlement as managers of the nation and *home*.

Hage (2000) discusses how the "spatial manager becomes entitled to take up such a managerial position" within discourses of "a homely national order" (p. 67). His analysis illustrates how Canadian nationalist practices become an expression of national entitlement as a process of accumulating whiteness. He states, "it is a process of establishing a White national order that reciprocally valorises the very Whiteness that operates as its principle of organisation" (p. 67). Nationalist practices are invoked and deployed as power relations through the ideal imaginary nation and this reflects an ideal national order defined by Hage as *a fantasy* that one yearns for (p. 68). It is this yearning for the national fantasy that I argue is embedded in political, affective, symbolic and spatial entitlement and becomes a marker of difference and domination. Hence, this research presents an important theorization of organizational entitlement derived from the formation of national entitlements.

White participants disclosed moments of intensity which reveal their defensiveness, denial and refusal to question their entitlement as white national subjects across class and sexuality which positioned them as exalted feminists of the nation. This exaltation legitimizes their rightful place in VSW and the nation through the process of accumulating national capital as managers of colonial spaces. I affirm that this is a useful framework to explicate the complexities of white national subjects' investment in the field of whiteness as the rightful managers of organizations, institutions and the larger nation. The relationship between these multiples sites of national belonging and entitlement is confirmed by this research. The presence of the stranger or Other whether they be welcomed or feared in any institution or organization is embedded in discourses of white national belonging and entitlement. To feel threatened and unhappy, to believe that one's space is being invaded, to witness one's symbols of attachment being challenged, and to fear the loss of one's political voice within an organization or institution as a dominant subject is a form of embodied displacement and contestation. By recognizing the affective, spatial, symbolic, and spatial dimensions of nationalism, I conclude that an examination of entitlements provides the necessary understanding to processes of exclusion/inclusion and belonging in organizations and institutions.

I examine the construction of labour in organizations and its relationship to the State, and I demonstrate how white working-class bodies and later racialized bodies regardless of class, played an important role in providing the pool of free or underpaid labour to reproduce the relations of production which sustained VSW. According to Althusser (2004), "the role of the repressive State apparatus...consists essentially in securing...the political conditions of the reproduction of relations of production which are in the last resort relations of exploitation" (p. 95). In particular, racialized feminists within VSW remained in volunteer, part-time and temporary positions until the early 1990s. I demonstrate how such bodies produced free, underpaid and exploitative labour which secured the functioning of the organization, as well as within the large social movements, as they had and continue to do in relation to the larger nation-state. Hence, this research offers implications regarding nation-state discourses of labour production by exemplifying how racialized women have been exploited not only across the nation but also within social justice organizations.

Sharma (2000) explains "the exclusionary discursive practices of 'Canadian-ness' are of particular importance to the organization of the Canadian labour market, as is graphically displayed by

the experiences of those categorized as migrant workers. They are made to work in unfree employment relationships as a condition of entering, residing and working in Canada" (p. 7). Clearly, the process and practices of nation-building due to labour needs has heavily relied on discourses of immigration and whiteness. As Thobani (2000a) indicates, "racialized immigration policies helped to establish and reproduce the 'nation's' population as white. Immigration policy and access to citizenship, as well as access to land and other economic resources, served to integrate white immigrants as members of the nation, albeit in gender and class specific ways" (p. 16). She further explains that the Immigration Act may have been constructed as a liberalization of immigration policies, however:

The Act continues to organize the racialized nationalization of white immigrants on the basis of their cultural and social affinities to the nation, their fluency in the 'national' languages, and their 'contributions' to the nation through the recognition of their skills and education. On the other hand, the racialized bordering of third world *immigrant* women has become organized on the basis of the social and cultural diversity, the linguistic diversity, the non-recognition of their contributions to the nation, and in the deskilling of their labour as *immigrant* labour. (Thobani, 2000a, p. 24)

This research has important implications for critical whiteness studies as it illustrates the discourses of white entitlement formation, reproduction, and reinforcement within white dominated spaces such as the women's movement and other social justice movements in Canada. Schick's (2002) research examines the university space which remains dominated by those who identify as white. She argues that the university in Canada, a white settler society, is a site which privileges whiteness through its reproduction as worthy and legitimate. She explains how space produces identities of both privilege and degeneracy. Schick states:

As a production of difference, the designation of space constructs and contains identities that are said to belong in a particular site. Social relations that converge in specific sites mark out places of privilege and elite formation against contamination by an outside Other. (p. 102)

Therefore she argues that spaces produce identities while gatekeeping what is necessary to avoid the loss of privilege and respectability. She demonstrates how whiteness intersects with legitimacy and respectability, which I argue are forms of national capital within the field of whiteness as discussed by Hage (2000). Schick further discusses the process of securing white entitlement by identifying with the "ideological space of rationality and objectivity" through sites of white bourgeois legitimacy (p, 108). It is this process which produces and distinguishes between those who belong and those who do

not which I illustrate takes place when feminist organizations become the *home* of the legitimate deserving respectable exalted feminists.

By analyzing white feminists' fears, anxieties, guilt, and transgressions under different circumstances and effects of power relations, important implications emerge for critical whiteness studies and nation-building theorizing. Processes of racialization provide important possibilities for how one moves through and struggles for space and home within legacies of colonization. By documenting and analyzing how differently positioned subjects within the nation occupy space, in particular feminist space, I emphasize the power relations that erupt through colonial interactions demonstrating inequalities across space, emotions, symbols, and politics. By bringing forth organizational struggles based on exclusions and white normativity, I emphasize the emergence of alternative modes of feminist practice which destabilize white hegemonic feminism within VSW.

## **Methodological Contributions**

### **Outsider Within and Insider Research Position**

As a feminist researcher, this study has pushed me towards a deeper level of critical self-reflexivity demanding nuanced ways of responding to arising dilemmas, negotiations, paralysis, frustrations, and participant involvement. When considering feminist research and methods, Lather (2007) suggests the following questions:

What are the inclusions and exclusions at work? How does it delimit, constitute, unbind, disharmonize, pervert, rupture, or fit into already established continuums? What are its internal differences and what self-knowledge does it not seem able to bear? (p. x)

The research methodology complexities emphasized by Lather point to the tensions and discomforts experienced by the researcher who risks inhabiting such multiple methods, analyses and temporalities. The process of moving from stuck places and messiness towards a coherent intersectional critical race feminist analysis of power in organizations is a journey that in itself produces nuanced relevant knowledge.

The first methodological contribution focuses on discourses of researcher as outsider within and insider positions.<sup>392</sup> This insider position highlighted the dilemmas and contributions of the insider researcher studying an organization where the researcher has been heavily involved (Lal, 1999; Wolf, 1996). As an insider to VSW, I am deeply conscious of my power as it gets invoked within VSW

organizing spaces. I attempted to distance myself from the organization by resigning from the Coordinating Collective and withdrawing my involvement from all other projects at the start of the research project and while conducting interviews. My withdrawal was important because I have come to understand how my mere presence invoked power relations particularly when I had traditionally been in a leadership position. I understand that it was precisely this historical involvement as an insider which facilitated this important in-depth research to take place.

My membership within VSW and the women's movement brought forth complicated discourses of researcher-participant relations. Because of my involvement in the women's movement and VSW since 1997, many of the participants knew of me, bringing forth further complexities of knowledge and power. In some cases relationships between the participants and myself existed prior to this research in the forms of friendships and acquaintances. As the interviews proceeded, several themes arose. There were situations where participants were in need of my approval for a complexity of reasons. I witnessed interviews becoming not only sites of remembering and debriefing past events but also sites of confession regarding one's complicity in reproducing essentialism and exclusion. This was a complicated journey for the researcher, as I attempted to negotiate multi-layered data analyses while "honouring of participants' voices in a way that problematizes confession, testimonial and the intrusiveness" (Lather, 2003, p. ix). Several interviews resulted in a confessional process of releasing one's guilt, actions and thoughts that reproduced homophobia, transphobia, classism, and racism. As much as these releases of confessions were important both for the participant and the research, I must acknowledge that they landed upon *my* body as the researcher. The hearing and absorbing of racist, classist, anti-Indigenous, anti-immigrant, homophobic and transphobic comments by the participants have certainly marked me and it is an experience I carry as I exit this research.

Differently positioned participants based on their education, race, class, ability, sexuality, and age at the time of the interview intersected to produce and perform knowledge and memory in relation to the researcher's social relations. White women saw and constructed themselves in relation to a racialized queer university educated researcher. What emerged from such interviews were the performance of exaltedness as white feminists helping and supporting a woman of colour with her research. Such processes of interconnectedness produced white women as white allies who were predominantly extremely honest during times of anxiousness and discomfort. This anxiousness is

embedded in the contradiction of white women's involvement as a performance of anti-racist alliance and also the fear of being quoted and seen as racist.

An additional complexity that arose during the interviewing process involves the non-traditional researcher who is less privileged than many of the participants in the study. Ahmed et al. (2006) explain that, traditionally, researchers study Others and other places as the professional "who comes in and out of a 'foreign culture', generating knowledge about others that are 'directed' towards readers back home" (p. 24). In this research, this is not always the case. I argue that there is an important contribution in explicating the processes, reflections and complexities involved when the stranger steps into the home of the one who belongs naturally to the nation. Hence, deriving from the interview process, I present the researcher from a place of marginalization who interviews dominant white subjects allowing for the emergence of unique interactions and forms of knowledge.

The experience of requesting an interview from white participants across class and sexuality was always warmly accepted usually with an invitation into their *homes*. My fieldnotes state "as a queer woman of colour, I am always anxious to walk into white women's *homes*, homes under any other circumstances, I likely would not have been invited into. How does this research facilitate these invitations and my presence into *their* homes? What relations will be born out of this research? I know what my purpose is but what is theirs?" Over time a multitude of reasons surfaced during white women's interviews, that speaks to their relationship to this research. As the interviews proceeded, I found myself covertly being asked to legitimize their stories of pain, guilt and transformation. Many appeared to crave closure, approval, or a release from what haunts them. From this unique interaction between the researcher and white participants emerges the complexity of colonial encounters between myself and the participants.

### **Intersecting Research Methods**

The second important methodological contribution involves the benefits of interacting research methods. This qualitative case study provides an important contribution to how archives and interviews intersect to bring about a breadth and depth of data that would not have been possible otherwise. Interview processes were very much influenced by archival data as much as archival data were influenced by interview data. I affirm that this research makes an important argument for applying an intersectional approach to research methods when studying historical themes particularly

where institutions are involved. This provided a more profound illustration of the making of power within the organization by presenting a wider framework for tracing and tracking the necessary data. Texts and archives emerge as subjects, which are intertwined with the narratives of the participants, and vice versa. Further, because organizations are sites of colonial encounters, the texts that they produced became colonial texts and archives.

One of the central thematic findings where archives became alive as they intersected with participants' narratives was the examination of the relationship between the Royal Commission on the Status Women and VSW. The data from the multiple methods produces a meaningful analysis which identified VSW as a contested feminist site that remains haunted by the RCSW. The RCSW, a project of the colonial state, sustained hegemonic power relations and reproduced national discourses of encountering strangers and welcoming of strangers (Ahmed, 2000; Thobani, 2007). This dissertation argues that Royal Commissions and specifically the Royal Commission on the Status of Women must be seen as colonial archives producing and sustaining nation-building discourse of Other, racialization, and belonging. Hence, archival power is also central to how organizations and institutions become embedded in national grand/master narratives.

### **Substantive Implications**

The first substantive implication of this research is the practical contribution of an in-depth study of one of the oldest feminist organizations in British Columbia, Vancouver Status of Women's organizational life cycle from 1971 to 2008. Specific political contributions to VSW include bringing to the forefront the strategies which have contested hegemonic feminism and hierarchal power relations towards a more inclusive feminist organization. Additionally, this research allows the organization to further develop organizational policies which strengthen its capacity towards a more inclusive organization while contesting hegemonic feminism. This project also brings practical logistical contributions of collating, archiving, and analyzing organizational archives and documents for the first time in its history. Traditionally, feminist organizations with limited resources have not had the capacity or womanpower to collate their own history for archival purposes. Therefore, I strived to provide this resource simultaneously as I engaged in the research.

The second substantive implication provides a useful framework for conceptualizing power relations (see Table 5.1) in understanding and responding to various invocations, deployments and

effects of power. These different categories of power as expressed by the participants contribute to a theorizing of power as intersectional, repressive, enabling and resistance as invoked by one's positionality within a colonial settler nation. Power as articulation and communication demonstrates the relationship between education, language and accents. Power can also be deployed in organizations by reproducing or challenging hierarchies and hegemonic feminism. All organizations experience power embedded in organizational roles which further produce power as accumulated institutional knowledge. The power to influence and persuade is central to any organizational culture particularly where decision-making processes are involved. Additionally, power as leadership and empowerment becomes deployed indicating one's ability to envision, mentor and take responsibility towards organizational changes.

Lastly, I argue that power as (cou)rage and anger is present in all institutional sites which provide the motivating force for institutional change. In the case of VSW, as women expressed anger as an effect of exclusion, women in dominant positions predominately experienced and performed guilt. This dissertation encourages the importance of understanding anger in organizations as a source of energy that stimulates rather than merely kills joy<sup>393</sup>. As Audre Lorde (1997) states "anger is loaded with information and energy" (p. 280). She further asserts:

I cannot hide my anger to spare you guilt, nor hurt feelings, nor answering anger; for to do so insults and trivializes all our efforts. Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness. (Lorde, 1997, p. 282)

Hence this dissertation challenges the conception of anger as merely inhibiting or impeding or as a killjoy but rather as the energy that moves, transgresses and transforms individuals and organizations.

A third important practical implication of this dissertation is the usefulness of the model of an affirmative action policy (see Figure 7.3) based on an intersectional feminist analysis of participant and archival data. This model of affirmative action takes into account multiple criteria for a more ethical policy by shifting beyond the one category of representation. I propose the following necessary criteria for an affirmative action policy: representation, political analysis, organizational capacity, and mentorship. These multiple components intersect to ensure more successful and ethical affirmative action hiring practices. By tracing VSW's making of such a policy, it offers to other

institutions' human resources and personnel policy possibilities to transgress not only the bodies within an organization but also a commitment to equalizing power.

I would like to offer a critical self-reflection to demonstrate the relationship between racialized permanent staff's organizational entitlement in VSW and the Affirmative Action Policy. I would like to argue that if racialized staff experienced organizational entitlement, they did so because of the Affirmative Action Policy. The Affirmative Action Policy was key in facilitating the formation of entitlement for racialized permanent staff. Several questions arise to confirm this. First, if the affirmative action policy was not in place, would there ever have been racialized feminists in the permanent positions? Second, would white women in all their diversity continue to dominate this organization? Third, would I have been hired without the Affirmative Action Policy in place? These questions are crucial to any organization, institution, and workplace embedded in white representation, knowledge, and normativity. Based on this research of racialized women's experiences within the women's movement, I confirm that it is very unlikely that I would have been hired without an affirmative action policy in place for racialized women, and hence, this thesis would be non-existent.<sup>394</sup>

## **Implications for Future Research**

This dissertation proposes a number of implications for future research. Clearly, organizations are sites of home and home making involving not only structures and policies but also emotions of attachment and relationships. Ahmed et al. (2006) explain:

How organisations work is partly through how feelings are mobilised. These collective sentiments get passed round organisations and permeate the everyday relations of the group. These collective sentiments are important to exploring how and why (individuals and) collectives become invested in and attached to particular ways of thinking and acting. (p. 24)

Hence, it is important to study how feelings in organizations exhibit and constitute discourses of belonging while identifying the discourses which get impeded or promoted in the production of power. As demonstrated in this dissertation, affective entitlement is central to how one accumulates organizational capital and therefore also national capital. Additionally, there is a strong relationship between the need for happiness and stability within organizations. Unhappiness often signifies an unstable and troubled organization. Organizational happiness is achieved by the things we want for VSW and organizational unhappiness is what we don't want for VSW. Yet, as demonstrated over and

over again, times of unhappiness were the best challenges for VSW, translating into moments of transformation.<sup>395</sup>

This research exposes colonial encounters that are considered both good encounters and bad encounters. Good encounters for Ahmed (2010) involves acquiring a place in which one can stay or bodies that stay in place. Bad encounters "can be read as how bodies refuse to be placed by disagreeing with what they receive" (p. 213). The feminist who contests organizational culture is constituted as a killjoy feminist because she interrupts organizational happiness and good feelings. She is the social threat to the organization's agreement and "gets in the way of an organic solidarity" (p. 213). She destabilizes the organizational affective economy and the affective entitlements attached from body to organization to movements to nation to globalization. As demonstrated, studying how a diversity of emotions and feelings become attached differently to bodies in the process of colonial encountering is an important area of study for organizations and institutions.

Secondly, emerging from the data collected for this study is the need for future research on how VSW and *Kinesis* were foundational sites for politicized queer feminist of colour organizing and knowledge creation. Although, several narratives and archives exhibit such queer racialized histories, unfortunately I was not able to examine this finding but look forward to do so in future research. Clearly, VSW and *Kinesis* became a powerful site of organizing, belonging, and mentoring for racialized lesbian feminists in the city of Vancouver. This history has been left out of queer history in British Columbia which has predominantly emphasized white queer history. This research provides detailed histories and narratives that contribute to the history of queer racialized feminist culture in BC, which I intend to examine in future research.

Lastly, future research of organization and institutions applying a political generation theoretical framework would provide a better understanding of how organizations across time and cohorts define their priorities. Political generation theory raises important questions about *who*, *how* and *when* feminists come to experience similar or different perceptions and understandings of reality. Whittier (1995) defines a political generation as "a group that experiences shared formative social conditions at approximately the same point in their lives and that holds a common interpretive framework shaped by historical circumstances" (p. 180). According to Schneider (1988) "generations are created within the movement with different attitudes toward it that can, in turn affect internal

movement conflicts, forms of organization, tactics, strategy, and ideology" (p. 9). By studying feminist generational thinking, the researcher can explore the similarities and contradictions of power relations within and across histories of the women's movement as well as feminist organizations. Furthermore, this theoretical perspective is useful for describing the multiple variations amongst feminists within a feminist organization at different times.

Whittier (1995) further contributes to political generation theory by explaining that *micro-cohorts* are feminists with distinct formative experiences and collective identities that shape and emerge at distinct phases of the women's movement. Whittier suggests that, "each micro-cohort entered the women's movement at a specific point in its history, engaged in different social movement activities, had a characteristic political culture, and modified feminist collective identity" (p. 181).<sup>396</sup> Braungart and Braungart (1984) emphasize that generational politics theory focuses on "identifying the historical circumstances, social structural conditions and mobilization opportunities crucial to the formation of an active political or social generation" (p. 2). They suggest that *intergenerational* conflict "takes place as one generation deauthorizes another and authorizes its own members to redirect the course of social and political events" (Braungart and Braungart, 1984, p. 2). Additionally, not all members of a generation perceive and react to politics in the same way, therefore *intragenerational* conflict also "occurs as various ideological and utopian units within the same generation compete for the definition and control of the political situation" (p. 2). The study of generational politics within feminist or other organizations is therefore pivotal to bringing a deeper understanding of the power relations that exist across and within generations.

## **Final Researcher Reflections**

I conclude this dissertation by raising a fundamental question regarding social justice and feminist organizing which has troubled me since formulating the modalities of entitlement discussed in Chapter 6. As agents of social change marginalized within a settler colonial society, *what exactly are we fighting for?* Is it what privileged white men have or privileged white women have in Canada? How are the ongoing discourses of equality and justice embedded in imperial entitlements of ongoing theft, destruction and colonization? How do we carefully consider and walk every day into the colonial legacies which we have inherited, every single one of us. I want to consider the following: *What are we fighting for when we fight for 'equality'? Are we fighting for a piece of the imperial nation?* As I

conclude this research, I have come to a place where I understand the essential need to rethink this whole business of fighting for equality and rights, because everything being fought for in the name of justice is done so through a dangerous imperial national machine that continuously churns. This complicated machine with which we not only engage but in which we invest when struggling for justice, is contingent on Indigenous Peoples remaining dispossessed and disempowered. Simply, Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and independence relies on disrupting or destroying the very same machine which we have come to be so dependent on as the mechanism to achieve rights and equality. The discourses surrounding the tactics and strategies used for creating change are deeply entrenched within the theft of all Indigenous resources and rights. *How and why have social movements avoided for so long this recognition?*

Within social justice movements, we speak of building solidarity and alliance with Indigenous peoples. What does that look like and which Indigenous Peoples are we talking about? Is this solidarity passive and cowardly or active and courageous? It is critical to recognize the diversity of Indigenous Peoples movements from those that engage in social change by working with the colonial State and those that refuse to work with the colonial State. The question is where will we stand, with whom, and for how long? The answer often reflects on one's own positionings, social locations, and settler politics at a particular time. So how prepared are we to deeply envision different ways of relating to each other across historical and present colonial encounters in spite of the reproduction of State apparatuses. Part of the answer lies in creating the necessary relations, time and space to begin to explore different, alternative and oppositional ways of working which does not rely on the accumulation of national capital and entitlement.

This research has also urged me to consider that it may very well be that organizations such as VSW are not necessarily the site of struggle and organizing that Indigenous women want to invest in. I have attempted to confront this colonial dilemma that forever haunts us as non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. As you recall, several white women within VSW discussed the politics of displacing oneself from a position of power in order to enable and facilitate the entrance of those who have not been present or who have been kept out. My own experience of attempting to find ways to make space as a woman of colour within VSW for Indigenous feminists remains a struggle. Within VSW, there have been several attempts to ensure that Indigenous women were in leadership positions of

power by developing creative alternatives such as job sharing and ensuring the organization worked towards the model of affirmative action discussed earlier. Yet, this model must be further developed to take into account the politics of colonial encounters that are significantly different when Indigenous bodies are present.

It is time to return to why I pursued this research. The response to this question has been partly fluid and partly concrete. I began this scholarly journey by first overromanticizing the righteousness of such an organization and its courage to challenge hegemonic feminism and hierarchies of power by developing and implementing organizational policies that equalize power. Yet, I did not expect that what would emerge are the complex colonial encounters and relations not only amongst differently situated women but also between VSW and the nation. By the end of the research, I offer a nuanced understanding of how feminist organizations are embedded in the nation. Feminist organizations challenge State policies and hegemonic national discourses while also reproducing nation-building discourses of exclusion, essentialism, racialization and entitlement.

Additionally, as a feminist consultant working in various capacities with social justice organizations in BC, I argue that it is pivotal for organizational theorists and the field of organizational scholarship to recognize the absence and silence regarding colonial encounters in workplaces, organizations, and institutions. That in fact, these sites are not neutral spaces of working and organizing but that they are the sites of colonial, gendered, classed, and sexualized intersections of power relations. Racist, heterosexist, and classist organizational cultures are sustained and reproduced while they are also challenged and resisted. As I deepened my knowledge of organizational entitlement, I began to see its strong relationship to national entitlements and the field of Whiteness and its hold on power in organizations and institutions in North America. I am deeply thankful for this academic journey of historicizing VSW, examining my occupation within VSW, and having had the amazing gift of studying and analyzing not only my self-reflections but also organizational reflections shared through the archives and participants.

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<sup>386</sup> See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of the conceptualization of power.

<sup>387</sup> Chapter 6 for an in-depth discussion of the modalities of entitlement.

<sup>388</sup> VSW Archives. Meeting Minutes and Correspondence.

<sup>389</sup> See Yuval-Davis' (1996) discussion on women's biological reproduction of the nation.

<sup>390</sup> See Knowles (2007).

<sup>391</sup> See Chapter 2 for a more in-depth discussion.

<sup>392</sup> See Chapter 3 for a more in depth discussion of *outsider within* and *insider* researcher positions.

<sup>393</sup> See Ahmed (2010) and Chapter 5 for more discussion on the concept of *killjoy*.

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<sup>394</sup> I would like to affirm that pre-VSW's Affirmative Action Policy, there had always been a systemic naturalized affirmative action culture in place at Vancouver Status of Women for white women amongst their diversity.

<sup>395</sup> Ahmed (2010) examines "unhappiness as a form of political action" (p. 207).

<sup>396</sup> Whittier (1995) identifies four types of micro-cohorts: initiators, founders, joiners, and sustainers. Micro-cohorts differ from one another due to being politicized at different times, having differences in age, organizing experience, and knowledge; all these differences lead to difficulties in maintaining collective practices in feminist organizations.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A.1: Letter of Initial Contact

### THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program  
Green Commons, Green College  
6201 Cecil Green Park Road  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1

Tel: 604-822-0954 Fax: 604-822-0470  
E-mail: [isgp@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:isgp@interchange.ubc.ca)

#### Letter of Initial Contact

[Date]

Greetings \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to ask for your participation in my research project entitled *An Intersectional Organizational Study of Vancouver Status of Women, 1971-2008*. I am currently a doctoral student in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of British Columbia. The research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree from the University of British Columbia under the supervision of the Principal Investigator, Dr. Sunera Thobani.

Currently, there is limited research regarding the organizational culture and policies of feminist organizations in Canada which addresses internal responses, negotiations and interruptions to power relations. This research engages in an in-depth study of Vancouver Status of Women's responses to power relations throughout its organizational life cycle. By engaging in this study, I examine the complexities, negotiations, and disruptions of power relations through time while considering its intersections with the international, national, provincial, and local political climates of the larger nation state.

I would like to kindly request for a face-to-face interview with you based on your involvement and experience with Vancouver Status of Women. If you live outside the Vancouver Lower Mainland area, the interview can be conducted via telephone.

I will be interviewing approximately 30 past and current staff or board/coordinating collective members of Vancouver Status of Women from 1971 to 2008. Interviews will be audiotaped and will remain confidential. The interview will take approximately two hours to complete. A second interview of one hour may be required for follow up purposes only. Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and it will be scheduled at a time and place that is convenient to you. You have the right to not answer any question and to withdraw from the interview at any time. All information gathered from the interview will be coded and pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality. The data will be kept in a locked drawer and password protected on a computer hard drive.

This research is extremely important to me as a feminist who is dedicated to bringing to the forefront important dialogues and discussions regarding the diversity of strategies and possibilities for challenging and equalizing power relations. I look forward to hearing from you in the next week so we are able to set up a time to meet.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me, Benita Bunjun, at [phone number] or [benitab@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:benitab@interchange.ubc.ca), or my supervisor, Dr. Sunera Thobani at 604-822-9265 or [sth@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:sth@interchange.ubc.ca) from the Centre of Women's and Gender Studies. Thank you for your support and commitment.

With thanks and appreciation,

Benita Bunjun  
Phd Candidate  
Interdisciplinary Studies  
University of British Columbia

## Appendix A.2: Letter of Consent and Consent Form

### THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program  
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#### Letter of Consent & Consent Form

[Date]

Greetings [name],

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project entitled *An Intersectional Organizational Study of Vancouver Status of Women, 1971-2008*. This letter is intended to provide you with more information about the research itself, requirements for your involvement, and your rights as a participant.

I am conducting this project for the purpose of writing my doctoral thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree from the University of British Columbia, Interdisciplinary Studies. For this research project, the Principal Investigator and my research advisor is Dr. Sunera Thobani from The Centre for Women's and Gender Studies. Dr. Thobani can be reached at 604-822-9265 or [sth@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:sth@interchange.ubc.ca). The information collected may also be used in other academic publications.

Currently, there is limited research regarding the organizational culture and policies of feminist organizations in Canada which addresses internal responses, negotiations and interruptions to power relations. This research engages in an in-depth study of Vancouver Status of Women's responses to power relations throughout its organizational life cycle.

By engaging in this study, I examine the complexities, negotiations, and disruptions of power relations through time while considering its intersections with the international, national, provincial, and local political climates of the larger nation state. I believe an appropriate way to engage in this study is to hear from past/current staff and Board/Coordinating Collective members of VSW. I am interested in your experiences and reflections on inclusion and power during your time with VSW and ways that you experienced VSW as an organization respond to power relations.

I am asking your permission to audio-tape record and transcribe the interviews for analysis purposes. The total amount of time required for participation in this study will likely be 2 hours. A second follow up interview of 1 hour may be required for follow up purposes only. Please understand that your involvement in this project is entirely voluntary. You will always have the option of not responding to any question and of withdrawing at any time during the study. If you choose to withdraw from the study at any time, your involvement in VSW will not be affected.

All information gathered from the interview will be coded and pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality. The data will be kept in a locked drawer and password protected

on a computer hard drive. Only, my research advisor, Dr. Sunera Thobani, and I will have access to the transcripts and data from your interview. You will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the interview data. An electronic copy of the dissertation will be

accessible upon request or through the University of British Columbia library database (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses). Additionally, a printed copy will be available for review at the Vancouver Status of Women.

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598. Keep this letter and one copy of the form for yourself. You will be asked to sign the second copy prior to starting the interview on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009. If you have any questions or concerns please phone me at [phone number] or email me at [benitab@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:benitab@interchange.ubc.ca).

Much thanks and in solidarity,

Benita Bunjun  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Interdisciplinary Studies  
University of British Columbia

-----  
**Consent Form**

I understand that my participation in the study entitled *An Intersectional Organizational Study of Vancouver Status of Women, 1971-2008* is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that the interview will be audiotaped and will remain confidential.

I understand that any information resulting from the interview will be kept strictly confidential. A code number will identify all audiotapes, and documents will be identified by a pseudonym and kept in a secure, locked location.

I also understand that sharing my perspectives on power relations at Vancouver Status of Women may bring up feelings of sadness and anger. Should this occur, the researcher will provide me with resources as needed.

If I have any questions or require further information about this study, I may contact Benita Bunjun at [phone number] or [benitab@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:benitab@interchange.ubc.ca), or Dr. Sunera Thobani at 604-822-9265 or [sth@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:sth@interchange.ubc.ca). I have received a copy of this consent form that explains the requirements of participation in this study as well as my rights as a participant for my own records.

I consent to participate in this study.

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<b>Participant Signature</b>	<b>Printed Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
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I consent to having my interview(s) audiotape recorded.

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<b>Participant Signature</b>	<b>Printed Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
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## Appendix A.3: Interview Schedule

### *An Intersectional Organizational Study of Vancouver Status of Women, 1971-2008*

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I very much appreciate you taking the time to recall and reflect on the diversity of responses by Vancouver Status of Women (VSW) when negotiation power relations as an organization. I am interested in your experiences and reflections on inclusion and power during your time with VSW and the ways that you experienced VSW as an organization respond to power relations. In particular, I would like to hear about VSW's policies, structures, and processes which were developed to equalize power within the organization.

To begin, I will ask you if you have any questions about the project or the interview process. I will then discuss how confidentiality will be maintained and will ensure that the consent form has been signed. Please kindly consider a pseudonym that you are comfortable with which will be used to refer to your interview data. I welcome your feedback about the interview process as well as any other information you may recall after the interview. I will also call you in about two weeks to check in about the interview process and be available to discuss any discomfort that may have risen due to the interview.

The interview will begin by gathering some background information about you and then we will focus on your experiences as a staff or Board/Coordinating Collective member of Vancouver Status of Women to illustrate the negotiation of power relations within the organization. At any time during the interview, you may press the "stop" button on the audiotape recorder.

#### Overview Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself? (age, family situation, class, race/ethnic background) How do you identify yourself?
2. Did you belong to any other organizations prior to joining Vancouver Status of Women (VSW)? How did you become involved in VSW? Why? How long did you participate in VSW? When did you exit the organization? Why? In what ways have you been involved in VSW? (e.g., Staff, Coordinating Collective, Project Committee etc.) What has kept you involved in VSW?
3. How did you view VSW back then? And now? How do you think VSW was viewed by other organizations?

#### Organizational Structure

4. How do you recall the organization being structured? How were decisions made or distributed? Who made decisions? (ie. adoption of policies)
5. How were staff hired? What was the process like? Was there an affirmative action policy in place? What was the policy regarding staff hours of work and pay?
6. Tell me about the division of labour at VSW? Were responsibilities rotated and shared? Discuss.

#### Inclusion

7. What are the strengths and limitations of "global sisterhood" and "the personal is political" within the women's movement? What are the struggles to creating and sustaining a diverse and inclusive feminist movement? (entitlement)
8. What is inclusion to you? Did you feel included at VSW? Why or why not? Were/Are there times when you didn't feel included? Can you give me an example?
9. What types of things would you do during your time at VSW to make people feel included or entitled?
10. Do you think VSW was successful in its attempts to be inclusive and equalize power? Why or why not? Can you give me examples?

11. Tell me about generational mentorship and solidarity at VSW? Did you mentor others? Tell me about it. What were some of the rewards and tensions? Tell me about generational conflicts at VSW? (within the same generation - intragenerational & across generations - intergenerational)

#### Challenging Power Relations

12. How did you share your power at VSW? Do you feel power was being shared? How? Why or why not? Can you give me an example?
13. Have you ever felt like you had power in VSW? Can you give me an example? Have you ever felt like you didn't have power in VSW? Can you give me an example?
14. Can you recall an experience at VSW which relates to organizational tensions around power relations (race, gender, class, citizenship, transgender, ability)? In this experience, were there particular processes which supported your experience of being heard, seen, respected and regarded as a contributing member of the organization? (How is domination organized or challenged within this organizational feminist site?)
15. What are and have been VSW's responses to negotiating power relations? What policies, strategies or tools have been developed at VSW to challenge oppressive power relations? Are there particular structural or organizational processes which you recall contributed to challenging unequal power relations?
16. Do you recall specific moments of tensions regarding challenging or reinforcing dominant forms of feminism? Tell me about it? (liberal, first/second wave feminism - entitlements)

#### Globalization & Nation Building

17. What government policies or shifts do you recall which impacted VSW positively or negatively? Why? How did these impact VSW's ability to equalize power internally? Why and how?
18. What are the similarities and differences of entitlements or belonging within a feminist organization and Canada as a colonial state?

#### Wrap-up Questions

19. Overall, what difference has VSW made in your life? Why did you agree to participate in my research project?
20. Do you have anything else you would like to add to the interview or any further questions about the research project?

Thank you again for your contributions for this interview and during your time at VSW.

## Appendix A.4: MAXQDA Code System

- Funding
  - Top Up Grant
  - LIP (Local Initiative Program)
- Hegemonic Feminism
  - Global Sisterhood
  - Personal is Political
- Inclusion
- Memory
- Methodology
  - Dilemmas & Tensions
  - Demographics
    - Age
    - Migration Journey
    - Family Status
    - Education
    - Race-Ethnicity
    - Sexuality
    - Class
    - VSW Position
  - Researcher Position
- Entitlement
- Nation, Home, Belonging
- Organizational Culture & Policies
  - Principles, Values, Positions
  - Personnel Policies
    - Affirmative Action
  - Organizational Emergence & Birth
  - Decision Making & Governance
- Power
  - Rage and Anger
  - Childcare
  - Disability
  - Education
  - Conflict: Initiating & Resolving
  - Indigenous
  - Queer (Lesbian, Trans)
  - Class
  - Race
    - Immigrant Women and Racism Committee/Women of Colour Caucus
- RCSW
- VSW Activities and Services
  - Assertiveness Training/Consciousness Raising
  - Gaining my Voice/Anti-Oppression/Leadership Empowerment Activism Program
  - Conferences
  - Ombudservice
  - Lobbying
- Women's Movement
- Impact of VSW on you

## Appendix A.5: Archival Themes of Focus by Decades

### 1970s:

1. Royal Commission on the Status of Women
2. Birth of VSW/Constitution
3. Working class, racism, and lesbian struggles
4. Ombudservice
5. Funding
6. Kinesis as newsletter and then as newspaper
7. Assertiveness training and consciousness raising
8. Assertiveness training for transsexuals

### 1980s:

1. Kinesis shifts
2. Assertiveness training and consciousness raising
3. Childcare policy
4. Membership
5. Personnel crisis: hires and fires
6. Women of colour challenge organization in mid to late 80s
7. Shift from board to Collective discussion late 80s
8. Organizational planning
9. UI Top Ups (1986)

### 1990s:

1. Shifting from Board to Coordinating Collective
2. Bringing in affirmative action policy
3. Hiring of the first women of colour in a permanent position
4. Strengthening personnel and organizational policies (CDM, statements on anti-semitism, anti-racism, anti-caste/classism, anti-imperialism); hiring and firings
5. Increase in First Nations women's presence
6. Anti-racism gathering in 1997
7. Beginning discussion regarding moving beyond lesbian identity towards acknowledging bisexuality/transgendering, late 1990s
8. Funding cuts and Kinesis vulnerabilities
9. Organizational planning

### 2000s:

1. Kinesis restructuring and termination (early 2000s)
2. Personnel policy development
3. Transgender policy development and review
4. Indigenous staff and dismantling false unity
5. Hirings and firings
6. Funding and CC struggles
7. Organizational planning

## Appendix C.1: Women of Colour Group Meeting with *Kinesis*

March 1, 1989

Kinesis Ed. Bd. Meet with Women of Colour Group - 03/01/89

### SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

- Assume that women of colour are feminists. Radical feminists.
- Articles about women of colour written by women of colour.
- Collaboration with women of colour on articles, making sure that the voice of the women of colour comes through.
- Use "as told to" byline wherever appropriate.
- Solicit articles from women of colour on all issues, not just women of colour issues.
- Aggressively seek more women of colour and communities of colour events and celebrations for Bulletin Board. (Check with Native Ed. Centre monthly)
- Make sure current issues is at women of colour and people of colour events.
- Make invitations to participate in Kinesis more public.
- More articles focusing of issues of concern to communities of colour in general. (Cover things like Black History Week)
- Where word imagery (dark, black/white, etc.) is used in potentially racist way Kinesis should print a disclaimer with the article.
- Editorial Board membership should at least reflect the % of women of colour in the community (50%).

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING

(as close to verbatim as possible)

### THESE SUGGESTIONS REPRESENT CONSENSUS OF THE WOMEN OF COLOUR GROUP.

Re: objectivity - W.O.C. Group feel it is necessary for women of colour to write about women of colour.

Kinesis needs to have awareness re: who is interviewed and who writes stories.

W.O.C encourage collaboration with women of colour on articles while process of integrating more women of colour writers goes on. Collaboration means awareness of who's voice is coming through in the article and sensitivity to this.

W.O.C. Group have noticed tokenism - certain women of colour being sought out to write.

Re: operating assumptions - Women of colour are feminists. Comparisons of conditions arising due to different privileges are not appropriate.

When women of colour feminists have their feminism questioned on the basis of Eurocentric standards this erases the history of their resistance.

Over 50% of the women in this community are women of colour. W.O.C. Group wants to see Kinesis get women of colour on the Editorial Board in a proportion that reflects at least this percentage.

By this W.O.C don't mean that Kinesis should have token women of colour on the Board, ie. asking 1 or 2 women of colour to stand for nomination to the Board.

One or two women of colour on the Board would likely be isolated. This would also make it difficult for the Board to see its racism.

There needs to be something set up so women of color on Boards have a way of getting support from their larger community.

Kinesis should also watch the word imagery used in articles. Dark, black/white, etc. should be used with great sensitivity to the potential for racism in this word imagery. Suggest that if Kinesis ends up running an article which uses such imagery in a questionable way, an editorial disclaimer could be run with the article (at the bottom or something) such as what Angles did recently.

W.O.C. suggest that Kinesis research women of colour celebrations and special events more assertively, rather than just phoning up some woman of colour and expecting all the leg work to be already done. This may include events and celebrations in the various communities of colour that are not specifically for women. Suggest dropping in at the Native Ed. Centre monthly, covering such events as Black History Week, etc.

Questions re: bylines. Suggest using "as told to" wherever appropriate. Women of colour want a change to speak up about all issues, not just women of colour issues.

Kinesis should focus more on issues of concern to communities of colour in general, understanding that these concern women of colour.

The invitation to participate in Kinesis should be more public. Women of colour should be made to feel comfortable in Kinesis space.

W.O.C. Group sees the inclusion of women of colour in Kinesis as fulfilling Kinesis' mandate to be a "non-partisan voice for women" -- This should include the full community.

[A woman of colour] had a couple of suggestions re: the production process to bring up later. (*I hope someone got them down, I didn't- [Notetaker].*)

Kinesis should expect women of colour to have the same... (*I missed the rest of this one as well- [Notetaker].*)

Kinesis should make sure the current issue of the paper is at women of colour and people of colour events.

Get more women of colour events in Bulletin Board.

## Appendix C.2: VSW Transgendered Policy

Policy Adopted in 1992

### Vancouver Status of Women

#### Statement on Transgendered Women

The Vancouver Status of Women strongly supports the struggles of other marginalized groups, and we view this as part of our role as feminist activists working towards fundamental societal change. We reject the notion that male-to-female transsexuals are not “women.” We assert that this is a fundamentally flawed premise that is based on ignorance and fear. We maintain that the perspectives of transgendered women complement those of non-transgendered women and profoundly contribute to uncovering the myths inherent in patriarchal societies assumptions regarding the origins of gender. We reject the dominant culture’s rigid definition and view it as a form of social control.

Therefore: the Vancouver Status of Women welcomes male-to-female transsexuals as “women” and as a community within the women’s movement. We are committed to educating ourselves and we welcome working with transgendered women as sisters offering a unique and valuable perspective to the women’s movement.

**Definition:**

Transgendered women are people born with male bodies but who identify themselves as women.

## Appendix D.1: VSW's Response Letter Regarding Ableism

From *Kinesis*, March 2000, p. 3.

February 21, 2000

Dear Editor:

Hosting Angela Davis on February 12 was truly a coup, not only for the Vancouver Status of Women, but also for the Vancouver women's movement. How exciting it was to witness a theatre full of activists representing the diverse issues which encompass our movement- all of them gathered to hear a feminist icon articulate the links between oppressions of women in North America and around the world.

Amidst the excitement of preparations for this monumental occasion, we (VSW) admittedly made an oversight by holding the reception in an area of the Vogue Theatre that was inaccessible. The irony of the situation is that VSW is committed to issues of accessibility, taking care to ensure that all our programs are held in venues which meet the needs of those with varying abilities. There is, therefore, no excuse for this occurrence and Joan Meister had every reason to be angered and disappointed by our oversight.

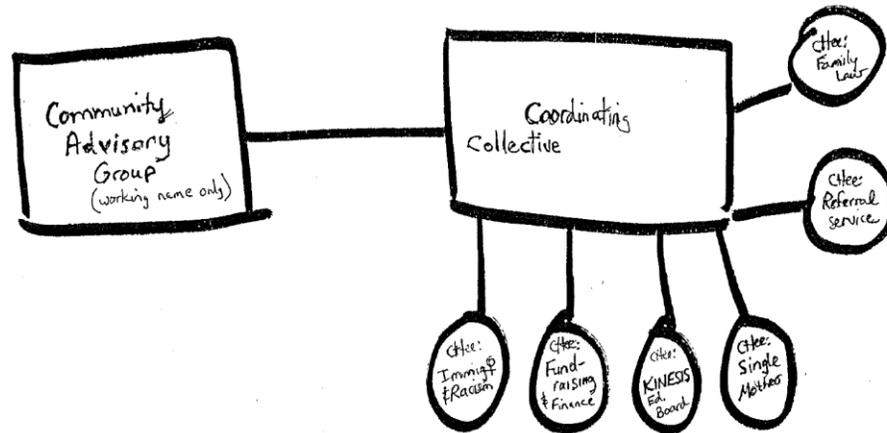
We thank her for bringing this matter to our attention and for offering her services to help us ensure that our new building will be accessible. We would like to reiterate our commitment to ending all forms of oppression against women, including women with disabilities and will make every effort in the future to lead by example.

The Coordinating Collective  
Vancouver Status of Women

## Appendix E.1: VSW Proposed New Structure of Coordinating Collective

Proposed new VSW governance structure presented at the Annual General Meeting on October 17, 1990.

### VSW's Proposed New STRUCTURE:



Community Advisory Group:  
voice but no vote  
quarterly meetings  
ambassadors to the larger community

Coordinating Collective:  
decision-making body  
representation from all committees

Committees:  
and part-time staff  
volunteers recruited to work on issues, Kinesis, activities...  
(area of focus)

NOTE:

To be discussed  
& voted on at  
VSW's AGM  
\* WED. OCTOBER  
17<sup>th</sup>  
Evening

## Appendix E.2: Proposed Amendments to VSW's Personnel Policy

### Proposed amendments to VSW's Personnel Policy March 1992

These proposals come from a meeting of Trisha, Jazmin, Jennifer and Nancy on March 4, 1992.

#### Preamble

We propose the following Preamble:

"As a feminist organization, the Vancouver Status of Women strives for employment practices which reflect these values:

- working collectively;
- being accessible to and representative of diverse communities of women;
- acknowledging our worth as workers through commitments to fair pay, decent working conditions, fulfilling work, and caring relationships among co-workers."

#### Hiring Policy

We propose that the following section be added to the beginning of the "Hiring" section of the personnel policy:

"VSW hiring practices should be guided by these principles:

We will hire women who:

- are politically and personally committed to feminism;
- are in agreement with the general goals of VSW as established by the membership and the Coordinating Collective;
- are qualified to carry out the specific tasks outlined in their job description;
- represent the diversity of communities VSW aims to serve.

In particular, VSW hiring practices will strive:

- to ensure the hiring of women who have been underrepresented in staff positions (for example, women of colour, immigrant women, women with disabilities and working class women);
- to ensure that women are not tokenized or isolated.

Our goals in this regard are:

- to ensure that the communities we aim to serve – and their varying needs and perspectives – are represented on staff;
- to enable women from groups who have been underrepresented to acquire skills and expertise in a supportive environment."

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## Appendix E.3: *Kinesis* Editor Job Posting

February 1992

**KINESIS**  
News About Women That's Not In The Dailies

### Position Available

*Kinesis*, the feminist newspaper published by the Vancouver Status of Women (VSW) requires a full-time Editor beginning March 9, 1992. Women of colour and First Nations women are strongly encouraged to apply. Affirmative action principles will be in effect for this hiring.

#### Duties:

The *Kinesis* Editor is a full-time staff person who supervises the production of a 20 – 28 page newspaper, 10 times a year. With the volunteer *Kinesis* Editorial Board, the Editor will:

- actively solicit articles; write articles; edit and copy edit; and make decisions regarding final copy in accordance with *Kinesis* editorial policies;
- maintain and expand *Kinesis*' contact with women's groups and organizations; other political and social groups; individuals; publishing associations; and news/information resources which may be a source of stories;
- keep abreast of current issues, debates and news relevant to a feminist newspaper;
- actively recruit and assist in the training of volunteer writers;
- work closely with the *Kinesis* Production, Advertising and Distribution Coordinators and the VSW Administrator and Circulation Manager to fulfil the newspaper's goals in these areas;
- operate computers (mainly word processing) relevant to *Kinesis* administration;
- facilitate monthly Writers' and Editorial Board meetings; in general, bring items of importance to the Board's attention for discussion on a regular and emergency basis.
- assist with VSW activities where feasible, and attend weekly VSW staff and monthly Coordinating Collective meetings.

#### Qualifications:

The successful applicant will have:

- an ability to work effectively and collectively with volunteers and paid workers;
- an ability to interpret *Kinesis* editorial policy and translate it into a tangible product each month;
- excellent editorial, writing and copy editing skills, with an ability to work under deadline pressure;
- an ability to initiate and maintain contact with local communities, as well as provincial, national and international contacts;
- broad-based knowledge of women's issues and women's groups in British Columbia and across Canada, with a particular awareness of the struggles of women of colour and working class women;
- familiarity with advocacy journalism in general, and feminist journalism in particular;
- knowledge of publication design and production (computer skills are an asset);
- organizational skills, especially regarding production flow and volunteer training.

Salary: \$23,805 (under review)

Benefits: Medical/dental; 7 weeks vacation annually

There will be an extensive orientation period.

**Deadline for Applications: Wed. February 19th, 1992**

Please send resumes to: *Kinesis* Hiring, #301 – 1720 Grant St., Vancouver BC V5L 2Y6  
For more information, call (604) 255-5499 (Mon. – Thurs.)