

Ecologies of Change:
Violence Against Women Prevention, Feminist Public Sociology, and Social Media

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of violence against women (VAW) prevention, feminist public sociology, and social media. In the past decade, many sociologists have been working to debate and operationalize Michael Burawoy's call "For Public Sociology", which challenges academics to engage beyond the university to effect social change. At the same time that Burawoy's program has garnered much sociological attention, social media have become a central site of mass communication and core component of the public sphere more broadly. This research explores two questions through surveys and in-depth interviews as well as my own experiences with public sociology: (1) how do people working on VAW prevention use and experience social media? And (2) what is the role of feminist public sociology in preventing VAW?

My findings explore the benefits and challenges of social media for VAW prevention work and argue that these processes should be understood through the ecological model of VAW prevention that is widely used in offline prevention work. I find that participants primarily use Facebook and Twitter, and that their activities cluster around four broad goals: (1) *information transmission* to existing and new audiences; (2) *conversational activism*: shaping narratives around VAW; (3) *feminism*: shaping their own feminist identity as well as online feminism more broadly; and (4) *preventing online VAW* (e.g. online sexual harassment), a new form of VAW prevention that has garnered recent advocacy and emerging academic work.

My research contributes four theoretical conclusions to discussions of public sociology, of feminism, and of VAW prevention: first, converging disciplines and roles in social media means that there is a more pronounced need for knowledge translation to achieve social and institutional transformation. Second, VAW prevention in social media reveals a rapidly reflexive, increasingly intersectional feminism that prioritizes experiential knowledge and conversational activism online. Third, this feminism is incompatible with Burawoy's original four-part framework for sociology but can be reconciled using community-based scholarship principles and emerging feminist work. Finally, the emerging category of online sexual violence encapsulates emerging re-understandings of feminism, gender, and violence by presenting us with a present-day cyborg problem where offline/online dichotomies are increasingly obsolete.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Karl Marx famously stated, “the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it” (1969 [1844]). This sentiment is echoed throughout writing on feminist praxis (e.g. Stanley 1990), and feminists have, for centuries, been working to change the world accordingly. In recent decades, feminist work to identify and address violence against women (VAW) as a social problem has been a particularly significant part of the women’s movement. Despite these grassroots successes, feminist work has been historically marginalized within the academy (Chesney-Lind and Morash 2013), even while the academy itself has become increasingly preoccupied in recent years with its role in creating social change. Specifically, sociologist Michael Burawoy (2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2006; 2007; 2009) has been a significant influence in North American contexts, championing public sociology as a way to bring sociology out from beyond the walls of the university and into conversations with broader publics. The re-emergence of public sociology into North American academic disciplines has generated much excitement. Yet the fact that the women’s movement “probably constitute[s] the most successful instance of large-scale, long-term, grassroots public sociology in the history of the discipline” (Helmes-Hayes and McLaughlin 2009:587) has been an afterthought rather than a central feature of public sociology debates. At the same time that the “public sociology wars” (Burawoy 2009) have been taking place within academia, feminist work and violence against women prevention has evolved, and social media in particular is being taken up in various ways to effect social change. This dissertation explores these intersections of

interpretation and social change through a study of violence against women (VAW) prevention, feminist public sociology, and social media.

My research focus is shaped by four factors. First, feminism and public sociology have much to contribute to each other. As explained above, despite feminisms' historical successes in effecting social change, public sociology does not pay sufficient attention to gender and feminist thought (Acker 2005; Risman 2006; Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry 2007). As I discuss in Chapter Two, feminist scholarship is an important body of knowledge to draw from, not only due to the inherently public nature of feminist work (Risman 2006; Nickel 2012), but also because it can provide insights to public sociology based on challenges and flaws of the women's movement. But feminist scholarship can also benefit from integration with public sociology. Feminism has been historically separate from "mainstream" or what Burawoy calls "professional" sociology, yet feminist epistemological principles such as reflexivity, praxis, and interdisciplinary work are transferable to research practice generally. Additionally, feminists frequently experience challenges such as backlash in various public spaces (as I discuss further in Chapters Three and Eight), particularly women who experience intersecting axes of oppression (Crenshaw 1991) such as women of colour, Indigenous women, differently-abled women, and fat women, among other identities and experiences. Thus, by synthesizing feminism with public sociology, we can center these tenets of reflexivity, praxis, and intersectionality, prioritize discussions about the well-being of academics working in public spaces, and increase the position of feminist research practices in sociological research generally.

A second factor that shapes my research focus is the recognition that VAW prevention is a rich empirical site of both feminist work and public sociology. Recognizing this, my project brings in findings from stakeholders who are working “in the field” to translate knowledge (about VAW) into social change (prevention). As I explain in Chapter Two, social problems are not single discipline issues, and so expertise beyond sociology is needed to prevent VAW. Activists, advocates, community educators, service providers, writers, and researchers have been and remain critical to translating empirical and experiential knowledge about VAW, and it is because of this history (discussed in Chapter Three) that my dissertation focuses on these sectors and their experiences with social media. Third, my project recognizes the diversity in VAW prevention work and the importance of knowledge mobilization within and among communities (e.g. feminist communities, VAW prevention sectors). This reflexive education within the VAW prevention sector (and feminist movements more broadly) is critical to develop best practices and address challenges. As such, my research focuses on collecting information and presenting it in a framework (specifically, the ecological model of VAW prevention, which I discuss shortly) that I hope will be helpful to VAW prevention stakeholders.

Finally, the Internet in 2015 is extremely social, and has grown from a communication model where most users were content consumers (Web 1.0) to a model where users are both producers and consumers of content (Web 2.0). As such, my focus on social media as a context to explore VAW prevention is driven by the understanding that recent changes in the media landscape, in particular the growth of participatory and social media, reveals larger shifts towards collaborative knowledge production (e.g.

wikis), socially mediated information transmission (e.g. sharing news stories with comments), and standpoint-based expertise (e.g. the numerous ways that individuals can publish their stories/perspectives online). Each of these facets represents valuable opportunities for feminist praxis, and public sociology. Moreover, the emergence and growth of social media points to a need to continue to build knowledge around social media and violence prevention that recognizes the diversity of the social media landscape, the important differences between major sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and the different possible prevention avenues to pursue in this context. The growth of social media and the consequential ability to create, link to, repost, and embed material in real time, and within broad networks, means that mass media content is closer (both visually and temporally) to the social responses it generates. While we know much about how news media cover VAW in a one-way traditional media framework, we know less about how societal understandings of VAW are mediated through the two-way communications processes of social media. As my research will show, we have to be careful about treating social media as monolithic.

Thus, feminist work and public sociology both require attention to social media. Specifically, I argue that analyses of what is new or unique about VAW prevention in the realm of social media should be a key feminist research priority, and that we should understand VAW prevention efforts in social media according to the ecological model of VAW prevention that is widely used in offline VAW prevention efforts (see Johnson and Dawson 2011). The ecological model of VAW prevention understands how risk factors occur at individual, relationship, community, and societal levels, and targets prevention efforts accordingly (see Heise 1998; Dahlberg and Krug 2002). We (feminists doing

VAW prevention work) need to translate this understanding into social media contexts. Social media is not a flat, one-dimensional space, but a multi-layered site of various relationships, communities, and structures (i.e. sites). Social media has emerged and evolved rapidly over the past decade, and this has led to new language (e.g. “trolling”, “hashtag”), changes in activist practices (e.g. hosting “tweet ups”, “hashtag activism”), and new understandings of VAW (e.g. “online sexual violence”). My dissertation focuses on unpacking these understandings in the context of VAW prevention.

In my feminist public sociology study of violence against women (VAW) prevention and social media, I am concerned with exploring two research questions. First, how do people working on VAW prevention use and experience social media? And second, what is the role of feminist public sociology in preventing VAW? In this way, my dissertation makes three central contributions. It advances theoretical and empirical understanding of VAW prevention work by presenting an account of how participants use and experience social media, and by considering what is unique about VAW prevention in social media relative to more traditional forms of prevention. It also contributes to feminist theory and feminist media studies by tracing the evolution of anti-VAW work from older forms of media into social media spaces and identifying what new feminist questions and issues have emerged in these spaces. Finally, my dissertation’s third contribution is to retheorize public sociology according to feminism and within social media. In this vein, I also aim to provide a practical roadmap for sociologists working at the “in-betweens” of academia and community, the professional and personal, and for whom the line between interpreting and changing the world is increasingly indistinguishable.

This introductory chapter is divided into four sections. First, I define violence against women for the purposes of this project and provide a brief overview of the empirical context. These definitions and statistics are important because they are a knowledge foundation for VAW prevention efforts. Second, I provide an introduction to social media and explain the key concepts that guide this research. In the third section, I outline the importance of public sociology and feminist work to this project. In the final section of this chapter, I explain the organization of this dissertation and provide a short summary of each of the nine chapters that follow.

Part I: Violence Against Women

Terminology

Despite a plethora of academic and activist work, as well as human rights campaigns worldwide, violence against women (VAW) remains “perhaps the most widespread and socially tolerated of human rights violations” (United Nations Population Fund 2005:65). Broadly speaking, VAW is an umbrella term used to refer to violence perpetrated by men against women and girls.¹ VAW exists in many forms and all areas of society, and both reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women (United Nations Population Fund 2005). The 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (Article 1) defines violence as:

Any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

¹ It is often used interchangeably with the term gender-based violence. I unpack the relationship between these two terms in some detail in Chapter Nine.

The 1993 Declaration is particularly significant because it was the first internationally agreed upon definition of violence related to women's experiences (Johnson and Dawson 2011). Feminist research and activism has been essential to the construction of VAW as a social problem, as well as a catalyst for social responses to this violence. While success is a notoriously difficult concept to measure in VAW prevention, tangible successes of feminist movements in recent decades include developing language and a conceptual framework of VAW within which to do prevention work, and in developing VAW support services such as domestic violence shelters and sexual assault support service.

The two most frequently referenced and reported forms of VAW in North America are intimate partner violence and sexual assault. In this dissertation, therefore, I use VAW as an umbrella term to refer to both of these phenomena. Other forms of VAW that have received international attention include trafficking of women and girls, sexual violence in conflict zones, female genital mutilation/genital cutting (FGM/C), and so-called "honour killings" (United Nations n.d.). While each of these phenomena are complex and have their own body of empirical knowledge, they also overlap in important ways with intimate partner violence and sexual violence (e.g. so-called honour killings are often intimate partner homicides, FGM/C is a form of sexual violence). Yet it is important to be clear that my project is not explicitly focusing on these aspects of VAW in any depth, but is using the terms intimate partner violence and sexual violence more broadly. The nature of the occurrence and impacts of intimate partner violence and sexual violence are frequently hidden, resulting in "a significant underestimation of the real level of harm caused" (World Health Organization 2010:5). However, population-based surveys reveal that these forms of violence are common (World Health Organization

2010). A brief discussion of recent empirical research on intimate partner violence and sexual assault is useful to provide a summary of sociological knowledge in this area, as well as to highlight the foundations of VAW prevention work.

Intimate partner violence

The World Health Organization (2002:para. 2) defines *intimate partner violence* as:

Acts of physical aggression, psychological abuse, forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion, and various controlling behaviours such as isolating a person from family and friends or restricting access to information and assistance.

This abuse occurs between individuals who are in a current or former intimate relationship, including legal marriages, common-law unions, or dating relations (Dobash et al. 2004; Dawson 2006; Swatt 2006). Intimate partner violence was brought onto the social agenda in the 1970s by feminist activists and researchers, and has since received a great deal of recognition as a social, legal, and criminal justice issue (Rasche 1990; Dawson 2004; Sev'er, Dawson, and Johnson 2004; Garcia, Soria, and Hurwitz 2007).²

There is a scarcity of intimate partner violence prevalence data in Canada (Johnson and Dawson 2011).³ The most recent survey data is from 2004 (General Social Survey) and 1993 (Canadian Violence Against Women Survey). Based on these sources, survey estimates indicate that approximately 7 to 12 percent of women reported being assaulted by a partner in the past five years (Johnson 2006). Intimate partner violence can be found in same-sex partnerships and can be perpetrated by women against men;

² Despite this increased attention, non-lethal violence among intimate partners has historically been one of the most under-reported crimes (Stanko 1985). In fact, recent Statistics Canada data indicate that only one-third of intimate partner violence incidents are reported to police (Johnson 2006).

³ See Johnson and Dawson (2011:66-67) for further discussion of prevalence of intimate partner violence against women.

however, the vast majority of intimate partner violence is men's violence against women (Johnson and Dawson 2011). For example, in 2006, police report data found that 83 percent of the approximately 38,000 spousal violence incidents reported involved women as victims (Ogrodnik 2008:6). Moreover, the severity of violence and victim health consequences are generally much greater in male-perpetrated violence against women than violence perpetrated by women against men (Johnson and Dawson 2011).⁴

Sexual violence

The World Health Organization (Jewkes, Sen, and Moreno 2002:149) defines sexual violence as:

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

Definitions of sexual violence vary in specifics, but widely acknowledge that sexual violence is about exerting power and aggression (not sexual desire) over someone else in order to undermine an individual's sexual or gender integrity (Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan 2011). Sexual violence can take many forms, but the most widely tracked forms are categorized as sexual assault. Sexual assault is defined as "forced sexual activity, an attempt at forced sexual activity, or unwanted sexual touching, grabbing,

⁴ Previous research indicates that the vast majority of women who use violence against male partners are either acting in self-defense or are committing minor acts of violence after experiencing ongoing and persistent emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence (McMahon and Pence 2003; Miller and Meloy 2006). Importantly, this violence is generally incident-specific and not part of broader patterns of domination and control. On the other hand, individuals who deploy violence in order to achieve and maintain general control over their partners (what Michael Johnson calls "intimate terrorism") are predominantly men (Johnson 2006).

kissing, or fondling” (Gannon and Mihorean 2005:3).⁵ Statistics Canada’s 2004 General Social Survey on Victimization indicates that 460,000 incidents of sexual assault against women occurred in a one-year period (Johnson and Dawson 2011).⁶

Research suggests that a majority of sexual assaults go unreported (Johnson and Dawson 2011). For example, General Social Survey data estimate that 88 percent of sexual assaults are not reported to the police (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005).⁷ The most frequent reasons given in the survey by victims for not reporting sexual assault to the police were that they did not consider it important enough (58%); the incident was dealt with another way (54%); they felt that it was a personal matter (47%); and/or they did not want to get involved with police (41%) (Brennan and Taylor-Butts 2008). Underreporting of sexual assault is an important issue for VAW prevention because lowers public awareness of sexual violence. Additionally, women’s reasons for not reporting also highlight various community and systemic barriers to preventing VAW (e.g. recognition of the severity of sexual violence, police treatment of sexual violence).

⁵ General Social Survey (GSS) data (Brennan and Taylor Butts 2008) show that the most frequent forms of sexual assault are unwanted sexual touching (81%), defined as a Level 1 sexual assault under the Criminal Code. Level 2 sexual assaults (sexual assault with a weapon, threats, or causing bodily harm) account for approximately 1 in 5 incidents. Police report data also show similar patterns: 86% of reported sexual offences are Level 1 assaults.

⁶ According to the same survey data, sexual victimization rates for women were almost five times the rate for men (3,248 incidents per 100,000 versus 664 per 100,000) (Brennan and Taylor-Butts 2008). Similarly, police reported data for 2007 indicate that women are sexually victimized at a rate 5.6 times that of men (120 versus 21 per 100,000). While women and girls are the predominant victims of sexual assault, men are most frequently the perpetrators: 2007 police-report data in Canada indicate that 97 percent of those charged with sexual assault are men and boys (Brennan and Taylor-Butts 2008).

⁷ This fluctuates slightly depending on severity of assault: 94 percent of incidents of sexual touching go unreported versus 78 percent of sexual attacks (Brennan and Taylor-Butts 2008).

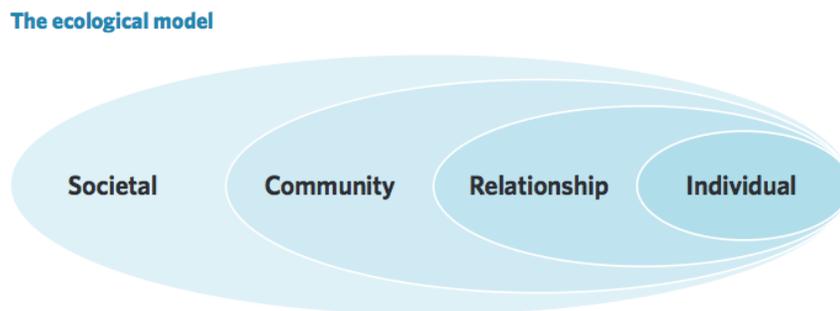
An ecological approach to VAW prevention

There are a variety of frameworks and theories used to understand and respond to VAW. Some are individual-level theories emphasizing psychological processes; others are societal level theories that focus on broader structural influences (Johnson and Dawson 2011). One of the most widely used frameworks to studying VAW is the ecological framework. In this dissertation, I argue that VAW prevention in social media should be understood within this framework. Specifically, rather than understanding social media as a monolithic “additional dimension” to VAW prevention, I argue that we should understand social media as its own ecological space containing various relationships, communities, and structures (i.e. sites). Consequently, we must translate VAW prevention knowledge, and target VAW prevention efforts, accordingly.

Originally developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and adapted by others (e.g. Heise 1998; Dahlberg and Krug 2002), the ecological framework combines various levels of influence (ecologies) to understand complex phenomena such as violence (Heise 1998). This model, including individual, relationship, community, and societal level factors, is summarized in Figures 1 and Table 1. The importance of this model, and the information presented in Table 1, to this dissertation is three-fold: First, I draw on this model in Chapter Six (Table 13) when I discuss the benefits of social media within an ecological framework. Here, I analyze how VAW prevention can occur at different ecological levels of violence prevention. Second, in Chapter Eight I discuss the differences between social media sites (predominantly Facebook and Twitter). Here, an ecological approach is useful helps me to unpack how structure (i.e. site design) as well as community and relationships (i.e. audiences) intersect with stakeholder’s experiences of social media

(including the backlash and violence stakeholder's themselves experience within social media). Finally, in Chapter Nine (Table 14), I explore how public sociology can be theoretically integrated within an ecological understanding of VAW prevention, understanding that public sociology itself can be understood and practiced to effect social change at a variety of levels.

Figure 1: Ecological model



As Table 1 illustrates, there is no one factor that directly causes VAW. However, research has identified a number of individual, relationship, community and societal characteristics associated with either experiencing or perpetrating abuse (Jewkes et al. 2002; The World Health Organization 2010; Johnson and Dawson 2011). For example, being young and male is associated with committing sexual violence (males 12 to 17 are charged most frequently, followed by men 18 to 34) (Johnson and Dawson 2011), and being young and female is associated with experiencing sexual violence. Gender is interconnected with other factors such as alcohol consumption (as Johnson and Dawson explain, alcohol is often used as a strategy to lower women's defenses) and attitudes and

beliefs supportive of VAW (e.g. women who cheat, or who get drunk, are “asking for it”).

Table 1: Levels (ecologies) of VAW

Level	Includes	Examples
Individual	Biological and personal history factors that may increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or perpetrator of violence.	Gender; age; alcohol and drug consumption; attitudes and beliefs supportive of VAW.
Relationship	Factors that increase risk as a result of relationships with peers, intimate partners and family members.	Sexually aggressive peers; family environment characterized by physical violence, and/or privileging patriarchal values, and/or family honour above women’s safety.
Community	Community contexts in which social relationships are embedded such as schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods.	Poverty; lack of support from police and courts; norms tolerant of VAW; and weak community sanctions for perpetrators.
Societal	Larger, macro-level factors that influence sexual and intimate partner violence such as gender inequality, religious or cultural belief systems, societal norms and economic or social policies that create or sustain gaps and tensions between groups of people.	Norms supportive of VAW; male superiority and sexual entitlement; weak laws and policies related to sexual violence and gender equality; and high levels of crime and other forms of violence.

**Adapted from The World Health Organization (2010) and Johnson and Dawson (2011)*

At a relationship level, it is now widely understood that women are at the greatest risk of sexual assault by men they know (in contrast to historical so-called stranger-danger beliefs prior to the 1980s) (Johnson and Dawson 2011). Community factors such as poverty are thought to interact with other factors (e.g. financial stress leading to increased interpersonal conflict or feelings of a lack of control). Additionally, lack of support from police and courts and weak community sanctions for perpetrators could be

seen as a tacit approval of VAW (Johnson and Dawson 2011). At a societal level, intersecting sites of oppression are important to consider (Crenshaw 1991). For example, legacies of racism and colonization have created conditions of extreme marginalization and high-risk of victimization for Aboriginal women and girls (Gilchrist 2010; Johnson and Dawson 2011).

Preventing VAW

In recent decades, responses to VAW in most westernized countries have started as grassroots and community-based initiatives, and grown to include broader social, health, and criminal justice policies and programs (Johnson and Dawson 2011). These responses have generally focused on three goals: increasing offender accountability; providing survivors with safety, protection, and/or supports; and improving the way the legal system, and society more broadly, treats survivors (Johnson and Dawson 2011). However, these goals “remain somewhat elusive” (Johnson and Dawson 2011:151).

Furthermore:

It is now generally recognized that community- and criminal justice-based initiatives alone cannot effectively respond to violence against women in its various forms. This awareness has prompted the development of collaborative approaches to address primarily intimate partner violence, the most prominent examples of which are coordinated community responses and specialized domestic violence courts (Johnson and Dawson 2011:151).

Prevention strategies are essential to long-term approaches to reducing VAW, and changing attitudes is a critical piece of prevention work (Johnson and Dawson 2011).

Without attitudinal change (e.g. VAW is never acceptable), other prevention efforts (e.g. legislation, front line services) are less likely to work (or to be created in the first place)

As I discuss in Chapters Six and Seven, changing attitudes and beliefs that support or tolerate VAW is a key part of social media work related to VAW prevention.

Public health approaches are increasingly being used in VAW prevention efforts (see World Health Organization 2010). These approaches are interdisciplinary and intersectoral methodologies based on the ecological model (discussed above). From a public health perspective, prevention strategies can be classified into three types (see Dahlberg and Krug 2002). First, *primary prevention* involves approaches that aim to prevent violence before it occurs (e.g. educational programming in schools and/or through social media). Next, *secondary prevention* includes strategies that focus on immediate responses to violence (e.g. health care services or treatments following violent victimization). Finally, *tertiary prevention* focuses on long-term care related to experiences of violence (e.g. rehabilitation and reintegration) and attempts to lessen trauma or reduce long-term disability associated with violence (Dahlberg and Krug 2002). My dissertation focuses on those engaged in primary prevention in North American contexts. Until recently, primary prevention has been “relatively neglected” in the field of VAW prevention, with the majority of resources directed towards secondary or tertiary prevention (World Health Organization, 2010:7). Although many factors are likely related to the growth of primary prevention work (e.g. feminist activism, research on the importance of changing attitudes and beliefs), the emergence and proliferation of the Internet (and social media in particular) has created many additional opportunities for primary prevention work. In this project, I explore what these opportunities are and what successes and challenges participants are experiencing in their work.

Research can provide insight as to how frequently VAW occurs and what factors are associated with violence, but is unable to provide a great deal of understanding as to what associated factors actually cause particular behaviours or outcomes (World Health Organization 2010).⁸ This is true of social science understandings of crime and violence more generally. Thus,

Perhaps the most critical element of a public health approach to prevention is the ability to identify underlying causes rather than focusing upon more visible “symptoms”. This allows for the development and testing of effective approaches to address the underlying causes and so improve health (World Health Organization 2010:7).

Ecological understandings of VAW are important because they recognize the interconnectedness of various risk factors of VAW. Importantly, the ecological framework also allows us to integrate individual level theories (e.g. social learning theory) with societal-level theories such as feminist perspectives (Johnson and Dawson 2011). As noted earlier in this chapter, my dissertation makes use of this broader ecological framework in order to (1) contribute to VAW prevention work using a model that is already widely-used in the field, and (2) to argue that VAW prevention in social media should be understood as its own ecological space containing various relationships, communities, and structures (i.e. sites), rather than as a monolithic “additional dimension” to offline work.

Feminist theory recognizes patriarchy⁹ as playing a central role in VAW.

Specifically, feminists regard VAW in westernized societies as a systemic product of

⁸ Additionally, as the World Health Organization (2010) notes, most of the literature in this area is from high-income countries, and it is unclear whether factors identified in these countries also apply to low- and middle-income countries due to differences in economies, ecologies, histories, politics and cultures.

⁹ Patriarchy refers to “the male domination of women in the family and in social, cultural, religious, and legal institutions. It is comprised of structures that provide males with positions of power and

historically unequal relations between men and women (Johnson 1996:21). In this regard, feminist perspectives on VAW maintain that an examination of gender and power is imperative to understanding violence, and that VAW stems from “attitudes held by individuals and institutions as opposed to some psychopathic sickness on the part of the abuser” (Berns 2004:143). Although gender is historically a focus of feminist anti-VAW work, in recent decades feminist theory has evolved to encompass broader intersecting systems of oppression such as race and class (Crenshaw 1991). This is primarily due to the work of women of colour and other marginalized groups, and perhaps most visible in the contributions of Black feminist theory and critical race theory (see Collins 2000; Potter 2006; hooks 2007).

Systems of oppression such as sexism and racism are public health issues. Sociology, as a discipline, has devoted significant attention to studying these systems of oppression, and should therefore have a great deal of knowledge to offer VAW prevention. Overall, however, societal understanding of women’s individual experiences of violence as part of larger systems of oppression remains poor. As Johnson and Dawson (2011:121) explain:

Despite decades of activism by feminist grassroots organizations, researchers, and legal scholars, myths and prejudicial stereotypes about sexually assaulted women persist, sexual assault remains hidden, and victims are routinely blamed and stigmatized.

Building on this history of activism, advocacy, and research, a diverse network of individuals and organizations continue to work to prevent VAW in Canada and internationally. As noted above, my dissertation focuses on those engaged in primary prevention (stopping violence before it starts) in North American contexts. Therefore,

status over women, as well as ideology that provides rationalizations for this inequality” (Johnson and Dawson 2011:195).

stakeholders traditionally found in secondary and tertiary prevention such as healthcare professionals (e.g. nurses) and criminal justice workers (e.g. police, domestic violence court workers) are not the focus of this research. Rather, I am focused on stakeholders who are involved in activism, education, communications, research, and advocacy surrounding VAW. However, it is important to acknowledge that various levels of prevention may overlap within individuals' work (e.g. many advocates also do front line service work, healthcare professionals or court support workers may do social media activism on their own time, and so forth). As I will explain in further chapters, this loosely defined, broadly feminist network represents an important community and a source of valuable potential partnerships for public sociology. Furthermore, the relationship between mass media and this network is a critical aspect of VAW prevention. While this mass media/anti-VAW work relationship has spanned decades, the emergence and proliferation of social media over the last ten years has been important for resistance and knowledge mobilization around VAW, and represents new opportunities as well as potential challenges for this work. Examining these opportunities and challenges is a key focus of my dissertation. I now move on to discuss in more detail the changes wrought by the emergence of social media and the implications of these changes.

Part II: Social Media as an Area of Inquiry

Web 2.0

In June 2006, blogger Jay Rosen introduced a new population to the mainstream media:

The people formerly known as the audience are those who *were* on the receiving end of a media system that ran one way, in a broadcasting pattern, with high entry

fees and a few firms competing to speak very loudly while the rest of the population listened in isolation from one another (Rosen 2006:para. 1).

This, explains Rosen, has changed:

We're not on your clock any more. We graduate from wanting media when we want it, to wanting it without the filler, to wanting media to be way better than it is, to publishing and broadcasting ourselves when it meets a need or sounds like fun...The people formerly known as the audience are simply *the public* made realer [sic], less fictional, more able, less predictable (para. 2).

From citizen journalism to Twitter revolutions, the media landscape has become immensely more interactive in the past decade. The emergence of a participatory media culture has changed the way that people connect, mobilize, debate, and create, and within this movement we have seen the emergence of “Web 2.0”. In contrast to the information Internet where users were more passive (Web 1.0), Web 2.0 is:

A by now ubiquitous term that loosely refers to the proliferation of user-created content and websites specifically built as frameworks for the sharing of information and for social networking, and platforms for self-expression such as the weblog, or using video and audio sharing (Hands 2011:79).

In recent years the term “social media” has been more widely adopted as a label for participatory media environments. Social media, similar to Web 2.0, refers to “the wide range of Internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities” (Dewing 2012:1). The development and growth of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram,¹⁰ proliferation of apps, blogs, and wikis demonstrate how

¹⁰ Meetup.com (a site created by Scott Heiferman in 2002 to help connect people locally to form groups, clubs, host meetings, and so forth) is arguably the first example of community building and activism through social networking platforms (Scholz 2010). The site was inspired in response to Robert D. Putnam’s work *Bowling Alone*, which explored the decline of social capital in post-WWII United States (Scholz 2010). By using online tools to facilitate offline meetings, Heiferman aimed to “revitalize local communities and counteract the social malaise” documented by Putnam (Scholz 2010:25). While these events represent initial social networking in Web 2.0, the true explosion of social media as a tool for news, activism, art, and information-sharing occurred over the next few years with the advent and take-up of Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), and Twitter (2006).

online sharing and collaboration have become principal components of an increasing number of initiatives.

Table 2: Social media typology

Type of social media	Description	Popular examples in Canada
Social network sites	Allow individuals to create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system and connect with other users with whom they share a connection.	Facebook, LinkedIn
Media-sharing sites	Allow users to post videos or photographs that others can share, comment, or 'like'.	YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest
Status-update services	Also known as microblogging services, allow users to share short updates (e.g. tweets) and to see updates of others.	Twitter
Blogs	An online journal often centered around core area(s) of interest where pages are usually displayed in reverse chronological order.	WordPress, Tumblr, Blogger
Social news	Forums where people post various news items or links to outside articles and users vote on the items. Items with the most votes are displayed most prominently.	reddit, Digg
Virtual world content	Offer game-like virtual environments in which users interact, often creating avatars (a virtual representation of the user) to interact with others.	Second Life, World of Warcraft
Wikis	A collective website where all participants are able to modify any page or create new pages.	Wikipedia

**Adapted from Dewing (2012), appears in Fairbairn, Bivens, and Dawson (2013)*

Table 2 (as appears in Fairbairn, Bivens, and Dawson 2013) breaks down various categories of social media.¹¹ Thus, the Internet in 2015 is extremely social, and has

¹¹ Although this table is useful to illustrate variations between social media platforms, it is important to note that significant overlap and convergence exists between social media sites. For example, as my

moved from a broadcast communication model to a model where users are both producers and consumers of content.¹² A review of work theorizing social media demonstrates that convergence and user-generated content define this new media landscape.

Convergence

Convergence refers to “the dissolution of boundaries between platforms” (McNair 2011:41) and is a key element of social media. Discussions surrounding convergence tend to focus the blending of physical media forms such as computers, telephones, television, and radio. For example, our smart phones are computers as well as telephones, television and radio stream through the Internet, and news organizations’ websites and social media profiles have functionally become newspapers.¹³ This feature of social media makes it a rich site of analysis for discussions about feminism and public sociology, as these areas of work are centrally concerned with blurring boundaries (personal and political, academia and community) and converging spheres of interpretation and social change.

In social media, no one form of technology is operating in a vacuum, and convergence means that media content percolates and infuses various technologies as

research will demonstrate, status update services such as Twitter have a significant networking component, where connections between users develop beyond simply viewing and sharing status updates.

¹² The emphasis on sociality within web-based platforms is particularly meaningful when juxtaposed against the fears of the 1990s that we would all become “pasty, asocial, isolated, and tech-addicted computer users” (Earl and Kimport 2011:126).

¹³ This of course does not mean that there are not differences in terms of content and presentation of online news and newspapers. For example, hard copy newspapers do not allow for public reaction and commentary immediately following the news story as online news frequently does, and online news sites may contain a shorter version of the story with links to more in-depth analysis in another article or blog post.

these technologies overlap and combine. In social media, power is less about control over particular media and more about “the role of networks and protocols in shaping and defining the entire media ecology” (Hands 2011:76). Importantly, this is an ongoing rather than a fixed process (Lievrouw 2011). In this sense, it is the seemingly horizontal relationships rather than the blatantly top-down operations that become a key area of focus (Hands 2011). Therefore, for sociologists who are interested in analyzing and participating in social change, it becomes increasingly important to look at how meaning is created and negotiated through various platforms rather than focusing only on the product of a particular media outlet or website. Studying social media, then, allows for the exploration of a converging space of mass media and social attitudes and beliefs, an important and somewhat elusive area of VAW prevention work. Rather than fixating on what is the most new and innovative product of converging technologies, it is important to look at the driving processes, underlying features, and broader implications of social media. In social media, the convergence of roles such as producers and consumers means that this media landscape is fueled by user-generated content.

User-generated content

In social media, users are no longer simply consumers or audiences, but rather take on a hybrid role as producer (Bruns 2011).¹⁴ This converging of audience and participant roles engages individuals in complex ecologies of “divides, diversities, networks, communities, and literacies” (Lievrouw 2011:1). Jenkins (2009) argues that participatory media culture has changed the face of literacy, shifting it from individual expression to

¹⁴ This process of users generating content has variously been termed *produsage* (Bruns 2011) or involving the *prosumer* (Deuze and Fortunati 2011).

community involvement (suggesting important opportunities for feminist work). We see this explicitly through sites such as Wikipedia,¹⁵ but also more subtly within platforms such as YouTube that track the number of page views. Here, a passive act such as watching a video becomes active involvement in the sense that videos with larger numbers of views are more likely to be seen and shared by others. In this way, endorsement through participation functions as a form of power within social media.

Despite these significant developments, it is important to consider the emergence and proliferation of social media as part of the historical evolution of media, technology, and society. As McLuhan (1964) argues, the form (medium) that delivers media content (message) is likely to impact how the message is received and taken up. Thus, anti-VAW messages that are similar in content may be understood and taken up differently in social media than in older media contexts. From its inception, the Internet's growth has been determined by its ability to connect individuals and promote interaction (see Scholz 2010).¹⁶ Social media is part of a media evolution. Understood in this way, it is therefore important to explore VAW prevention and social media as part of a larger media landscape.

This basic understanding of social media, and its associated features of convergence and user-generated content, provides a foundation for my dissertation research on VAW prevention related to social media. As my dissertation will illustrate, social media work

¹⁵ Wikipedia, the "Internet-based collaborative and cooperative encyclopedia" is written and edited by its users and is arguably the most frequently cited benchmark case of participatory media culture (Hands 2011:176). Through co-editing and vetting for accuracy, huge networks of contributors have built a massive information portal that receives tens of millions of hits each day (Hands 2011).

¹⁶ For example, Scholz (2010:25) identifies four significant milestones in the history of the Web: (1) the "sudden and surprising" adaptation of network mail on ARPANET (the original network of computers forming the internet) in the 1970s; (2) the "astonishing success" of the Mosaic Web browser in the 1990s (allowing a "window into cyberspace" and credited with securing the success of the World Wide Web; (3) the "remarkable popularity" of social media platforms; and (4) the growth in the use of mobile phones to access the Web.

involves more than simply extending offline VAW prevention. It also reveals wide-ranging potential, successes, and challenges for those involved. These include larger shifts towards collaborative knowledge production (e.g. using hashtag campaigns to reframe news stories using a VAW lens), socially mediated information transmission (e.g. live-tweeting VAW prevention events), and standpoint-based expertise (e.g. sharing and connecting individual stories to the social problem of VAW). While my findings illustrate valuable opportunities for feminist praxis, and public sociology, they also reveal significant challenges for feminist work in public spaces, such as backlash and online sexual violence, and resource challenges.

Part III: Feminist Public Sociology

During the same ten-year period that social media has become a core component of mainstream media and the public sphere more broadly, many sociologists have been working to debate and operationalize Michael Burawoy's call "For Public Sociology". This call involved a series of presentations, forums, and publications, and was significantly elevated by Burawoy's presidential address at the 2004 American Sociological Association Annual meetings. In this campaign, Burawoy appeals for sociologists to engage in conversations with publics outside of the university. As I will explain shortly in Chapter Two, his work has been a catalyst for energetic debate about the role of sociology beyond the academy and about the ability and responsibility of public sociology to be socially transformative. However, the "public sociology wars" (Burawoy 2009) of the last decade highlight various problematic epistemological and ontological assumptions of Burawoy's program. For example, one criticism is that the

success of Burawoy's work (and the many academic debates it has prompted) has been primarily to affirm the relevance of professional sociology to present day society rather than to value public sociology and present a roadmap for social change (Creese, McLaren, and Pulkingham 2009; Nickel 2012). Feminism, given its roots as a field in pursuit of social change, provides particularly valuable insight surrounding many of these issues. In particular, I argue that feminist work helps to highlight the importance of reflexivity, praxis, and interdisciplinary work to the research process. In this way, feminism helps to understand how effecting social change can be part of the research process. My own experiences with feminist public sociology were a significant influence on my research trajectory, and I present my reflections and analysis of this process, and my own vision for public sociology, in Chapter Five.

As discussed at the outset of this chapter, my research focus on feminism and public sociology is shaped by the understandings that (1) feminism and public sociology have much to contribute to each other; (2) VAW prevention is a rich empirical site of both feminist work and public sociology; and (3) VAW prevention work is a diverse field and so it is important to mobilize knowledge within and among communities working on these issues. I have also argued that it is important to bring an ecological understanding of VAW prevention to social media work. With this in mind, this dissertation explores VAW prevention work using social media for two central purposes. First, it seeks to understand how VAW prevention extends and is reshaped in the context of social media, with awareness that the lines between traditional media and social media are fluid and blurred. The second objective of my research on VAW prevention and social media is to use this empirical research to further explore how feminist sociologists can effect social

change. In this vein, I aim to retheorize public sociology according to feminist thought and community-based knowledge production, as well as present a theoretical map for public sociology that accounts for social media. In these ways, my findings from the various foci of social media, VAW prevention, public sociology, and feminism are intended to inform and strengthen one and other.

Part IV: Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of ten chapters. In this first chapter, I have explained the overarching foci of my research project and identified its key contributions. I have discussed the empirical context of VAW and provided an introduction to social media, explaining convergence and user-generated content as important features of this media landscape for this study. Finally, I have briefly outlined the importance of public sociology and feminist work to this project. I will continue this discussion in Chapter Two, where I present a feminist analysis and critique of public sociology. Specifically, Chapter Two synthesizes and develops critical feminist insights to analyze Burawoy's call for public sociology. I will argue that while this model has provided a high profile discursive arena for sociologists and criminologists to ponder public engagement and social change, the successes of this work to date are primarily in affirming the relevance of professional sociology to contemporary society rather than valuing public sociology and/or effecting social change. Moving forward, I therefore advocate for reflexivity, praxis, and interdisciplinary work as core areas of focus for scholars who wish to pursue publicly engaged scholarship for the purposes of effecting social change. In my project, I take up these areas of focus by reflexively analyzing my own work as a public sociologist

(Chapter Five), where I am working in interdisciplinary, community-engaged settings to translate research findings about VAW into social change (praxis). Additionally, in my synthesis and analysis of research findings (Chapter Nine), I present tangible, praxis-based actions for VAW prevention in social media (Table 13) within an existing model of the spectrum of VAW prevention (an interdisciplinary environment).

Chapter Three explores the evolving relationship between feminism, VAW prevention, and mass media. I describe how feminist struggles to construct VAW as a social problem have been underway for decades and have had an important relationship with mass media throughout this time. I argue that, in light of ongoing changes in the media landscape (i.e. the development and proliferation of social media), studying VAW prevention requires a feminist research base that takes into account the historical factors that have shaped these efforts, while also considering what unique opportunities and challenges are facilitated by social media. Looking back at the last fifty years, I explore three phases in the mass media-VAW prevention relationship: (1) how battered women's activism shaped public understanding of VAW through its relationship with news media; (2) how news portrayals of VAW became sites of feminist critique, and then intervention; and (3) how online spaces have emerged as key arenas of advocacy and research surrounding VAW, as well as sites of media intervention and creation. My review of this literature shows how VAW prevention and mass media relationships have become increasingly participatory, as they have transitioned from a primary focus on critique and knowledge transmission to also include partnership and collaborative knowledge production. By focusing on these struggles, and this relationship, I am interested in setting up the question "how are VAW prevention stakeholders using and experiencing

social media?” Additionally, I am introducing a discussion about backlash and abuse online: specifically, emerging understandings of online sexual violence. In addition to the practical and empirical contributions here, understanding this relationship is important given that media is a core area of public sociology attention. Additionally, the feminist critiques of media representation discussed in Chapter Three, as well as the emerging attention to online sexual violence, situate the survey and interview findings presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

In Chapter Four, I describe the components of my methodological framework and explain the specific methods used to collect data. My methodological framework includes an explanation of the feminist epistemology that guides my research, which is based on four tenets: (1) gender, along with many other areas like race/ethnicity, class, ability, and nation, is a powerful organizer of social life; (2) research is not value-neutral (3); the pursuit of progressive social change is central to research and therefore embedded in research design; and (4) individual experience is important to understanding social and political relations. As part of my methodology, I also discuss the intersecting nature of public sociology, community-engaged scholarship, community-based research, and participatory action research, distinguishing between these fields and explaining their relationship in my research. The second half of Chapter Four is the methods section, in which I explain the various stages of my dissertation research and outline public sociology, surveys, and qualitative interviews as the specific methods I use to collect data.

In Chapter Five, I discuss my experiences doing public sociology. Here, I turn my research gaze onto my own role and activities to consider how public sociology is not

simply an after-product of sociological knowledge (i.e. dissemination), but how public sociology, as a reflexive, praxis-based, and interdisciplinary model, can be part of the research process. As such, I use this chapter to reflect on my role and experiences in knowledge mobilization surrounding VAW prevention and media. I first explain the activities that I include as public sociology and discuss my key objectives in doing public sociology. I then discuss the benefits and challenges of this work through key themes of roles and boundaries, expertise, and time and resources. Finally, I unpack why and how we might move beyond the dichotomous traditional/organic understanding of public sociology, and conclude by explaining how public sociology shaped my survey and interview focus on social media.

Chapter Six presents my survey findings on how VAW prevention stakeholders use and experience social media. I present and discuss the results of my survey of 109 advocates, educators, service providers, researchers, writers, and activists. I describe participants, including demographic characteristics, their roles related to VAW prevention, and their feedback on VAW terminology. I also discuss participant social media use as it relates to VAW, and consider differences in social media use based on their roles (e.g. researcher, activist). Finally, I identify and analyze participants' views on the strengths and challenges of social media for their work, and consider how social media goals/successes can be understood through an ecological model of violence prevention.

Chapters Seven and Eight both explore findings from my qualitative, in-depth interviews. In Chapter Seven, I start by describing interview participants and their general roles/work related to VAW. I then discuss transmissions, or how participants share

information in social media. In section two, I explore ‘conversational activism’ through a discussion of how conversation emerged as an umbrella theme of VAW prevention and social media that encompasses notions of narrative, storytelling, and voice, as well as listening and intersectionality. I argue that the notion of conversational activism is useful for understanding efforts to change social narratives by using social media, and explain how bystander intervention, a popular model of offline VAW prevention work, occurs through conversational activism.

In Chapter Eight, I delve into issues of identity and design related to VAW prevention. Here, I explore how feminist identities, social media design, and VAW prevention are mutually shaping practices. Specifically, I analyze differences in social media sites in terms of how individual identity and perceptions of audience identities shape participants’ choices of sites used and form of their VAW prevention work. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss research findings surrounding the important relationships between feminism and community. I explore the importance of community both in terms of resources and supports, and also within collaborative ways of knowing that are related to larger feminist movements. In the final section, I discuss research findings surrounding safety, online VAW, and anti-feminist backlash, including the connections with men’s rights activists, how experiences and perceptions of online abuse and backlash shape behaviour, and social media sites’ role in VAW prevention.

Chapter Nine is a discussion and synthesis of research findings with various literature. Here, I consider how this study’s survey and research findings fit into VAW prevention literature more broadly. I also explore how findings about VAW prevention in social media can inform understanding of public sociology through themes of

conversational activism, audiences and news media, epistemic communities, and translation. I then put forward and discuss recommendations for a VAW-focused feminist public sociology. Finally, I draw from feminist theorists such as Donna Haraway to consider how the cyborg metaphor can weave together social, media, and technological aspects of VAW prevention, and allow us to layer this understanding with feminist public sociology to move forward under a VAW prevention framework where ‘the digital is real’. By ‘real’, I mean that digital tools and platforms are meaningful to individuals and their lived experiences, are complex, heterogeneous landscapes designed, used, and shaped by living people, reflect and reproduce power and inequalities preset in non-digital spaces, and have a critical role in preventing (or facilitating) violence. Finally, in Chapter Ten, I conclude with a brief summary of the core ideas from each chapter, highlighting my key analytical points and empirical findings, commenting on the limitations of this research project, and exploring possible directions for future research.

Chapter Two: Public Sociology and Feminism

Introduction

In this chapter I present a feminist analysis and critique of public sociology. This chapter ties into my larger thesis project in two central ways. First, it explores the relationship between academic visions of public sociology and feminist efforts to effect social change. This lays the theoretical groundwork for my methodological framework presented in Chapter Four and my alternative vision of public sociology presented in Chapter Five. Second, this broader understanding of public sociology is intended to set up the discussion of feminist work, mass media, and efforts to re-shape societal understanding of VAW as an example of public sociology presented in Chapter Three. Understanding feminist work as a longstanding form of public sociology is important for the discussion and analysis of research findings in Chapters Six through Nine.

Ten years ago, Michael Burawoy's campaign "For Public Sociology" ignited energetic debate about sociology's purpose and role in producing and disseminating knowledge, and spurred forward conversations in other disciplines such as criminology. In the past decade, Burawoy's work has garnered much commentary and response that has been, in varying proportions, enthusiastic toward or critical of Burawoy's approach to public sociology (2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2006; 2007; 2009). The "public sociology wars" (Burawoy 2009) of the last decade highlight various problematic epistemological and ontological assumptions of Burawoy's program. Feminist scholars in particular provide valuable insight surrounding many of these issues, and concerning how, if unchecked, certain assumptions serve to simply reify existing boundaries and inequalities within and outside of the university. Feminist sociologists have, generally, spoken up to support

public sociology, yet are also cautious to give Burawoy a green light on his program (e.g. Acker 2005; Brewer 2005; Risman 2006; Lal 2008; Creese, McLaren, and Pulkingham 2009).

My objective in this chapter is to draw from feminist analysis and critique to consider key debates and tensions in public sociology. Specifically, I synthesize and build on critical feminist insights to reflect on the implications of Burawoy's call for public sociology. My hopeful reading of the field is that Burawoy has provided a high profile discursive arena for sociologists to ponder effecting social change. More critically, my interpretation is more in line with scholars (Creese et al. 2009; Nickel 2012) who feel that the success of Burawoy's work (and the many academic debates it has prompted) has been primarily to affirm the relevance of professional sociology to present day society rather than to value public sociology and present a roadmap for social change.

Ultimately, however, I am not concerned with accepting or rejecting Burawoy's version of public sociology, but with identifying key priorities moving forward. To do so, I argue that reflexivity, praxis, and interdisciplinary work should be approached as core areas of focus for scholars who wish to pursue publicly engaged scholarship for the purposes of effecting social change. I mobilize these ideas in this project by seeking to understand the feminist praxis and interdisciplinary work of others (VAW prevention stakeholders) as well as reflexively unpacking my own experiences as a public sociologist.

This chapter is organized in three parts. In section one, I discuss the theoretical foundations of public sociology, present Burawoy's four-part typology of sociology, and unpack Burawoy's vision for public sociology. I also discuss the strong connection between public sociology and public criminology and discuss how I will be incorporating

literature on public criminology into this analysis. In the second section of this chapter, I outline criticisms of public sociology, emphasizing feminist critiques. In the final part of this chapter, I explain how my dissertation draws from and moves forward from these debates by focusing on reflexivity, praxis, and interdisciplinary work as core pillars of public sociology.

Part I: What is Public Sociology?

What is the civic mission of the social sciences? This question has long “exercised and vexed” social scientists, and, in particular, the public role and value of sociology has been the focus of attention of scholars such as Gans (1989) and Mills (1959) (Loader and Sparks 2010:771). In its early conception, public sociology described a general style of intellectualism “involving dialogue between sociologists and the publics with whom they were concerned” (Nickel 2012:2). More recently, Michael Burawoy’s presidential address “For Public Sociology” at the 2004 American Sociological Association meetings has been a catalyst for energetic debate about the role of sociology beyond the academy, internal hierarchies and relationships within the discipline, and the ability and responsibility of sociology to be socially transformative.

Four types of sociologies

Burawoy presents a four-part conceptualization of sociology as professional, policy, critical, and public. *Professional sociology*, according to Burawoy, supplies true and tested methods, relies on instrumental knowledge and emphasizes scientific norms (2005a:277). It is frequently seen as mainstream sociology (particularly in the United

States), and is focused within academic institutions, producing and disseminating sociological knowledge for an audience of academic peers. It is self-referential in that research is conducted within research programs that spell out questions, conceptual apparatuses and theoretical knowledge. In contrast to professional sociology, *policy sociology* is concrete and pragmatic, concerned with effective policy intervention in service of a client-defined goal or problem (Burawoy 2005a). The essence of policy sociology lies in providing answers or legitimating existing solutions to problems; its audience is outside of academia and consists of those involved in political decision-making and policy apparatuses. Burawoy also differentiates his sociologies by identifying their various potential pathologies. For example, whereas professional sociology can suffer from abstraction and isolation, policy sociology runs the risk of being held hostage to the trends or demands of organizations and institutions that employ sociological knowledge (Burawoy 2005a). *Critical sociology* is characterized by internal debate and ongoing examination of the foundations of professional sociology. By illuminating its biases and silences, critical sociology acts as the conscience of professional sociology (Burawoy 2005a). According to Burawoy (2005a), critical sociology should be particularly concerned with promoting public sociology, and should shift some of its emphasis from radicalizing professional sociology onto fostering public sociologies that will strengthen and develop what Burawoy calls civil society.¹⁷

Finally, Burawoy's *public sociology* is concerned with sociological communication

¹⁷ Burawoy defines civil society as “a product of late 19th century Western capitalism that produced associations, movements and publics that were outside both state and economy – political parties, trade unions, schooling, communities of faith, print media and a variety of voluntary organizations” (2005a:288). His use of civil society suggests publics who are already motivated and active in ‘speaking truth to power’ and resisting oppressive power structures, rather than passive publics who must be spurred to action.

and relevance through engaging with designated publics to disseminate and produce sociological knowledge. The goal of public sociology is to bring sociology “into a conversation with publics, understood as people who are themselves involved in a conversation” (Burawoy 2005a:263). Burawoy emphasizes that his typology of sociologies represent ideal type categorizations and in practice these categories of course blur. Many critical sociologists, for example, would be concerned about public debate and intervention. Burawoy (2005a) also notes that policy and public sociology frequently overlap, as sociology can simultaneously serve a client and generate public debate. For Burawoy, these categories are complementary, synergetic, and interdependent; without professional sociology, for example, there would be nothing to do policy or public sociology with, and nothing to criticize. Each type of sociology is concerned with different types of knowledge and has its own accountability: for example, public sociology is concerned with reflexive knowledge and accountable to its designated publics.

But what does public sociology look like in practice? As a starting point, Burawoy’s conceptualization of traditional versus organic public sociology provides the clearest articulation of the various forms that public sociology might take. The distinction between traditional and organic public sociology lies in the process of education and the public role in knowledge creation. *Traditional public sociology* focuses on a one-way process of education where publics are the recipients rather than the co-creators of knowledge. The flow of knowledge is linear, from the intellectual to a broader audience, and this type of sociology is generally concerned with disseminating sociological knowledge and ideas to a mass audience. Sociologists who write opinion pieces for

newspapers, or whose research journalists disseminate, are the most common examples of traditional public sociology. As Burawoy (2005a:263) explains, in traditional public sociology

the publics addressed are generally invisible in that they cannot be seen, thin in that they do not generate much internal interaction, passive in that they do not constitute a movement or organization, and they are usually mainstream.

Organic public sociology, on the other hand, refers to the sociologist working in close connection with a “visible, thick, active, and often counter-public” (Burawoy 2005a:264). Burawoy’s use of the term counter-publics appears to refer to counter-hegemonic groups that represent disadvantaged or oppressed sectors of the population (Helmke-Hayes and McLaughlin 2009). Within organic sociology, there is a philosophy of mutual education, and the intellectual/public boundary is less clear than it is purported to be in professional, policy, critical, and traditional public sociology. As with the four broader ideal-type categories of professional, policy, critical and public sociology, Burawoy argues that traditional and organic public sociology are complementary rather than antithetical, and that, in ideal circumstances, the traditional frames the organic, while the organic “disciplines, grounds, and directs” the broad engagement of traditional public sociology (Burawoy 2005a:265). Although the traditional public sociologist might “instigate debates within or between publics” (Burawoy 2005a:264), she is not seen to actively participate in them.

Traditional public sociology, as articulated by Burawoy, has many similarities with Barak’s (1988; 2007) notion of newsmaking criminology, which encourages criminologists to seek out engagement with news media in order to disseminate their work. Compared to the one-way model of traditional public sociology, Burawoy explains

that organic public sociology involves a two-way, synergetic process of knowledge creation where sociologists work with publics to create sociological knowledge. As I discuss in Chapter Five, organic public sociology is a much closer parallel to the field of community-engaged scholarship than traditional public sociology. It has also been the more fruitful area of commentary, critique, and heated debate.

Before exploring these critiques, however, it is helpful to put forward a brief summary of public sociology's incorporation into the discipline of criminology. This is in part because Burawoy's call for engagement with multiple publics to produce and disseminate sociological knowledge has also been taken up in conversations about public criminology (e.g. Currie 2007; Loader and Sparks 2010; Uggen and Inderbitzen 2010). Furthermore, my research focus on VAW prevention aims to be a contribution to feminist criminology as well as sociology more broadly by responding to calls for creative ways to blend scholarship with activism in "an era of backlash" against feminist criminology (Chesney-Lind 2006:6). For example, my project informs understanding of how stakeholders conceptualize risk factors for VAW within social media and explores the gendered backlash that feminists experience in social media.

Public criminology

Conversations about public criminology were underway prior to Burawoy's work (e.g. Garland and Sparks 2000; Loader and Sparks 2004). However, Burawoy's promotion of public sociology (and the resulting debate and discussion) has been a driving mechanism and a framework for considering the role of criminology beyond the university. Unlike public sociology, which is loosely organized around the amorphous

object of civil society, public criminology has a more tangible focus: crime and criminal justice. For example, Loader and Sparks (2010:771) note that criminology is “a field constituted around a social problem and of acute interest to governments, justice practitioners, and citizens alike”. Despite this more identifiable object of organization, there has still been a great deal of discussion and debate about what public criminology is and should be (for example, to what extent public criminology should be concerned with social justice). My purpose here is not to exhaustively outline these perspectives (see Loader and Sparks 2010 for a more comprehensive analysis), but, rather, to create a multi-disciplinary discussion of core themes in these debates and the critical feminist responses they garner.

Public criminology looks to “evaluate and reframe cultural images of crime, criminals, and justice by conducting research in dialogue with communities and in disseminating knowledge about crime and punishment” (Uggen and Inderbitzen 2010:733). Uggen and Inderbitzin (2010:726-727) identify four key tasks of public criminology: 1) evaluating and reframing cultural images of the criminal; 2) reconsidering rule making; 3) evaluating social interventions; and 4) assembling social facts and situating crime in disciplinary knowledge. Much work on public criminology focuses on how to more effectively translate and disseminate criminological knowledge to broader audiences. This focus is more in line with Burawoy’s traditional public sociology and Barak’s newsmaking criminology. Public criminology also pays a great deal of attention to the relationship between criminologists and policy-making (see Mears 2010). This is perhaps not surprising, given that much political and policy discourse focuses on crime and criminal justice as key issues, and significant criminological

literature focuses on the disjuncture between what is shown by research and the understanding of criminal justice demonstrated in public beliefs and attitudes towards crime (e.g. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1991; Surette 2007; Mopas and Moore 2012).

An underlying theme in public criminology discussions (paralleled in public sociology debates) is not whether criminology can provide insight into political issues, but to what extent it should. For example, Brownstein (2007) argues that there are two core ways that criminal justice research might contribute to policy and practice: first, by providing research findings to help policy makers and practitioners make informed decisions: second, by advocating for particular positions based on one's scientific knowledge and experience. While acknowledging that the former is "more consistent to [one's] training and socialization as social scientists" (2007:119), Brownstein argues that, to be effective, criminologists will need to compete and collaborate in a political process composed of oppositional perspectives. This distinction between providing research findings versus advocating for a particular position is something that I return to in the next section of this paper, where I consider several areas of critique of Burawoy's program, with a focus on critical feminist work.

It is important to acknowledge the presence and contributions of public criminology scholarship because of my project's focus on VAW and thus its intersections with criminology. However, the decision to frame my research within public sociology and criminology rather than narrowing it simply to public criminology is based on three factors. First, as I have outlined, the majority of public criminological work uses public sociology as its point of origin. Literature on public sociology represents a broader field of work to draw from. Second, my project does not focus on crime and criminal justice

responses to VAW specifically, but is instead interested in a wider range of approaches that focus on social interventions to prevent VAW before it occurs (primary prevention). Finally, as I have discussed, public sociology and public criminology are fluid knowledge spheres. Thus, to avoid creating an artificial dichotomy between public sociology and public criminology, I use the term public sociology to encompass these overlapping bodies of work.

Part II: Criticisms of Burawoy's Public Sociology

Burawoy's (2005b) vision is that public sociology follows a trajectory whereby it is recognized, legitimated, institutionalized, and, finally, defended and expanded. Yet public sociology faces some significant challenges in these pursuits. In the years of academic conversations following Burawoy's ASA address, numerous rebuttals and further discussion have been put forth that highlight contradictions between Burawoy's various sociologies, as well as tensions among diverse sociological priorities. For his part, Burawoy (2009:451) expresses puzzlement at what he describes as the "open hostility" of many of these critiques:

What has prompted these wars over public sociology, over the seemingly innocent proposal to take sociology's findings, its ideas, its theories beyond the academy, that is to carry on what is effectively its mission of public education? Why all the heat, the defensiveness, the skepticism, and the animosity toward public sociology?

Moreover, Burawoy (2009:451) maintains that rejecting his program of sociologies is to the detriment of the civil society he wishes to strengthen:

At a time when the world is so badly in need of rudimentary sociological insights, why would we barricade ourselves within an ever more fragile academic citadel or, on the critical side, turn against the one protection we have in the uphill struggle against social injustice, inequality, and oppression?

This straw man set up is problematic because, by conflating resistance to his public sociology program with total rejection of public sociology as a paradigm, Burawoy is positioning his critics as against the notion of sociologists effecting social change, when they may be simply voicing alternative visions for how his program might be improved in pursuit of said change. This dissertation, in part, reflects such an alternate vision. It is true that a host of sociologists and criminologists have participated in “the public sociology wars” (Burawoy 2009:451), deeply criticizing Burawoy’s presentation of public sociology and presenting alternative visions (e.g. Agger 2007). However, these scholars (and I include myself here) nonetheless remain interested in the relationship between academia and social change, in making scholarship and research findings more widely accessible, and in forging stronger links between community-driven efforts and academic processes. In this light, Burawoy’s suggestion that criticisms of his vision of public sociology represents a lack of solidarity is reminiscent of pathological manifestations of feminism that view dissenting marginalized voices as concerned with hurting feminist efforts rather than strengthening them through inclusivity and intersectionality.

Feminist scholars have made significant efforts to theorize public sociology and to relate their research experience to core themes and issues within these debates (e.g. Acker 2005; Brewer 2005; Risman 2006; Collins 2007; Hays 2007; Stacey 2007; Lal 2008; Creese et al. 2009). As noted in Chapter One, the women’s movement has arguably been the most major example of public sociology in the history of the discipline (Helmes-Hayes and McLaughlin 2009:587). Proponents of public sociology and feminist academics share a preoccupation with social knowledge for the public good; that is, sociology as something that is revolutionary, challenges existing power systems, shifts

social ideologies and, consequentially, changes experienced reality. Despite this, public sociology does not pay sufficient attention to gender and feminist thought (Acker 2005; Risman 2006; Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry 2007). Feminist scholarship is an important body of knowledge to draw from, not only due to the inherently public nature of feminist work (Risman 2006; Nickel 2012), but also because it can provide insights based on challenges and flaws of the women's movement. By challenges, I mean working to change society (dismantle patriarchy) in anti-feminist climates. By flaws, I mean historical tendencies of feminism to perpetuate certain systems of oppression (e.g. racism, classism) by ignoring or glossing over issues of inequality and marginalization within the movement (Collins 2007; hooks 2007). As a body of work, critical feminist thought has more to contribute to conversations about public sociology than has been recognized to date (Creese et al. 2009).¹⁸ My project synthesizes these areas, while also bringing in findings from stakeholders who are working in the field to translate knowledge into social change.

This chapter is not an exhaustive account of criticisms of Burawoy's framework.¹⁹ Rather, my objective is to outline clusters of concern around public sociology and to synthesize this work with critical feminist positions to draw out core assumptions, problems, and tensions.²⁰ I have grouped these debates into four groups: 1) scientific

¹⁸ For an example of the lack of recognition of feminist work in now mainstream public sociology: the *Handbook of Public Sociology* (Jeffries 2009) does not contain an index entry for feminism.

¹⁹ For a more in-depth discussion of Burawoy's critics, see Nickel (2012). In addition, one point that I do not delve into here is that the debate of whether or not to engage in public sociology (or public criminology) is a Western-based notion. Burawoy himself (2005a; 2005b) reminds us that sociology exists in the global South primarily as public sociology, in contrast to the dominance of professional sociology in the United States.

²⁰ Because I am drawing from both broader (non-feminist identified) critiques as well as explicitly feminist, I identify feminist critiques as such.

integrity and politicization; 2) publics and civil society; 3) centering professional sociology; and 4) practice and recognition.

Scientific integrity and politicization

One major theme of debates surrounding public sociology is scientific integrity, and specifically, the fear that perceived politicization will harm the discipline (Brady 2004; Neilsen 2004; Tittle 2004; Turner 2005). Public sociology, according to Burawoy, aims to prevent professional sociology from “suffocat[ing] from its own irrelevance” (Burawoy 2005b:105). However, some skeptics of public sociology feel that the political outlook of public sociologists may be inherently incompatible with that of scientifically or scholarly oriented professional sociologists (Nielsen 2004). In this regard, Zussman and Misra (2007: 10-11) argue that sociologists who are nervous about the implications of public sociology are centrally concerned that public sociology will politicize sociology and, consequently, that political concerns will intrude into the “otherwise intellectually rigorous core” of the profession.

Similarly, others have argued that professional sociologists’ fears reflect a belief that public sociology’s assumed associations with left activism will hurt the disciplines’ precarious position in the research university (McLaughlin, Kowalchuck, and Turcotte 2005). Burawoy (2005a:266) maintains that there are no inherent normative values or political directions in public sociology and that it could “as well support Christian Fundamentalism as it can Liberation Sociology or Communitarianism”. However, Burawoy’s continual referencing of Marx and focus on fighting neoliberalism do imply particular value orientations. This is to be expected, for, as I discuss in further detail later

on, value neutrality is an impossible goal in research (Lumsden 2012). Additionally, the general tendency of sociology to produce knowledge surrounding social inequalities related to gender, race, and class, combined with the inherently action-oriented nature of much public sociology, places public sociology in close proximity to what are commonly thought of as left-wing interests. Thus, the notion that public sociology never, or rarely, has political direction is unconvincing whether one is arguing for or against its advancement.

Moreover, preoccupation with whether public sociology is inherently political is misguided. Public sociology is absolutely political insofar as knowledge, and its organization, is political (Nickel 2012). Additionally, the political label is applied in the context of particular social, political, and legal climates. Brownstein's (2007) juxtaposition of providing research findings versus advocating for a particular position helps to further unpack this notion. While the desire to distinguish between political and apolitical research is understandable for a host of reasons (the need to be seen as objective, maintaining credibility, obtaining funding, and so forth), this boundary represents a false dichotomy (Nickel 2012). The determination of whether one is providing research findings or advocating for a particular position is not clearly defined, and might instead be determined by audience (who is the research being provided to?) as well as by the context (do these findings challenge current political positions or activities?). For example, in our current Canadian political climate,²¹ many scientists have unwittingly found themselves in an advocacy type of position simply by way of attempting to share their research on climate change. In a different political climate, their

²¹ For example, a recent *CBC News* article discusses the muzzling of federal scientists (see Chung 2013).

research would be politically benign. However, our social and political institutions have shifted in ways that have changed these categories, even if a researcher's actions, considered in isolation, have not changed. While it may be tempting (and perhaps often pragmatically important) to draw these lines about whether we are "presenting research findings" or "advocating for a particular position" in discussions of public sociology, we must consider the broader social and political conditions that structure these definitions.

Other feminist sociologists outrightly reject Burawoy's need for publicly engaged but value-neutral sociology (e.g. Gamson 2004). Risman (2003; 2006) argues for public sociologies that are social justice oriented, and emphasizes that feminists' success in continuously framing their work around a mission of social justice and carving out exceptional careers as scholar-activists can apply to public sociologies more generally. According to Risman (2006:283), a presumption of the possibility of a value free public sociology wholly undermines its broader counter-hegemonic significance, and public sociology is "only worth doing if it is done from a value driven standpoint". It is understandable that Burawoy (and other public sociologists) may be worried about the backlash that so-called leftist sociology may receive among broader publics; feminist scholars have certainly experienced their own challenges in this regard (see, for example, Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry 2007). However, by maintaining that public sociology has no inherent political direction *and* failing to promote value-engaged public sociology, Burawoy implicitly conveys the assumption that sociology can be value free. This notion is highly problematic, and scholars have criticized Burawoy for glossing over longstanding methodological feuds between positivism, critical theory, and post-positivism (Creese et al. 2009).

Feminists and feminisms vary widely in form and perspective, yet the notion that social scientists (and thus social science) can ever be value free is rejected throughout much feminist work. Feminist scholars frame the research process as politicized and argue that sociology should be examined as the social production that it is (Brewer 2005). Stanley and Wise (1983, 1993) identify the traditional subjective/objective dichotomy in science as one of the core areas of feminist critique. Specifically, they argue that objectivity is a sexist notion, a term men have given to their own subjectivity, and best left behind by feminists. Dorothy Smith (1987) critiques much allegedly objective research as merely male standpoints represented as universal realities. The tendency to represent dominant perspectives as universal realities is of course not limited to gender. For example, Brewer (2005:355) has written about how “white feminism did not see race and class”, a reality that is highlighted throughout critical race work and Black feminist thought (e.g. Collins 2000, 2007; hooks 2000, 2007). Burawoy (2005:268) acknowledges these contributions when speaking about the role of critical sociology:

Feminism, queer theory and critical race theory have hauled professional sociology over the coals for overlooking the ubiquity and profundity of gender, sexual, and racial oppressions. In each case critical sociology attempts to make professional sociology aware of its biases, silences, promoting new research programs built on alternative foundations.

Yet Burawoy does not sufficiently consider the likelihood of public sociology replicating these biases and silences. Nor does he explicitly make room for feminists, queer theorists, and critical race scholars to be professional sociologists. By setting up this framework where those who center gender, sexuality, and race in their analysis are part of critical sociology, and where critical sociology is separate from professional sociology, professional sociology is maintained as a male, heterosexual, and white field.

Feminist scholars have also expressed concern with public sociology slipping uncritically into a left-of-center political orientation (Brewer 2005). However, rather than anxiety about being labeled political, this worry focuses on the danger of repeating historical patterns of marginalization and failing to develop what Lal (2008) identifies as counter-hegemonic public sociology. The assumption that counter-hegemonic perspectives will develop organically is problematic, as Brewer (2005:357-358) explains, for “sociology is not ahead of the game. It is still too enmeshed in the dominant discourses and policy practices of the day”.

Beyond these feminist critiques, in arguing for public criminology, Currie (2007:188) also challenges the view that researchers should stay separate and objective from public policy:

Underlying this view is the sense that truth is a fragile thing, easily contaminated if it comes into too much contact with the gritty world outside of the academy.

Furthermore, efforts to protect the perceived integrity of our truths by distancing oneself from public discourse and policy accomplish little:

...the greater problem is that truth can easily be overwhelmed in the real world by calculated untruth, and indeed historically that has probably been the case more often than not. Definitions of social reality are always the object of struggle and contest. Staying out of that struggle does not mean that others will graciously and judiciously wait for the results of further research before they make their own definitions of that reality and act upon them accordingly (Currie 2007:188).

Epistemological debates over the political nature of public sociology and, more generally, over the extent to which the production of all knowledge is inherently political, are a massive arena of work of which this section has only scratched the surface. Regardless of whether one views their research as politically neutral, politically shaped, and/or politically motivated (which does not preclude rigorous, well done research), attempting

to cordon off intellectual positions from political arenas is complex. But who, and what, is this gritty, political, messy world outside of the academy? In the next section, I consider civil society and the “publics” involved in public sociology.

Publics and civil society

The heart of public sociology is its relationship with civil society: according to Burawoy, sociology is responsible for the development and strengthening of civil society to the extent that civil society “and its resilience” are sociology’s object and value (2005b:318). This does not mean that public sociology only studies civil society, but instead that, as Burawoy explains, public sociology engages in sociological conversations from the standpoint of civil society.²² Importantly, public sociology is primarily linked to the health and well being of civil society. When civil society prospers, sociology flourishes accordingly (Burawoy 2005b). Burawoy’s call for public sociology comes at a time of increasing concern about the neoliberal environment, and his campaign pleads for sociology to resist and fight this climate.²³

Despite the importance for him of publics in name, Burawoy’s public sociology does not go into a great amount of detail in conceptualizing publics or civil society. Nickel (2012:19) argues that public sociology and civil society are strongly related to governance, but that these three concepts are increasingly difficult to discern and “signify

²² Burawoy (2005a:288) describes civil society as “the product of late 19th century Western capitalism that produced associations, movements and publics that were outside both state and economy-political parties, trade unions, schooling, communities of faith, print media and a variety of voluntary organizations”.

²³ Burawoy (2005b:319) explains this current climate as “the terrorist state and the commodification of everything, that ruinous combination we call neoliberalism.” In a political climate where the private is valued and the public devalued (Collins 2007), Burawoy is presenting a sort of “sociology from the margins” that Pfohl (2007:113) argues is intended to resist “dominant cultural and political narratives spun by those who profit most from the exploitation of others.”

so many competing ideals and activities that they fail to signify at all". Feminist scholars also identify a need to further define civil society (Acker 2005) as well as problematize it in relation to public sociology (Brady 2004). For example, feminist analysis of publics highlights that, just as much of the academic knowledge production site has been historically male-dominated, so too have the publics to whom Burawoy refers (Risman 2003). My project helps to move away from the androcentric model of publics and to operationalize this concept within feminist praxis by investigating activists', advocates', service providers', writers', and community educators' experiences of social media and VAW prevention.

Burawoy may also be overly optimistic about publics in terms of their social justice missions. For example, what about publics that are brought together to oppose immigration, reproductive rights, or same-sex marriage? Even social justice enterprises such as the women's movement, for all its successes at mobilizing and identifying women as an active public, developed and operated in racist, classist, and heterosexist ways, as lived experiences of women of colour, working class, and LGBT women were mostly invisible within first and second wave feminism. Feminism created new understandings of social problems, such as naming the previously private sphere issue of domestic violence as a public concern (Loseke 1989), yet it repressed and marginalized many of those whom it claimed to represent. Public sociology can take lessons from these failings, such as one about the necessity of abstaining from defining the experiences of others (Acker 2005). Much of the criticism leveled at Burawoy's work involves the argument that Burawoy is describing sociology in a way that does not represent the

experienced reality of his critics. Because of this disjuncture, these critics are not willing to move forward under his proposed framework.

Burawoy's work has also been criticized for reinvoking the public/private dichotomy, which significant feminist effort has gone into refuting (Creese et al. 2009). Instead of separating civil society from the state and market, scholars argue that the focus should be governance and the exercise of power in all spheres (Creese et al. 2009; Nickel 2012). Furthermore, Collins (2007:107-108) raises doubts about whether there is actually any inherent benefit to sociology claiming the term public in a political context "where the private is valued and public places are devalued spaces containing marginalized groups". Collins argues that those most likely to be drawn to public sociology have experiences that provide them with a distinctive view of social inequality and, therefore, these individuals may feel marginalized or alienated within the discipline of sociology. If public sociology is simply inserted and compartmentalized among existing hierarchies in the discipline, it will maintain a second-class status (Hays 2007).

In proposing that sociologists create knowledge in conjunction with publics, Burawoy does not address whose knowledge will prevail. Feminist scholars such as Brewer (2005) question where indigenous knowledges of marginalized peoples fit, and others wonder how we will distinguish between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic public sociology (Lal 2008). Public sociology will not be made up of a singular public or a singular sociology; thus, powerful publics and dominant sociological practices may be the first (or only) to be recognized as legitimate. Furthermore, in more traditional forms of public sociology (i.e. media engagement), who speaks for sociology on issues of power, violence, race, gender, and so forth? We are not a unified discipline, and those

who most readily fit with mainstream media needs may be those least likely to introduce critical sociological concepts and research to wider public audiences.²⁴

The lack of concrete detail around publics is likely due, at least in part, to the extensive number of possibilities of who these publics might be, as well as a need to speak broadly to encompass such diversity. But this nebulosity also reflects the skewed nature of this discussion, whereby sociology is more frequently and centrally featured than are publics or civil society. In the next section, I consider the centering of professional sociology within public sociology debates, and argue that Burawoy's program has more to do with sustaining and invigorating professional sociology than it does with effecting social change.

Centering professional sociology

In Burawoy's four-part conceptualization of sociological practice, each category is defined in relation to professional sociology: policy sociology administers professional sociology to clients; critical sociology criticizes and radicalizes professional sociology; and public sociology brings sociology into a conversation with publics. In this way, professional sociology is the foundation of each additional categorization. Yet Burawoy's articulation of the four sociologies is inherently contradictory in that it simultaneously degrades and valorizes professional sociology (Hays 2007). Burawoy (2005a) argues that professional sociology, left to its own devices, risks suffocating from insularity and abstraction, but goes on to declare that "professional and policy sociology would remain dominant, but that dominance would be enlightened rather than parochial, hegemonic rather than despotic" (Burawoy 2007:126). In positioning professional sociology in this

²⁴ See Mopas and Moore (2012) for further discussion of this notion.

way, feminists argue, Burawoy implies that “good” research is only done in the sphere of professional sociology (Acker 2005) and does not clearly articulate where and how public sociology will be given a place at the sociological table (Collins 2007). Consequently, he fails to sufficiently challenge the disciplinary dominance of professional sociology, and, by labelling it as the core of the discipline, has actually reaffirmed this hierarchy (Creese et al. 2009). I would therefore tend to agree with Nickel (2012:42) that Burawoy’s program is, in effect, less a call for public sociology than it is primarily an argument for the legitimacy of professional sociology and instrumental knowledge, and for sociology’s need to publicize its relevancy in an increasingly neoliberal climate. However, I do not believe this means we should dismiss it. In the last decade, Burawoy’s program has been constructed as a call for public sociology, and many scholars have thoughtfully taken up and parsed out Burawoy’s program in this context. As such, it is worth further contemplation and analysis.

The practice of engaging publics beyond the university does not depend on the take up of public sociology as a mainstream sociological pursuit. However, as Vaughan (2004:118) observes, “in giving public sociology a name, perhaps Burawoy’s enduring gift is to confer it with legitimacy”. Yet Burawoy may be doing public sociology a disservice by presenting it as complementary to professional sociology. Asking a discipline to recognize, legitimate, institutionalize, and defend public sociology without honestly and directly addressing the dominant position professional sociology holds is unlikely to produce desired results. As Hays (2007:81) explains, “proclaiming the absolute centrality of public sociology offers a more powerful grounding for consensus building than does an affirmation of existing distinctions in the division of sociological

labour”. A great deal of current sociology is public sociology, but it is too often on the margins, regarded with “insecurity and ambivalence” by others in the discipline, as well as those who engage in it (see Vaughan 2004:118). Part of this hesitation may stem from the difficulties conveying critical scholarship to the broader public through the mass media (Schor 2004) and professional beliefs that the production and consumption of knowledge should be restricted to the credentialed (Derber 2004:120). In glossing over various power imbalances within sociology and refusing to address inequality, the call for solidarity among sociologists in Burawoy’s program has similar qualities to early (and arguably, contemporary) feminist “sisterhood” activism that has struggled to understand race, sexuality, class, and ability as central to the movement. Rather than approaching public sociologies, and feminism, as movements that must be united to effect social change, my dissertation explores the diversity of feminist work and public sociology occurring in relation to VAW prevention.

The historical relationship between feminist scholarship and sociology suggests that the discipline will not shift effortlessly. For example, Stacey and Thorne (1985) identified a “missing feminist revolution” in sociology, despite the feminist work in the 1960’s and 70’s. More recently, Eichler (2002) argues that, despite significant efforts by the women’s movement and sociology’s role as the leading feminist discipline in the latter part of the twentieth century, feminist scholarship has yet to redefine what sociology is about. Fostering organic public sociology, and recognizing this form of knowledge creation as core to the discipline, requires real transformations of power and reconceptualization of existing sociological hierarchies. A final area of debate that I will

touch on here is the lack of concrete plans for how public sociology is to be practiced, recognized, and received.

Practice and recognition

How do we define, implement, and advance public sociology? The need to avoid being overly prescriptive when conceptualizing “what public sociology is” results in a vague template for what exactly it is that sociologists are supposed to be endorsing and promoting. As such, supporters and skeptics (often overlapping groups) have responded to Burawoy’s call for public sociology with important questions and arguments surrounding what “good” public sociology might look like. Numerous scholars are supportive of the broad aims of public sociology but raise significant concerns with the lack of concrete detail, and offer proposals to put these aims into practice, as well as exploring how to reward and support public sociology (e.g. Brady 2004; Currie 2007; Zussman and Misra 2007; Creese et al. 2009). Nickel (2012) argues that the transformation that is underway is more often a transformation of vocabulary than of practice. To date, Burawoy’s argument may be, therefore, more effective as a “political program and diplomatic compromise within the profession” than as an empirically grounded action plan (McLaughlin et al. 2005:134).

In his remarks, Burawoy acknowledges that universities (which he identifies as the primary breeding ground for sociological knowledge) are not institutionally prepared to reward students or faculty who engage in public sociology in terms of awards, distinctions, promotion, or tenure. Nor are they well set up to encourage students to

develop interest and training in public sociology in the first place.²⁵ Proponents argue that the current institutional rewards structure needs to change to incorporate public sociology and public criminology into merit decisions (Currie 2007; Fallis 2008; Land 2010) and to acknowledge and encourage researcher investments in building long term, collaborative, extra-university partnerships (Ryan 2004). In Chapter Five, I will discuss my own experiences with public sociology, and some of the benefits and challenges that I experienced from this process. In addition to bringing reflexive analysis to this dissertation, my aim in Chapter Five is to provide one possible example for how sociologists might approach public sociology as part of their research process.

Media engagement is a repeated theme of public scholarship. However, many sociologists have expressed concerns with translating research findings into broader social knowledge through mainstream media channels (Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry 2007; Schor 2004). This is particularly the case for public sociology and critical sociology since the public sphere is seen as generally valuing instrumental knowledge (that which is technical and solves a puzzle or offers a solution) over reflexive knowledge (that which questions assumptions and/or proposes alternative frameworks of understanding) (Nickel 2012).²⁶ Moreover, when researchers are consulted, there are often sexist and racist patterns of whom is portrayed as the expert. For example, Uggen and Inderbitzin (2010) explain that a present-day pathology of public criminology is the

²⁵ This has arguably changed considerably in the past decade, as numerous university programs now market their Sociology degree programs as Public Sociology programs. Examples include Birmingham University in the United Kingdom, York University in Ontario, and the American University in Washington.

²⁶ For Burawoy (2004:106), instrumental knowledge involves “a ‘means-end’ orientation, whether it be the puzzle solving of normal science or the problem solving of policy sociology.” It is “technical or formal knowledge insofar as it does not critically engage its foundations, its value premises.” Reflexive knowledge, on the other hand, “holds instrumental knowledge up for examination in the light of its presuppositions, often challenging those presuppositions as arbitrary, and even proposing alternative principles.”

lack of diversity in whom are portrayed as crime experts. Researchers and scholars who are women and/or people of colour, for example, are seldom consulted on general crime trends, and are generally restricted to stories on women and crime or racial minorities and crime (Uggen and Inderbitzin 2010:734). These tendencies, combined with the lack of control and potential for distortion of research findings to fit news formats and agendas, are significant reasons why sociologists may be discouraged from traditional forms of public sociology. Furthermore, much contemporary criminological knowledge contradicts mainstream political law-and-order agendas, and both critical criminology and sociology face an often-uphill battle in terms of public acceptance because problems identified by the discipline, and the solutions proposed, often require large scale social, cultural and political transformation.

To develop institutional practices and recognition for public sociology moving forward, it is important to consider the ways in which researchers' and advocates' experiences within institutional and public spaces shape their relationship with public sociology. Current understandings of "public" in public sociology have been criticized for being male-streamed because they have not considered the institutional barriers that hinder feminist scholars' ability to do public sociology. For example, Sprague and Laube (2009) use Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnographical approach to explore the experiences of academic feminists and feminist public sociologists within the institutional structure. Instead of asking whether public sociology is "good" or "bad", these authors address the question, "What are the institutional arrangements that make doing public sociology difficult, and thus less likely?" Two core reasons emerge from their research: the culture of professional sociology and the standards used when evaluating scholarship.

This culture, and these standards, rewards those public sociologists who are professional sociologists by day, leaving their public sociology for the second-shift. Additionally, the extent to which public sociology is adopted into the mainstream (for example, the creation of the American Sociological Association Task Force on Institutionalizing Public Sociologies in 2005) does not necessarily represent any critical transformation of the discipline (Nickel 2012).²⁷ For example, our disciplines may be less capable of effecting social change if a majority of prevailing expertise in sociology and criminology comes from white, male, and/or heterosexual perspectives.

Feminist scholars such as Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry (2007) argue that, in addition to institutional spaces, key public spaces in which public sociology might take place are themselves gendered, and that online spaces have been notably neglected within analysis surrounding public sociology. For example, for these authors, disseminating research on representations of beauty in Grimm’s fairy tales resulted in extensive anti-feminist backlash following media coverage. Feminists have historically found themselves on the margins of the academy (Wise 1997) and feminism has a long history as a dirty word in many broader public arenas. Furthermore, emerging research points to the notion that gender is a key factor in experiences of abuse and harassment on the Internet (Barak 2005), a theme I will discuss in detail in the context of my research findings. Moving forward, the implications of backlash towards feminist sociologists and criminologists, including their ability and desire to do public sociology, need to be taken seriously and explored in relation to racism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia.

²⁷ Nickel (2012:35) argues that, in fact, it represents quite the opposite, that “the recognition of public sociology *through the lens of professional sociology* is a means of disciplining the margin” (emphasis in original).

Brady (2004) argues that the lack of tangible measures of success in public sociology hinders the advancement of Burawoy's agenda. Measuring success is a complex topic that is unlikely to be universally defined, but rather, may be identified based on local characteristics and priorities, as well as in partnership with the various publics we aim to engage. While it is impossible to discuss Burawoy's arguments for public sociology as a "comprehensive and internally consistent program", it is possible to recognize his central thesis to be "the world needs public sociology" (Nickel 2012:25). While I would problematize the unidirectional nature of this claim (whatever "the world" is, the discipline of sociology needs it too), I am not interested in debating either/or acceptance or rejection of public sociology. Moving forward, the focal question should not be dichotomous in nature (Are we for or against it? Will it succeed or fail?), for the last decade certainly demonstrates that this conversation will never be resolved, nor should it be. Rather, drawing from Clear's (2010) assessment of public criminology, I would rather ask, "What shall we make of public sociology?" The above analysis is a starting point in mapping out these debates. In the spirit of imagining this further, in the last section of this chapter I draw further from feminist literature to propose praxis, reflexivity, and interdisciplinary work as central priorities, or pillars, of what I wish to make of public sociology, in practice as well as in defining its success.

Part III: Proposed Pillars

Praxis

To put the theoretical program of public sociology into action requires a more in-depth consideration of praxis than Burawoy undertakes.²⁸ Like public sociology, feminist discourse surrounding praxis employs the Marxian premise that the point is to change the world rather than simply study it (Stanley 1990). Praxis, in this sense, represents the “continuing shared feminist commitment to a political position in which ‘knowledge’ is not simply defined as ‘knowledge *what*’ but also as ‘*knowledge for*’ (Stanley 1990:15, emphasis in original). Feminist work on praxis centers around two key premises: (1) rejection of the theory/research divide and (2) method (how we do research) is central to knowledge creation (what conclusions we come to) (Stanley 1990). Furthermore, from this perspective there is no question of the value-engaged, political nature of publicly engaged research:

Because feminism *de facto* links theory with practice, “feminist” research, by definition, also promotes political steps towards resolution of power imbalances. The research process itself is politicized to the extent that collectivized and value-explicit methodologies are employed, in the form of both team research by academics, and ways by which researchers and subjects work in collaboration (Faith 1993:69).

Other scholars define praxis as a process where theoretical validity is assessed in terms of how it informs action (Creese et al. 2009). In other words, the question becomes, how

²⁸ Considering feminist work on praxis both highlights its relative absence from Burawoy’s work and, furthermore, suggests that praxis is fundamental to sociologies that aim to engage with diverse publics in counter-hegemonic ways. For example, Lal (2008) critiques Burawoy for presenting a utopian version of the relationships between the four sociologies and argues that he is principally able to do this because he ignores significant differences/questions surrounding methodology. The lack of attention and discussion of methodology as it relates to public sociology suggests that Burawoy has theorized why public sociologies are important and what they may achieve, but not how they will be practiced.

useful is the theory in helping to shape actions to address social problems? This is important in an academic environment where

Most of us have been brought up to think of ‘theory’ as something arcane, mysterious and rather forbidding. And, particularly if we are women, we will have been encouraged to think of ‘theory’ as special, not a part of everyday life; something produced by clever people (who just happen to be men), not by us (Stanley and Wise 1993:45).

While I am highlighting the gendered nature of theoretical production here, it is important to note that this is one of many systems of oppression experienced by people based on racialization or colonialism, social economic status, and disability, among other factors.

As sociologists, we have significant training in interpreting the world. Classroom lectures, academic writing, seminars and conference panels have all supported and shaped this tendency. However, less support is provided for how to engage with structural processes and social organizations to create and disseminate research. Moreover, many individuals who desire to focus significantly or solely on civic engagement may have left academia at various stages (or, alternatively, never entered the university funnel to begin with) to pursue additional career opportunities based on factors such as interest and reward structures. Those who retain “academic” as a primary role, and wish to do publicly engaged research, would do well to consider Loader and Sparks’ (2010:772) concerns:

One looming risk, as we see it, is of turning inward and becoming mired in discussions that only ever are going to be of much interest to criminologists (how ironic it would be if a debate about public criminology ended up taking this form).

This perspective is not unique to Loader and Sparks. For example, Wacquant (2011:440) explains:

To put it tersely, ‘public sociology’... does not exist outside the discipline: it is an inverted projection of the frustrated political aspirations and forsaken civic yearnings of official sociology, made by, about and for American academics.

Public sociology that is engaged only in internal conversations about disciplinary relevancy is not sufficient or sustainable. In addition to critical theoretical analyses, the experienced reality of the feminist movement in working in public, political arenas (e.g. Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry 2007) can provide relevant insights and advice for those who wish to cultivate a role as a public scholar. Using praxis as a key principle of public sociology (particularly for the organic sort) helps to fight against the insular tendencies of disciplinary knowledge and conversation.

My iteration of public sociology, therefore, needs to be focused on producing and disseminating knowledge in a way where theoretical ideas are translated into (and further derived from) social justice actions. Granted, this is uncomfortable for all of the reasons discussed here: resistance to politicization, the complexity of publics, difficulties with media engagement, and the lack of institutional support, among many others (I discuss some of these challenges in detail in Chapter Five). Additionally, other scholars, while embracing public engagement, caution against going down the pathological road of leftist elitism, i.e. attempting to “solve” the problems of oppressed groups rather than working alongside them (McLaughlin et al. 2005). Much western feminism to date has been taken to task by work such as transnational feminism and Black feminist thought for these sorts of practices (e.g. Collins 2000; Mohanty 2003). Theories, to be valid, must apply to “some people somewhere” (Stanley and Wise 1993:105), but the socially constructed and socially located nature of these theories means that they will not apply to all people everywhere. Thus, methodologies inspired by feminist standpoint epistemology (Smith

1987) such as power-reflexive methodology, are critical elements of public sociological practice in that they “involve the curse of no longer being able to easily exercise white, heterosexist, or class-based privilege” (Pfohl 2004:115). To conceive of how this union of theory and practice might take place, in the next section I put forward reflexivity as a second core pillar of public sociology.

Reflexivity

Burawoy (2004) identifies public sociology as employing reflexive knowledge, which critically engages the foundations and value premises of sociology. Burawoy recognizes reflexivity’s importance as the first step towards bringing American sociology down “from the pedestal of universality” to “recognize its distinctive character and national power” (what he calls “provincializing”) (2005b:288). Yet there is nothing in public sociology that is by definition reflexive (McLaughlin et al. 2005). Furthermore, reflexivity is not emphasized as a methodological process, nor considered in relation to increasing intellectual rigour, as it has been within feminist work (e.g. Mauthner and Doucet 2003).²⁹ Wacquant (2011:239) describes Loader and Sparks’ (2010) analysis of public criminology (PC) as “deliver[ing] a strong incitement to reflexivity”, and notes that this in itself is a key contribution:

In social science, reflexivity is not a decorative device, a luxury or an option (like vitamins in an intellectual smoothie). Rather, it is an indispensable ingredient of rigorous investigation and lucid action. If PC helps reflexivity insinuate itself into criminology, better yet become integral to it, then it will have done that discipline a lot of good.

²⁹ Additionally, Merton (1949:181) argues that a wider spectrum of criticism from “interested parties” may actually enhance the intellectual rigour of sociological practice and encourages the researcher to seek out “increasingly effective tools of analysis”.

Feminist work (among other scholarship)³⁰ can provide valuable insights into the indispensable nature of reflexivity. The concept of reflexivity or “reflective practice” (Naples 2003) has been a core area of feminist theoretical and methodological works in recent decades, and public sociologists such as Ryan (2004:111) advocate for partnership based on reflexive praxis:

As a public sociologist, I work with collective actors to apply theoretical constructs to an actual situation...working as a team, the collective actors and I attempt to draw insights and directions from existing social movement paradigms. To impose theories on activists would be to ignore the fact that all human beings theorize. Subjected to practice, only the most robust theoretical constructs survive.

As a sociologist who has worked with activists and media stakeholders to bring social change to media reporting of intimate partner violence (among other initiatives), Ryan (2004) maintains that we should strive for sociology to be valued among non-academic audiences, and that individual experience can be seen as a tester of theories. In this way, Ryan explains how reflexive praxis actually increases the social relevance as well as the intellectual rigour (and, therefore, integrity) of sociological projects:

Most theoretical models are under-developed offering a vague sense of relationships between ideas...In practice, one quickly knows which concepts are under-specified. Far more easily than intellectuals working alone, collective actors and I in tandem link concepts into workable and transferable paradigms and related transformative practices...Public sociology, at its best, synergetically links uncommon partners to deepen knowledge and equalize social resources (2004:111).

From this perspective, we see public sociology as a necessarily reflexive testing of theoretical ideas and frameworks, as theories and concepts are reconstructed, reworked,

³⁰ The call for a reflexive social science is not unique to feminist work: for example, Merton (1945:405) argued that the values of “the research worker”, whether acknowledged or not, affect each stage in the research process, and noted that “social scientists have been so busy examining the behaviour of others that they have largely neglected the study of their own situation, problems, and behavior”. More recently, criminologists such as Young (2004) have written about the need for reflexivity in critical ethnography.

and reformulated among various publics and according to various social contexts. My research focuses on this notion of linking uncommon partners to deepen knowledge, and the research locations of VAW prevention stakeholders in social media, and my own experiences with public sociology, are fertile grounds to explore this further.

Reflections on public criminology have also considered the need to engage with individual experience. Currie (2007:178-179) explains that, for public criminology:

In the long run, we want to move criminal justice policy in the directions many of us would like—from a diminished reliance on incarceration to serious investment in prevention, rehabilitation and community reconstruction—we have to be able to win hearts and minds.

To win hearts and minds, public sociology and public criminology needs to recognize a plurality of contextualized knowledge and expertise. It must be more than abstract theory; it must speak to the lived experiences of those to whom theory is often applied. To do this requires addressing gaps in specific aspects of sociological and criminological knowledge. For example, Mopas and Moore (2012) argue that public criminology should involve acknowledging and responding to emotions as part of broader publics' understandings and responses to crime. In my project, I argue that we also need to pay attention to the emotions of the researcher/public sociologist.

Reflexivity also requires regularly revisiting taken for granted boundaries and exclusions within sociology and criminology. For example, feminist criminologists have documented how criminology has historically ignored and trivialized violence against women (see Stanko 1985, 1998) and highlighted the challenges in practicing feminist criminology in our current era (Chesney-Lind 2006). Despite ongoing backlash, feminist criminology has worked consistently to change public attitudes and public policy surrounding sexual violence and domestic violence by fostering better understanding of

these problems (Stanko 2007), and to press police and criminal justice officials to realize that there is “no choice but to enact reforms to close the gap between rhetoric and reality” (Chancer and McLaughlin 2007:165) in addressing violence against women. In my empirical research, I will explore the experiences and processes of VAW prevention stakeholders in undertaking this work in social media.

Feminist insistence that theories must be applicable to individual experience (e.g. Stanley and Wise 1993) is important to public scholarship. Public sociologists will find that their sociological theories and methods do not work with all publics and within all contexts. As such, discussions of how to engage in reflexive praxis are fundamental to the conversation of how to develop good public sociology and public criminology and how to be responsible experts in media arenas. Furthermore, as I will discuss in the final section, interdisciplinary research and practice should be a mainstay of public sociology.

Interdisciplinary practice

Merton (1949:163) argues that “it is well-known [that] a given practical problem ordinarily requires the collaborative researches of several social sciences”. Interdisciplinary knowledge is imperative for social change, yet is currently precariously positioned at the boundaries of sociology (Burawoy 2005b). Therefore, more attention is needed to theorizing the relationship between interdisciplinary collaboration and public sociology. Feminism is inherently interdisciplinary (Creese et al. 2009) and public sociologists can learn a great deal about effective integration of various scholarship from feminists who argue that “the more tools at the table the more we have to offer” (Risman

2006:287). Social problems are not single discipline issues.³¹ The role and value of sociological knowledge must be articulated as a tool to be used in conjunction with other disciplines, rather than giving public sociology “vanguard status” in defending humanity (Stacey 2007:95). This is important, not only for sociology to be a valued function of public life (see Ryan 2004), but in challenging increasingly market and career-focused reward structures that lead to excessive professionalization and insularity (Stacey 2007).

Interdisciplinary work is also important to recognize valuable work that has helped to create new publics (Lal 2008). Although Burawoy (2006:14) credits feminism with “shed[ding] disciplinary chauvinism by bridging disciplines in pursuit of women’s rights” while joining with extra-academic projects, Burawoy’s model does not sufficiently reflect the interdisciplinary research practices of much feminist research as well as that of other disciplines (e.g. public anthropology) (Creese et al. 2009). It is also too ambitious to imply that the feminist interdisciplinary work has “shed” disciplinary chauvinism. Feminism may have made huge gains in addressing patriarchal social structures (including within academia) but chauvinism (and racism, heterosexism, classism) have not been abolished within research or teaching, and interdisciplinary programs such as human rights and women’s studies struggle to exist at many universities. Sprague (2008) argues that, despite initial success transforming aspects of sociology, feminists in the academy have been disciplined, in the Foucauldian sense, into academic docility.³² Loxley (2008) suggests that “square peg” academics that identify with several disciplines may remain permanently at the margins, as the interdisciplinary intellectual is at times associated with lower quality education. While this may often be

³¹ This is reminiscent of the widely cited quote from Audre Lorde (1984:183): “There is no such thing as a single issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives.”

³² For further discussion, see Messer-Davidow (2002).

the case, the ubiquity of certain high profile and influential thinkers such as Noam Chomsky, bell hooks, and Michel Foucault suggests that in the public sphere, the ability to engage an interdisciplinary audience is rewarded rather than marginalized.

Public sociologists are not the only scholars wishing to disseminate and reformulate transformative disciplinary research among publics. In fact, there are at least ten arenas of academic focus customized by the adjective “public” (Nickel 2012).³³ However, it remains unclear where the public varieties of disciplines such as anthropology, geography, or history sit in relation to public sociology. As with conflicts among the four-part categories of sociology, Burawoy downplays the extent to which disciplinary perspectives may collide in tackling social problems. In a professional context, sociologists are able to discuss research problems, methods, and analysis in a sort of disciplinary cocoon (e.g. sociological conferences or journals). In a classroom, although students will often introduce ideas or frameworks from other disciplines, the sociologist is still in a hierarchical position as the expert, and it is generally accepted that a sociology course is by definition prioritizing sociological perspectives. Interdisciplinary work contains no such weighted position for the sociologist, and thus public sociologists may struggle with sharing expertise and negotiating strategies for solving problems alongside those whose own expertise will lead to different solutions. Moreover, each facet discussed here is further complicated by the fact that “the debates over public sociology involve words, concepts, institutions, and problems that transcend the disciplinary boundaries of sociology” (Nickel 2012:7). Frameworks that place social

³³ According to Nickel (2012:7-8), these include traditional “applied fields” of public administration, public policy, public finance, and public law, as well as more recent disciplines in the social sciences such as public anthropology, public criminology, public geography, public intellectual political scientists, and public neuroscience.

change at their core are already doing public sociology under a host of other names that reflect their interdisciplinary nature, such as community-engaged scholarship and action research (see Morton, Dolgon, Maher, and Pennell 2012; I also discuss these frameworks in further detail in Chapter Four). Promoting interdisciplinary efforts will not only increase the number of potential sites of engagement but may help to create new ones, therefore increasing the capacity for public scholarship that challenges the status quo.

Conclusion

Sociologists, criminologists, their practices, and their institutions are embedded in the web of historical, social, and political complexity with which they engage. In wondering why his call for public sociology would generate such a spectrum of criticisms, Burawoy not only glosses over the epistemological and ontological assumptions inherent in his program, but also underestimates the complexity and diversity of these disciplines, and their scholars. Thus, significant resistance and alienation accompanies the excitement that is evident from the past decade of academic conversation. Nonetheless, Burawoy's program has generated a valuable mainstream professional arena for scholars to ponder effecting social change.

In this chapter, I have discussed the theoretical foundations of public sociology and unpacked Burawoy's four-part typology of sociology and vision for public sociology. I have also explored criticisms of public sociology, drawing in particular from critical feminist insights. I have argued that a framework for public sociology is strengthened by reflecting on power inequalities that exist both within and outside of the university and attending to how these dynamics manifest in academic practice and rewards structures.

Overall, I wish to move beyond dichotomous good/bad understanding of public sociology. Thus, in the final part of this chapter, I explained how my dissertation draws from and moves forward from these debates by focusing on reflexivity, praxis, and interdisciplinary work as core pillars of public sociology. In the next chapter, I move away from Burawoy's vision of public sociology for the moment to focus on a longstanding example of public sociology: feminist activism, the mass media, and efforts to re- shape societal understanding of violence against women.

Chapter Three: Feminism, Violence Against Women Prevention, and Mass Media

Introduction

In this chapter I consider the relationship between feminism, violence against women (VAW) prevention, and mass media. Specifically, I review literature with a focus on the last fifty years to investigate the evolution of this relationship in North American contexts. Feminist struggles to construct VAW as a social problem have been underway for decades, and have had an important relationship with mass media throughout this time. As Chapter One explained, the boundary between news media producers and consumers is no longer clear. Thus, while we know much about how news media cover VAW in a one-way traditional media framework, we know less about how societal understandings of VAW are mediated through the two-way communications processes of social media. In Chapter Two, I explored blurring boundaries between research and activism through a framework of public sociology, and synthesized public sociology with feminist critiques. In this chapter, I argue that in light of ongoing changes in media landscape (i.e. the use and proliferation of social media), studying VAW prevention requires a feminist research base that takes into account the historical factors that have shaped these efforts, while also considering what unique opportunities and challenges are facilitated by social media. By focusing on these struggles, and this relationship, I am providing a foundation for the question “how are VAW prevention stakeholders using and experiencing social media?” which I will explore further in Chapters Six through Eight.

This chapter is divided into three sections, representing three phases of the mass media and VAW prevention relationship. In the first part of the chapter, I review

literature analyzing this relationship in the late 1960s and 1970s, explaining how battered women's activism became news. In the second section, I discuss mass media coverage of VAW through the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, explaining how news portrayals of VAW became sites of feminist critique, and then intervention and prevention. In the final section, I consider how, in recent years, online spaces have become key arenas of advocacy and research surrounding VAW, as well as sites of media intervention and creation.

Part I: How Battered Women's Activism Became News

Feminism and the press

North American media coverage in the late 1960s and early 1970s focused on the activities of the American feminist movement as a whole; attention to domestic violence would not occur until the late 1970s (see Tierney 1982).³⁴ A number of scholars have analyzed various aspects of the movement/media relationship during this time and identified its importance in laying a foundation for present day activism and advocacy (Smart and Smart 1978; Tierney 1982; Cancian and Ross 1981; van Zoonen 1992; Barasko and Schaffner 2006; Mendes 2011).³⁵ From the 1960s to the 1970s, news media served as a sort of record keeper of the feminist movement by tracking activities and reporting on progress of the movement. The quantity and tone of this coverage changed

³⁴ Of course, this attention was primarily focused on white, middle-class women, and activism and anti-violence work of historically marginalized groups such as Indigenous women has been widely neglected by much news media coverage of the woman's movement, as well as the woman's movement as a whole.

³⁵ One potentially-limiting characteristic of this research is that a majority focuses on the *New York Times*, an urban American publication often associated with some degree of class standing and educational status (see van Zoonen 1992 for an exception). However, given the respected nature of this publication, research seems to regard this publication as an indicator of mainstream success, i.e. once the *Times* has covered it, it is broadly legitimized.

quite significantly within this timeframe, as the women's movement struggled to be taken seriously by the mass media. There was little media coverage of the women's movement's early stages, and the movement developed independently of mass media (Cancian and Ross 1981). In fact, initial media coverage often portrayed movement activities as a joke, and the refusal of male editors to take "women's lib" seriously (Tuchman 1978; Howell 1990) suggests that the women's movement not only developed independently of, but perhaps in spite of, the mass media.

The lag between the feminist movement's expansion and an increase in news coverage of it may be explained by the fact that the early women's movement was seen as difficult to cover because it dealt with broad issues when news organizations were interested in specific events (Cancian and Ross 1981; Tuchman 1978b). Furthermore, many of (what were considered) the more radical groups operated in a non-hierarchical manner without a clearly defined leader. As such, it was difficult for the press to quickly identify and locate someone who was clearly the spokesperson (Cancian and Ross 1981). News organizations were also seen as problematic for the movement. For example, many feminists felt news coverage was "sparse, demeaning, and exploitative" and, therefore, groups often limited their interactions with journalists or other press representatives (Cancian and Ross 1981:17), a pattern that remains true at least in part today. Other scholars highlight the tense nature of this movement/mass media relationship (van Zoonen 1992) where coverage of movement goals, members, and actions was minimal and "frequently misrepresented and maligned feminists, portraying them as men-hating radicals out of touch with the concerns of average American women" (Bronstein 2005:783).

Perhaps due to this less than positive relationship with mass media, the women's movement focused on grassroots media strategies such as feminist newsletters and magazines as movement building tactics, where the objective was to develop a common discourse surrounding issues foundational to the movement, such as women's employment (Howell 1990). Nothing in the literature suggests that these tactics were specifically aimed at "getting in" to the mainstream media. However, it does appear that grassroots strategies of mediated communication were successful in helping to build the movement to a critical point where it would get picked up by the mass media. Despite initial media trivialization of the movement and general scarcity of mass media coverage, the years 1969 and 1970 were a tipping point for women's movement in terms of its relationship with news media. For example, *The New York Times* began 1969 by running an account of the "firsts" won by the women's movement during the previous year, suggesting that the mass media had designated the woman's movement a newsworthy object (Howell 1990). Starting about 1970, four distinct types of movement coverage developed in *The New York Times*: general news coverage; in-depth analysis; book reviews; and letters to the editor.³⁶ According to Howell (1990:32),

These areas of coverage represent not only efforts by the *Times* and the movement itself to chronicle events, but also illustrate the attempt by the *Times* and the movement itself to become understood by a larger audience.

There was a ten-fold increase in coverage of the women's movement between May 1969 and March 1970 (Morris 1973). Cancian and Ross (1981:20) explain that the "sudden surge" of media coverage at this time likely resulted from the movement gradually

³⁶ See Howell (1990:32) for further detail and description of each type of coverage.

increasing “in popularity and notoriety” to a point where individual news reporters took notice, rather than stemming from any major changes in movement activity.

Once breaking into the mass media, the women’s movement received mixed coverage. van Zoonen (1992) argues that while women’s emancipation was constructed as legitimate by the press, feminism was not. Furthermore, news framing of the movement as hostile to men was particularly salient and had far reaching consequences (van Zoonen 1992). Mendes (2011) analyzes four British and American newspapers reporting of the second-wave feminist movement from 1968 to 1982 and finds that coverage is contradictory, simultaneously portraying the women’s movement as effective and serious in some coverage, and ineffective and trivial in others. Moreover, the coverage demarcates between “legitimate” and “de-legitimate” feminists, where de-legitimate feminists are those who deviate from traditional feminine norms. This coverage functions to construct feminism as a “dirty word”, an association that Mendes (2011:483) argues still exists today.³⁷

Research exploring the North American mass media/women’s movement relationship from 1955 to 1995 finds that much news coverage degrades the legitimacy of the women’s movement (see Terkildsen and Schnell 1997; Costain, Bruanstein, and Berggren 1997; Ashley and Olson 1998).³⁸ Examples of this delegitimization include quotation marks around words such as “liberation” and emphasizing dissention within the movement (Ashley and Olson 1998). As I discuss in Chapter Eight, the diversity of feminist work makes for a less unified or organized message than that of anti-feminist

³⁷ Although significant anti-feminist backlash still exists in many spaces, I am not certain that feminism can still be described as a dirty word in all spaces. I will discuss anti-feminist backlash further in Chapter Eight.

³⁸ For a detailed discussion of news framing of the second-wave women’s movement, see Bronstein (2005).

groups such as Men's Rights Activists (MRAs). Moreover, when news coverage does portray the women's movement more seriously, there is a disconnect between the issues that news outlets cover and those that women's groups focus on. For example, Barasko and Schaffner (2006) analyze television and print news media coverage of women's movement organizations from 1969 to 2004 and compare news stories to women's groups' actual activities. These authors find an overrepresentation of abortion-related coverage and an underrepresentation of coverage of social programs and so-called family issues (including domestic violence). In more recent years, Bronstein (2005) explores news frames of third-wave feminism from 1992 to 2004 in *The New York Times* and finds that news coverage retains several stock frames from earlier coverage of the second wave (e.g. trivialization). While some of these frames were positive (e.g. portraying feminists as having agency), Bronstein argues that binary categorizations of second-wavers versus third wavers led to third-wave feminism being defined against second-wave feminism (e.g. "mannish" versus "attractive", "raucous" versus "agreeable").

These studies illustrate that it is also important to think about the news media's role in depicting and defining the activities and priorities of feminist research and activism. We see that social backlash and problems inherent in mainstream media coverage led feminist activists to rely on alternative media strategies to grow their movement to a critical mass, at which point news media began to take feminists, and their claims, seriously. News media are key means of public education about social problems such as VAW, but this involves a process of mutual shaping where news media both shape and are shaped by public attitudes and beliefs. VAW, although not an initial focus

of feminist activism and media coverage, became a significant issue of feminist advocacy in the mid-1970s and this, in turn, led to changes in media coverage of feminism.

The construction of rape and domestic violence as social problems

Feminists began to draw attention to “the wife-beating problem” in the mid 1970s (Loseke 1989). Prior to this, mass media (along with major social institutions and community organizations) had been largely silent on intimate partner violence (more widely referred to as domestic violence at this time), and general public interest ranged from indifference to tolerance (Tierney 1982). Tierney (1982) explains that because empirical research on intimate partner violence was not yet available, the women’s movement was not able to use data to support its claims. However, unlike the broader women’s liberation movement, the issue of battered women became a focus of the mainstream media quickly and was transformed from private shame to public concern within a decade (Tierney 1982).³⁹ Of course, this was likely due at least in part to the significant momentum gained by the women’s movement prior to the mid-1970s.

Although it may have happened seemingly quickly, the identification of intimate partner violence as a social problem did not happen organically. Rather, feminist work building a conversation in legal arenas, social services, and scholarship identified a problem with a

³⁹ To illustrate this point: Tierney’s analysis of the *New York Times* found no references “to wife beating as a social or community issue” from 1970 to 1972 (p. 212). After one reference a year in both 1973 and 1974, five articles appeared in 1975. These focused on a lack of police and legal cooperation in wife beating cases, a conference on battered women, and a National Organization of Women (NOW) march protesting violence against women (Tierney 1982). Seven articles appeared in 1976, and, following extensive coverage of a class action suit filed on behalf of abuse victims against New York police and family court, in 1977 this increased to 44 articles. For the first time, topics such as victim services, new and proposed legislation, shelters, public hearings, conferences, and events were discussed. In 1978, “battered wives” appeared for the first time as a separate topic in the *New York Times* index (Tierney 1982).

name and provided media with a framework and foci to talk about intimate partner violence (Tierney 1982).

During this time, feminist efforts also focused on spotlighting rape as a social problem (Rose 1977; Chasteen 2001). Organized anti-rape activism began in the late 1960s (Rose 1977), the first rape crisis hotline was established in Washington in 1972 (Wasserman 1973), and the first Rape Crisis Centre in Canada (Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter) opened in 1973 (Den Hertog 2008). In the United States, feminist participation in mass media was heavily focused on two separate high profile 1974 criminal trials of two women who were charged with killing men who had sexually assaulted them (Rose 1977).⁴⁰ Following extensive media coverage and commentary of these cases (particularly, as Rose (1977) notes, in the feminist press), sexual assault became a nation-wide focus of attention. In Canada, there was less feminist activism focused on specific news cases at this time. Instead, feminist groups were first concerned with having women acknowledge their own experiences of abuse and viewing this abuse as unacceptable (Fraser 2014). However, fifteen years later in 1989, the killing of fourteen female engineering students at l'École Polytechnique (an event widely known as the Montreal Massacre) "served to galvanize the feminist women's movement and also moved governments to "do something" after such a visibly violent event" (Fraser 2014:167). Within all of this work, feminist participation was critical to understanding sexual assault as a social problem of violence (not sex) and the role of misogyny in violence against women, as well as highlighting the gender and racial discrimination

⁴⁰ In the first case, Inez Garcia, a thirty-year-old Latina woman, was found guilty of the 1974 murder of a man who, Garcia testified, held her down while another man sexually assaulted her. In the second case, Joan Little, an African American woman, pled self-defense and was acquitted in the killing of a white guard who sexually assaulted her at the North Carolina jail where she was held. See Rose (1977) for further discussion.

inherent in public discourse about these crimes. This notion of carving out gender-based understandings of social problems is something that I will return to at the end of this chapter in the context of current public discourse around online sexual violence.

Tierney (1982:213-214) explains that the media/feminist anti-violence movement relationship was one of mutual benefit:

Wife beating was a good subject for the media. It was a “new” problem for the public, although certainly not for its victims. It was controversial. It mixed elements of violence and social relevance. It provided a focal point for serious media discussion of such issues as feminism, inequality, and family life in the United States- without requiring a sacrifice of the entertainment value, action, and urgency on which the media typically depend. Media attention was, in turn, an asset to the movement. Coverage first gave the movement visibility. Then, groups used media interest and the public concern that resulted to recruit support. Finally, wife beating came to be seen as a social problem... Movement pressure, combined with media attention, created a climate in which organizations already inclined to offer support to battered women could do so- and obtain benefits in return.

The process of obtaining benefits is what Tierney (1982) calls “incentives for sponsors”. Here, media attention entices institutional and community sectors to donate resources to battered women’s groups. Battered women’s groups are thus motivated to engage with mass media to draw in these resources, without which they could not provide services to victims (Tierney 1982). A challenge in this arena, as I discuss later in Chapters Seven and Eight, is that front line service providers may feel pressure to engage in media work when they are already under time pressure to serve clients.

By the early 1980s, sexual violence and intimate partner violence had come to be viewed as symbols of women’s oppression and therefore central to feminist attention and activism (Los and Charmard 1997). Feminist activists and researchers were key players in the construction of this violence as a social problem (Berns 2004). The 1980s rape law reform campaign and subsequent passage of 1983 sexual assault legislation in Canada,

led by women's organizations and feminist lawyers, resulted in a dramatic increase in awareness of sexual violence as a political issue (Los and Chamard 1997). Yet being recognized as newsworthy, though valuable, came with challenges. For example, Kozol (1995:662) argues:

Americans routinely see women raped, murdered, and otherwise brutalized in news coverage and entertainment... While this makes women's experiences of abuse visible, it also naturalizes them as the focus of attention, thus reinforcing their objectification.

In an analysis of *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail* coverage from 1980-1984, Los and Chamard (1997:322) find that women's representatives were frequently used as news sources leading up to the passage of the 1983 sexual assault legislation in Canada, but that "the authority of feminist voices was undermined by the tendency to portray them as biased, emotional, and incoherent". Additionally, media use of feminists as news sources dropped significantly once the legislation was passed (Los and Chamard 1997). These authors argue (1997:295) that feminist victories surrounding VAW prevention were, "perhaps inevitably", co-opted by prevailing media tendencies of sensationalization and trivialization. Despite increased public attention, then, mass media attention also meant that the battered women's movement no longer controlled the framing and messaging surrounding intimate partner violence to the same extent as when activists were publishing their own work and reaching out to women one-on-one. Rape law reform work was taking place, but it was occurring in a context fraught with rape myths and victim blaming, many of which still remain today. Media coverage, therefore, presented significant challenges as well as opportunities for VAW work, and became an important area of feminist engagement and critique moving forward.

Part II: Critiquing News Representation

The importance of news for VAW prevention

Media scholars generally agree that the mass media/societal relationship is one of mutual shaping, where media both reflect and reproduce aspects of social reality (e.g. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1991; Benedict 1992; Carll 2003). Not surprisingly then, media portrayals have garnered significant feminist attention as an important space to look at for both understanding and shaping attitudes and beliefs surrounding VAW, that elusive but critical area of primary prevention work. Following the successes of battered women's activism in acquiring news attention, news reporting of VAW became a particularly fruitful ground for feminist analysis and critique. This was in part because of the heightened public awareness and interest in violence against women (and thus the importance of shaping emerging understandings) as well as the potential for news outlets to "subtly alter the terms of the debate to achieve the end of selling newspapers" (Walby, Hay and Soothill 1983:94). Furthermore, frustrations with news reporting of the December 6, 1989 Montreal Massacre at l'École Polytechnique made it clear that Canadian media was "a discursive battleground for issues of violence against women" (Bradley 2006:930). Unlike much popular culture and fiction that generally prioritize entertainment over education,⁴¹ news media have, traditionally, an explicitly informational role, and journalists strive for objectivity as a core pillar of their work. Of course, scholars have problematized these notions of objectivity and neutrality in news

⁴¹ Portrayals of sexual harassment or non-lethal domestic violence are more frequently found in popular culture, which has a track record of misrepresentation and trivialization that has also been observed in news coverage of sexual harassment (Bing and Lombardo 1997). For example, a study of prime time television in the 1990s demonstrated that sexual harassment occurred in 84 percent of episodes, but was generally portrayed as humorous and something that women should be able to deal with themselves (Grauerholz and King 1997). Other research has critiqued the normalization of dating abuse in the popular teen-targeted *Twilight* series (Collins and Carmody 2011).

reporting, highlighting various power dynamics at play (for example, see Carter, Branston, and Allan 1998). Nonetheless, mainstream news has historically been viewed as both a powerful vessel for transmitting information (raising awareness) as well as a place to identify community and societal risk factors for VAW in the form of social norms, which perhaps explains why it has been such a consistent focus of feminist analysis over the last several decades.

In general, feminist critique of media coverage draws on empirical knowledge about VAW (see Stanko 1985; Johnson 1996; Jewkes et al. 2002; DeKeseredy 2011; Johnson and Dawson 2011) to highlight patterns of myths and misrepresentations. There have been many content analyses of media coverage of VAW conducted internationally, including in Canada (Voumvakis and Ericson 1984; Jiwani and Young 2006; Gilchrist 2010; Sampert 2010; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013), the U.S. (Meyers 1997; Los and Chamard 1997; Berns 2004; Bullock and Cubert 2002; Carll 2003; McManus and Dorfman 2005; Bullock 2007; Carlyle, Slater, and Chakroff 2008; Taylor 2009; Richards, Gillespie, and Smith 2013); the United Kingdom (Carter 1998; Wykes 2001; Dobash et al. 2004; 2009; Moore 2009; Meyer 2010); Australia (Howe 1997), Turkey (Alat 2006), South Africa (Bonnes 2013), and the Arabian Gulf (Halim and Meyers 2010).⁴² Although earlier studies focus more on qualitatively identifying and analyzing frames in news coverage (e.g. Meyers 1997; Bing and Lombardo 1997; Berns 2004); the last decade or so has seen a particular growth in quantitative and/or mixed methods approaches (e.g. Bullock 2007; Caryll 2008; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013; Richards et al. 2013). Additional

⁴² It should be noted this is an overview of research published in English only. For examples of French-language Canadian study on press coverage of intimate partner violence, see Guérard and Lavender (1999) and Boudreau and Ouimet (2010).

research draws from other approaches, including discourse analysis (Howe 1997) and psycho-linguistic studies (Henley, Miller, and Beazley 1995).

While these studies primarily focus on news media coverage of sexual violence and intimate partner violence, scholarship also focuses on other facets of media coverage of VAW. In Canada, for example, research analyzes disparities in coverage of missing and murdered women from marginalized communities (e.g. Jiwani and Young 2006), including the invisibility and/or stereotyping of missing and murdered Indigenous women (Gilchrist 2010). Other research analyzes Internet rape sites (Gossett and Byrne 2002), explores media coverage of battered women who kill their abusive partners (Noh 2010), and traces the evolution of concepts such as date rape over time (Moore 2011).

Psychological research has attempted to explore the impact of media coverage of VAW on audience punishment beliefs (Palazzolo 2011) and the effects of rape myth acceptance (Bohner et al. 2009). Recent scholarship has also undertaken a more intersectional approach through exploring patterns of gender and race stereotyping in sexual assault coverage (Bonnes 2013; Jackson 2013). While the details of the above analyses vary, the overall finding is consistent: mainstream media coverage perpetuates negative myths and stereotypes surrounding VAW that potentially impede social and political progress to address this violence. My interest in this chapter is in tracing the relationship between mass media and feminist efforts to prevent VAW from the 1970s to present. It is therefore important to understand the nuances of this body of news critique literature in more depth, both in terms of how VAW is represented, and also in terms of how these frames may relate to more recent VAW prevention efforts. In highlighting problematic patterns in news coverage, scholars are identifying and articulating key targets for

prevention: particular social attitudes that condone, tolerate, enable, and/or promote VAW. These critiques, therefore, may provide examples of how VAW prevention stakeholders are using social media (e.g. to provide context, challenge victim-blaming). Additionally, they provide a baseline for understanding what is different or unique about social media use and news media critique when it comes to VAW prevention. To provide such a framework, I next discuss literature according to what I identify as five areas or subfields of feminist critique of mass media coverage of VAW: (1) lack of context; (2) victim portrayals; (3) perpetrator portrayals; (4) news sources; and (5) crime of passion narratives.

(Lack of) context

Perhaps the most consistent observation in the literature is the tendency of mass media to focus on VAW as involving isolated events with primarily individual-level causes (e.g. being drunk, having a mental illness). Many scholars make note of the lack of discussion in the mass media surrounding the larger social and political forces that contribute to the occurrence of sexual violence and intimate partner violence against women (Forsyth-Smith 1995; Meyers 1997; Hackett and Gruneau 2000; Bullock and Cubert 2002; Berns 2004; Carlyle et al. 2008; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013). Bullock (2002) identifies this focus on individualized events as episodic coverage. Carlyle et al. (2008) explain that episodic news relies on individual explanations (“he believed she was cheating”), whereas thematic coverage relies on social explanations (“possessiveness is one sign of an abusive relationship”). In episodic coverage, the relevant problems, causes, solutions lie within individuals and their private (intimate) relationships and not their

communities and larger societies. The tendency towards episodic coverage is of course not unique to VAW, but is a pattern well established in news coverage in general (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1991). However, some research finds that intimate partner violence is actually covered less frequently and with less depth than other forms of violence, and that intimate partner violence is less likely to be reported as a thematic issue (about 1 in 8 stories) than other violence (about 1 in 3 stories) (McManus and Dorfman 2005). Bullock and Cubert (2002) find that less than 1 in 4 Washington State newspaper articles label the homicide as domestic violence, and that only 1 in 10 frame the homicide within the larger context of intimate partner violence.

There are particular consequences to portraying VAW episodically, for the public gets much of its information about sexual violence and intimate partner violence through media (Wozniak and McCloskey 2010; Richards et al. 2013). Of course, audiences are not passive, and do not simply accept media frames with no critical thought (Doyle 2006). Yet while the relationship between news media and public understandings is complex, much audience research suggests that media portrayals foster and reinforce particular perceptions of and attitudes toward violent crime (e.g. Anastasio and Costa 2004; Roberts and Doob 1990). As such, news frames help to shape if the public considers intimate partner violence something that certain individuals need to work through, or a broader issue requiring community-wide solutions (Carlyle 2008). In an analysis of male and female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide news coverage in the U.S., Wozniak and McCloskey (2010) find that 72 percent of coverage does not mention domestic violence or intimate partner violence. Bullock and Cubert (2002:493) argue that, by failing to connect individual cases to the broader social problem, news coverage

fails to provide the public with “the vocabulary with which to discuss domestic violence”.⁴³ One U.S. study of how news media portray intimate partner violence reveals that discussion of government responses to intimate partner violence is present in only eight percent of articles (Carlyle et al. 2008). Thus, from an ecological model of violence prevention (discussed in Chapter One), news coverage is primarily concerned with individual level risk factors and there is an absence of education as to the relationship, community, and societal factors that need to change to prevent VAW. Carlyle et al. (2008) argue that it is important to consider the potential public health impacts of knowledge and awareness about intimate partner violence against women. By failing to discuss important factors (e.g. the prevalence of psychological abuse, heightened risk of lethal violence when leaving abusive relationships, and/or the availability of community support services for current and potential victims), media coverage presents an incomplete and distorted picture of violence, filled with what Benedict (1992) deems “tiny lies”.

In the widely cited work *Virgin or Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crimes*, Benedict (1992) provides a framework for feminist understanding and advocacy about media portrayals of VAW as well as how these crimes and the individuals involved are constructed more broadly. Related to this theme of a lack of context in reporting, Benedict finds that a reporter’s understanding of sexual violence is actually a more

⁴³ For example, Bullock and Cubert (2002) and Bullock (2007) explain that even when intimate partner violence is covered, many newspapers stop short of referring to it as “intimate partner violence”, “domestic violence”, or “domestic abuse”. Furthermore, terminology such as “violent history” and “battered women” is also infrequently used. In general, when identifying the nature of the crime, newspapers generally “described the crime and the victim-perpetrator relationship early on and largely let readers draw their own conclusions” (Bullock and Cubert 2002:483).

significant influence on news coverage than the reporter's gender.⁴⁴ This suggests that simply changing the demographic makeup of the newsroom (i.e. more women reporters) is not sufficient for better news coverage. Additionally, rather than dismissing problematic coverage as a product of bad journalism, Benedict (1992) argues that sexual assault myths⁴⁵ leave reporters little choice, since whatever details they choose to publish about the victim will be either used against them (vamp classification) or, in the absence of any unflattering or negative qualities of the victim, will reinforce the "virgin" ideal.⁴⁶ In other words, to actually develop healthier attitudes and beliefs around VAW, we cannot simply campaign for better news coverage, but must recognize the mutual shaping of news and society by doing broader public education to shape how information presented in news portrayals is received. News portrayals must be considered not only for their content (e.g. the victim was intoxicated) but for their larger meaning in a society that has historically placed responsibility on women to protect themselves from sexual assault (e.g. "drunk girls are asking for it"). At the same time, journalists and media organizations are part of the larger culture, and can be engaged as partners and collaborators to change news coverage as well as public understanding of the information in this coverage. My project explores the multi-directional information sharing and

⁴⁴ As Benedict's (1992:6) argues, "a myth-saturated woman will be just as insensitive to the subject of rape as a myth saturated man, especially given the conditions and habit of newsroom behavior." Benedict analyzed news content of four sexual assault cases, and interviewed the reporters responsible for these stories. It should be noted that, in this analysis, Benedict approached the research "as a social critic rather than as a social scientist" (p. 5). Perhaps for this reason, no quantitative descriptions of the news reports or journalists gender are provided.

⁴⁵ Rape myths identified by Benedict (1992) include: rape is sex; the assailant is motivated by lust, is perverted or crazy, and/or is a person of colour and/or lower class; women provoke or deserve rape and only 'loose' women are victimized; sexual assault 'sullies' women; rape is a punishment for past deeds; women cry rape for revenge.

⁴⁶ More recent research, which provides needed intersectionality to this framework, emphasizes that factors such as race and racism play an important role in shaping societal attitudes about women and their sexualities (e.g. Karaian 2012).

conversations happening around VAW. It emphasizes that the conversations that happen around these news stories, as well as the news stories themselves, are important for VAW prevention, and that social media has an important role in this regard.

Victim portrayals

Much research has observed media tendencies to blame women for their victimization (Smart 1978; Voumvakis and Ericson 1984; Benedict 1992; Bing and Lombardo 1997; Meyers 1997). Benedict (1992:3) explains that analyzing news reporting of sex crimes is not simply press criticism, but is “a way of examining public attitudes toward women, sex, and violence, and the role the press plays in establishing or reinforcing these attitudes”. In Benedict’s virgin/vamp dichotomy, the “woman as vamp” coverage establishes that “the woman, by her looks, her behavior or generally loose morality, drove the man to such extremes of lust that he was compelled to commit the crime”, while the “woman as virgin” narrative is that “the man, a depraved and perverted monster, sullied the innocent victim, who is now a martyr to the flaws of society” (1992:24).⁴⁷ Scholars have found this latter version to be the dominant portrayal of rapists in popular culture such as movies (Bufkin and Eschholz 2000). Related to the discussion in the previous section, the absence of thematic context of VAW is important because it increases available discursive space for sexual assault myths. And as long as these myths hold sway, news accounts are likely to be constructed and read within these frameworks (Benedict 1992).

⁴⁷ Benedict (1992:19) identifies several factors that contribute to public and the press perceiving the woman victim as “vamp”: victim knows the assailant; no weapon is used; victim and perpetrator are of the same class, race, and/or ethnic group; victim is young and/or considered pretty; and if the victim in any way deviated from the traditional female sex role of being at home with family or children at the time of the attack.

Many studies of news reporting of intimate partner violence find that news accounts frequently engage in subtle or overt victim blaming (e.g. emphasizing the victim started an argument, or was possibly unfaithful) (Campbell 1992; Wykes 2001; Bullock and Cubert 2002; Bullock 2007; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013). Other studies argue that while the majority of news coverage does not blame women victims of intimate partner violence, this does occur more often than with victims of other violent crime (McManus and Dorfman 2005). Bullock and Cubert (2002:493) found that even when victim blaming is not present, a majority of coverage provides “no sense of the victim’s experience” as a result of the lack of broader context. Reducing myths and stereotyping in news coverage, then, involves simultaneously reducing victim responsabilization⁴⁸ while increasing coverage of the relationship, community, and societal factors contributing to VAW. In addition, research indicates this will need to involve targeting myths and stereotypes surrounding perpetrators of VAW.

Perpetrator portrayals

Scholars have identified a strong association between perpetrator excusing and victim blaming news frames (Taylor 2009; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013). For example, news coverage of intimate partner violence may indirectly blame the victim by using sympathetic language to describe the perpetrator, assigning equal blame to both partners, and emphasizing the perpetrator’s mental, physical, emotional, and financial problems (Taylor 2009). Tendencies to pathologize the perpetrator by focusing on various stresses that made him “snap” or “lose it” are also well documented by feminist scholars (Dobash et al. 2004; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013). Additionally, the perpetrator’s role may be de-

⁴⁸ See Karaian (2012) for further discussion of responsabilization.

emphasized by providing humanizing details about his life in order to suggest he is a good person, and/or by placing blame on outside factors such as drugs and alcohol (Bonnes 2013). The emphasis on humanizing or empathizing with the perpetrator seems to be particularly strong in murder-suicides, and even more so when the perpetrator is a respected community member such as a police officer (Taylor 2009). Nettleton's (2011) analysis of men's magazines found that men's responsibility for their abuse was de-emphasized through drawing from explanations that they were naturally inclined to be violent due to biology, difficult childhoods, sports careers (e.g. equating physical assault with competitive sports behaviour), and military service (e.g. "snapping" from post-traumatic stress disorder). Thus, the dominant news frame was "they cannot help themselves" and that it was up to the women in these relationships to not provoke men and/or choose better partners (Nettleton 2011:153). It is important to note here that discussion of issues of abuse in childhood and the construction of masculinity and violence in sports and the military can be important opportunities to highlight the systemic nature of VAW. However, these opportunities are absent without the news story providing context, and when focusing solely on individual experiences and not broader patterns of socialization.

When not portraying them as otherwise ordinary guys who "snapped" (Dobash et al. 2004), there is a strong tendency in media coverage of VAW to portray perpetrators as either invisible actors or deranged monsters. Furthermore, coverage may de-emphasize the role of the perpetrator by using linguistic styles that separate the perpetrator and the rape, such as the passive voice (e.g. "a woman was sexually assaulted by a man" rather than "a man sexually assaulted a woman") (Bonnes 2013). Other scholars critique the use

of the passive voice in news reporting, explaining that this frequently used tool obscures the agency and responsibility of those with greater power and status in society (Henley, Miller, and Beazley 1995).⁴⁹ Furthermore, the passive voice may result in truncated or “agentless” writing, where the actor is removed altogether (Henley et al. 1995).⁵⁰ In sexual violence coverage, Henley, Miller, and Beazley (1995) find that (male) readers attribute less harm to the victim/survivor, and less responsibility to the perpetrator, when news reports used the passive voice to describe sexual violence. In intimate partner violence coverage, Frazer and Miller (2009) find that passive voice is used more often in narrating intimate partner violence perpetrated by men than violence perpetrated by women. Furthermore, after repeated exposure to stories using the passive voice, people “became more negative toward rape victims, more accepting of rape myths, and more accepting of physical abuse of women” (Frazer and Miller 2009:80). Rather than viewing this as an intentional or conscious act, the authors argue that such writing is “in most cases the result of the unconscious working of the culture’s attitudes supporting of violence against women and of our tacit knowledge of the meaning carried by syntactic forms” (2009:81). In other words, at a societal level, we are used to hearing that women may get raped if they do not take adequate precautions to protect themselves (e.g. walking in groups at night, avoiding getting drunk, and/or making sure they do not send so-called mixed signals). Our implicit understanding that “women get assaulted” rather

⁴⁹ Benedict (1992:9) explains that “the antifemale bias in our language” is a compounding factor that, in addition to sexism in the press and myths about rape, furthers the harmful coverage of sexual assault. See Benedict (1992:19-21) for a discussion of sexism inherent in the English language.

⁵⁰ The example the authors provide here is the passive phrase “In the U.S. a woman is raped by a man every 6 minutes” to “In the U.S. a woman is raped every 6 minutes.” The active phrase would be “In the U.S. a man rapes a woman every 6 minutes).

than “men assault” is, therefore, reflected in the increased use of the passive voice, which further reinforces this understanding.

Journalistic pursuit of ‘objectivity’, sometimes attempted through a perceived need to tell both sides of a story using a he said/she said model, can also be harmful to victims and survivors of VAW, particularly given the stigma and backlash many survivors of violence experience. However, in select instances, research demonstrates that this desire to be objective can also result in challenging problematic framing. For example, McManus and Dorfman (2005) find that in coverage that features perpetrator-excusing frames, these frames are frequently challenged by other sources. In other words, for media coverage that tends to revolve around “he seemed like such a great guy” narratives, norms of objectivity can at least interject an element of thematic analysis. What is particularly significant about McManus and Dorfman’s (2005) study (which also found very little victim-blaming relative to other studies of news coverage) is that both of the regions where they draw newspaper data from have domestic violence death review committees,⁵¹ which may result in more progressive news coverage (McManus and Dorfman 2005). Feminists have identified a need for inclusion of VAW experts (survivors, advocates, and researchers) in news coverage to present a counter-narrative to many historically entrenched myths, such as the frequent explanation that VAW (and intimate partner violence specifically) is a crime of passion.

⁵¹ Domestic violence death review committees review cases of intimate partner homicides to make recommendations to prevent future homicides. For example, in Ontario, the purpose of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee is “is to assist the Office of the Chief Coroner in the investigation and review of deaths of persons that occur as a result of domestic violence, and to make recommendations to help prevent such deaths in similar circumstances” (Domestic Violence Death Review Committee 2012 Annual Report 2014:4).

Crime of passion

The concept of crime of passion is a deeply ingrained ideology surrounding intimate partner violence. It is so deeply rooted, in fact, that we can study social responses to intimate partner violence in historical contexts such as late nineteenth-century Paris, (long before the existence of terms such as “domestic violence”) by studying what were known as “crimes of passion” (Ferguson 2007). Despite social change, political shifts, and new systems of language, the notion of the crime of passion has had sticking power in social discourse. This is clearly seen in true crime genres (e.g. Engel 2007) and in television dramas such as *Crime of Passion*, a six-part miniseries that aired for two years in Canada on, somewhat oddly, the Women’s Network (W Network). *Crime of Passion* dramatized homicides that occur “in the heat of the moment... driven by love, or, in most cases, the potential of loss of love” (Corpus Entertainment 2006).⁵²

One feature of dramatized cases of intimate partner homicide is that they frequently focus on women who kill intimate partners and are therefore not representative of the gendered nature of intimate partner homicide more broadly (Johnson and Dawson 2011). Wykes (2001:149) explains that the potential for sensationalism and stereotyping in intimate partner homicide is extremely high because “not only are intimate murders violent and deviant but they also allow journalists to generate the sexual innuendo and romantic drama for audiences with which they can ‘tickle the public’”. Although Wykes is speaking specifically of news coverage, this observation is particularly relevant when

⁵² The show appears to be purposefully focused on cases that readily fit the crime of passion narrative. For example, the show description states that: “These crimes are not pre-meditated; the perpetrator has no previous convictions, and has shown no violent tendencies” (Corpus Entertainment 2006).

considering the current lineup of the television network Investigation Discovery,⁵³ which features titles such as *'Til Death Do Us Part*, *Scorned: Love Kills*, *Stalked: Someone's Watching*, and *Wives with Knives* (Bibel 2012).

Numerous scholars problematize the misleading nature of crime of passion as an explanation of VAW (Wilson and Daly 1992; Meyers 1997; Herbst and Gez 2012; Dawson 2006). Dawson (2006) compares intimate partner and non-intimate partner killings and finds greater evidence of premeditation in intimate partner homicide killings. Despite this, media framing of intimate partner violence as a tragedy of “loving too much” or “romantic obsession” persists (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013). Even if the label crime of passion is not used directly, it may be used indirectly through the notion of a jealous rage, or of the perpetrator “snapping” after being left or rejected (Wilson and Daly 1992). Beyond its potential for sensationalizing and trivializing these deaths, one consequence of crime of passion explanations is that there is no call to action to address VAW, since the systemic and gendered nature of this violence is ignored when the focus is on an individual who “lost it” (Meyers 1997). Because we cannot prevent what we cannot predict, acceptance that intimate partner homicides are crimes of passion is a significant barrier for prevention.

The notion of a crime of passion is often tied to the legal defense of provocation, which, although not used solely in cases of intimate partner violence, has roots steeped in

⁵³ According to its website, Investigation Discovery (ID) “brings justice to television with a deeper look into the world of crime, forensics, paranormal investigation and modern mysteries. ID offers arresting entertainment that delivers remarkable insight into the thrilling twists and turns of real-life investigation and the most intriguing puzzles of human nature. Launched in Canada in 2010, Investigation Discovery reveals the fascinating human potential for good and evil.”

the understanding of women as men's property (Cote, Majury, and Sheehy 2000).⁵⁴ Advocacy efforts have specifically targeted "love kills" messaging in news coverage (see Herbst and Gez 2012), but this has historically been an uphill battle. As Campbell (1992) notes, even when evidence of premeditation is present, news stories tend to focus on aspects of the killing that can be constructed as spontaneous. To my knowledge, no research to date has analyzed the specific presence of crime of passion framing of sexual violence. However, I would argue that the historical use of "uncontrollable" sexual desire in legal and social discourse as a supposed explanation for rape has important similarities to crime of passion explanations. Namely, viewing rape as the product of so-called uncontrollable sexual urges, as with crime of passion explanations, involves individual focus on men and an assumption of extreme biological and psychological responses as causal elements of VAW. According to feminist media critiques, these limited understandings are reproduced at least in part by a lack of expert voices that can speak to the other ecological levels of VAW.

Inadequate news sources

A final core area of feminist critique of mass media portrayals of VAW is that information and perspectives provided tend to be primarily official news sources such as police and other criminal justice officials. While this pattern is found in a majority of crime news coverage (Welch et al. 1997), it has been a particular concern of feminist advocacy and scholarship in recent years. O'Hara (2012) finds that media coverage of

⁵⁴ See Cote et al. (2000) for further explanation of the patriarchal nature of the defense of provocation. Although the defense was restricted to married men initially (men had no legal "claim" to their girlfriends or mistresses), the definitional boundaries of provocation have expanded significantly since the Second World War to encapsulate scenarios of "nagging wife", "wife's disobedience" and suspected (as opposed to witnessed) infidelity, for example.

sexual assault is often focused more on the impact for the community and family of the perpetrator than that of the victim. Although journalists may not have access to the survivor and/or their families, O'Hara argues that counselors or medical professionals would be beneficial news sources, and that by failing to obtain such perspectives, journalists are trivializing VAW. Police may be seen as sufficient news sources because they are viewed as objective or neutral voices, and also because access to police is generally available and institutionalized at news media outlets. However, police and other criminal justice professionals offer specific types of information on VAW and, in our myth-saturated society, the so-called objectivity tied to relying on official sources may have opposite results. For example, in Canadian cities where police are less involved in sending out news releases, newspaper coverage of sexual assault has significantly fewer victim-blaming news stories (Sampert 2010).

Inclusion in mass media is an important part of prevention work because it represents an opportunity to mitigate harmful myths and stereotypes while simultaneously providing education about the pervasiveness and complexity of VAW. In this way, it is an opportunity to change attitudes that trivialize, contribute to, and support VAW. Yet despite their success in increasing visibility and knowledge of VAW, activists, scholars, and service providers remain remarkably absent from mass media coverage. Bullock and Cubert (2002) find that intimate partner violence experts, women's groups, and/or advocacy group perspectives are included in approximately four percent of cases studied. Carlyle et al. (2008) found that only five percent of coverage contained information about resources such as shelters, advocacy and counselling, and/or hotline and website services. In a content analysis of Utah newspapers, Bullock (2008)

found that coverage of intimate partner homicide and attempted homicides was built primarily on criminal justice sources, while VAW experts were almost never used in shorter pieces and in only approximately 12 percent of long (14 paragraphs or more) pieces. In Canadian news coverage, a comparison of Toronto newspaper coverage from the late 1970s and the early 2000s found no VAW organizations, researchers, or service providers used as news sources in either time period (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013).

Feminists emphasize the need for more VAW expert perspectives in mass media in order to help achieve five major goals. First, to *name the problem*: sexual violence and intimate partner violence against women must be labeled and understood as such if they are to be understood as social problems (Meyers 1997; Johnson 2006). Current popular news sources such as police and lawyers operate, respond to, and prevent VAW on a primarily individual case basis (though of course they may also be involved in working towards systemic change through task forces and legal reform). Researcher, advocate, and service provider voices are therefore necessary to provide context surrounding the particular dynamics of VAW (including emotional and psychological violence) and to incorporate all levels (ecologies) of VAW prevention. Because these perspectives work from a standpoint where VAW exists as an identifiable and measurable social issue (however complicated it may be to do so), their participation in news discourse shifts the framing from an individual event to a social problem with a name. Second, researcher, advocate, and service provider voices are necessary to *offer a counter-discourse to individual pathology*: In the absence of alternative explanation, there is no reason to think that the “he snapped” or “she asked for it” explanations for violence will fade out by their own accord. The social voice of advocates, researchers and services providers questions

the assumption that this violence is only due to individual pathology, and presents another option for perceiving and responding to this violence. A third goal is to *identify systemic failings*: If causes of VAW are portrayed as solely or predominantly within individuals, then there is little impetus to scrutinize our social structures in this regard. However, broader expertise may be able to highlight cracks in systemic responses to VAW: for example, failure to issue or enforce a restraining order, or unwillingness to report sexual abuse due to fear of social stigma or further abuse. Fourth, feminists emphasize the need for VAW expert perspectives in order to *highlight the gendered nature of VAW*: In an attempt to be neutral, news media may portray intimate partner violence as something that “goes both ways” (see Easteal, Holland, and Judd 2015), or report sexual violence in a she said/he said antagonistic style. These frames do not acknowledge that the majority of intimate partner violence is perpetrated by men and directed at women, and that the consequences of this violence are consistently more severe for women than for men (Johnson 2006),⁵⁵ as well as playing into the myth that women often lie about sexual assault. Research and advocacy perspectives can speak to these trends at a broader level, which is also helpful when reporters do not have the information or legal ability to discuss an individual case. Finally, these voices may be able to *question the socio-cultural roots of violence*: Activist work argues that VAW needs to be reframed as a problem of men’s violence that results from the social and cultural environment, including hegemonic masculinity (Katz 2006; Kimmel 2009). Feminist media analyses have demonstrated that by using various media as tools to draw

⁵⁵ This is not to suggest that the study of female-perpetrated violence is unnecessary; for an analysis of female-to-male violence in Canadian dating relationships, see DeKeseredy, Saunders, Schwartz, and Alvi (1997).

attention to a wider range of influences and factors, we can begin to question the way in which power relations in society produce VAW.

This desire to change the use of news sources, shape of news coverage, and social attitudes that tolerate VAW has been a core aspect of feminist action. As discussed earlier, the battered women's movement experienced significant success in highlighting sexual violence and intimate partner violence as social problems, but faced media relationship hurdles due to the movement's concerns with exploitive media coverage, as well as press failure to identify and access adequate news sources. Following this initial relationship, we see that more recent feminist media studies outlined here identify the crucial need for feminist analysis to: (1) draw attention to the way in which mass media portrayals of battered women have symbolically annihilated (Tuchman 1978a) the feminist position so integral to this movement; (2) challenge dominant mass media discourses; and (3) advance strategies to promote broad public understanding of this violence as both socially produced and socially problematic. Thus, in addition to critiquing news media, feminists have outlined and even implemented strategies to improve context and reduce myths and stereotyping in news coverage of VAW. Through this, mass media became targets of feminist media critique in addition to their role reporting feminist issues and activities. In more recent years, this relationship has continued to evolve, with recent shifts in the media landscape enabling a more interactive relationship.

Part III: Media Interventions

Feminist news collaboration

In addition to problematizing much media coverage, feminist media analyses have highlighted promising practices and identified directions for better VAW coverage. For example, scholars such as Bullock and Cubert (2002) and Richards et al. (2011) find a small number of articles that portray intimate partner violence as a social problem: providing context by linking to other cases, quoting intimate partner violence experts, discussing the work of advocacy groups and agencies, and/or including hot-line numbers or other resources. Moving forward, Carlyle et al. (2008) argue that mass media should work towards the inclusion of information about victimization rates, elements of the criminal justice process, government response to intimate partner violence, and/or a public health perspective addressing prevention or the health consequences of intimate partner violence. Carll (2003) has identified several priorities for better news coverage of VAW, including: preventing the minimization of these crimes, increasing coverage of new policy and legislation that attempts to prevent violence against women (to highlight the seriousness of these crimes); follow-up coverage of the consequences and outcomes of violence against women; discussion of various aspects of domestic violence, including information about consequences of mandatory reporting. These discussions provide tangible strategies that further earlier calls to develop journalism courses in this area (Byerly 1994) and to change news practices and processes for covering VAW (Benedict 1992; Meyers 1997).

Feminism is built on a foundation of praxis, representing a commitment to putting theoretical and empirical knowledge into action to effect social change (Stanley 1990).

While earlier VAW work did this through the battered women's movement and rape law reform, the 1990s and 2000s saw significant movement in terms of active intervention in media representation to target social norms (among many other feminist priorities such as racism, reproductive justice, labour equity, and so forth). For example, Ryan, Anastario, and DaCunha (2006) worked with the Rhode Island Coalition against Domestic Violence (RICADV) to undertake a longitudinal initiative to increase organizational communications capacity to have a news media presence and engage journalists.

Journalists work in an environment structured by deadlines and this requires the development of systems where news friendly VAW news sources can be sought out in an accessible and efficient manner (Ryan et al. 2006). From 1996-2000, RICADV conducted content analysis of news coverage of intimate partner homicides, held focus groups with survivors of violence, and interviewed reporters and editors to understand their knowledge of intimate partner violence. From this, in 2000 the Coalition developed and disseminated a handbook for journalists reporting on intimate partner homicides. The handbook was used as a catalyst for relationship building to continue to engage in dialogue with journalists (Ryan et al. 2006). In terms of building organizational capacity, RICADV undertook specific organizational strategies including hiring a communications coordinator/media liaison, establishing a media database, creating a media caucus, and running public education campaigns. The core philosophy of these actions was that the organization "did not simply expect reporters to change" but rather, "changed its own practices to respond to reporters needs" (Ryan et al. 2006:223). Through these initiatives, the organization became the primary background news source for intimate partner violence, and local news reports of these events, previously framed as unpredictable

private tragedies, shifted to more commonly frame these homicides as social problems warranting public intervention (Ryan et al. 2006).

Of course, advocacy groups and organizations face significant constraints in terms of availability of resources to undertake such a process. However, while such an extensive commitment to participatory communications approaches may be difficult, in recent years media guides for reporting on domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or violence against women more broadly have been developed in States such as Chicago (Chicago Task Force on Violence Against Girls and Young Women 2012); Iowa (Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team 2009), Michigan (Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence 2009), Minnesota (Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault 2013), as well as Scotland (Zero Tolerance n.d.), South Africa (InterPress Service 2009), and here in Canada (Femifesto 2013). The Rhode Island handbook has been developed into an online guide integrated into the Coalition's website (RICADV 2013). More locally, as I discuss in Chapter Five, from 2013 to 2014 I worked with the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) to develop a Media Hub for journalists reporting on various forms of VAW, which includes tip sheets on topics including intimate partner violence, violence against Indigenous women, violence against people identifying as LGBTQ, and sexual violence involving social media. While the creation of media reporting toolkits may have been underway prior to the mid-2000s, the ubiquity of the Internet allows for a massively expanded audience for information dissemination. Additionally, instead of focusing on individual reporters and news organizations, feminist efforts to re-present VAW can take a more direct and hands-on approach by producing our own media content.

As I have discussed so far, mass media and feminists have been engaged in a mutually influential relationship for decades around VAW. Beyond the specific purpose of changing news coverage, research and advocacy work in this area is significant because it is part of a climate that recognizes harm associated with media sexism and misrepresentation, and demands gender equity in media more broadly. Sarnavka's (2003:91) comments from the Association for Women's Rights in Development Forum, *Using the master's tools: Feminism, media and ending violence against women*, attests that women worldwide are "harnessing the power of mainstream media to change minds and hearts" about women's human rights, and VAW in particular. Significantly, Sarnavka argues that VAW is being recognized,

not only as violence against women in society, but as violence committed in the media. By this we mean all misrepresentations, distorted reflections, sexism and silencing of women's voices, which violate women's right to equal access to public discourse (p. 91).

This shift from viewing mass media primarily as a tool to change social norms around VAW to additionally viewing media as a space where violence can be committed through sexism and misrepresentation is significant. Of course, other feminist scholars have argued that pornography is a form of VAW (see MacKinnon 1989). Yet the idea that sexism and misogyny could be individually harmful on their own terms, rather than simply associated with other forms of violence, represents the overlap of violent acts with broader ecological factors such as attitudes and beliefs. The notion of violence as encompassing more than physical acts is something I will discuss further in Chapters Seven and Eight. This changing understanding of violence, explains Sarnavka (2003:92), represents a shift in feminist interest:

The production of attractive media artefacts- created according to the highest professional standards, as well as being empowering and not sexist or discriminatory- has not been among the priorities of women's movement so far...No ongoing education of women activists on media production and media literacy has been conducted. Nor has the education of journalists on gender issues been a priority.

By reaching out to media workers (journalists, editors) and producing media toolkits, this branch of VAW prevention work is recognizing that providing solutions is a necessary addition to pointing out problems. Now well into the twenty-first century, feminists have additional resources and networks at our disposal to bridge critique and action surrounding mass media. The integration of the Internet into everyday life means that VAW prevention and the production of feminist media content have been taken up online. While the production of feminist media itself is not new (pamphlets, posters, and zines were all around pre-Internet, for example), there are unique aspects to online feminist work, particularly in the age of social media, which have significant implications for VAW prevention.

Social media and issue mediation

As Chapter One explains, in recent years the media landscape has shifted to a participatory media culture where mass media are sites of social activity: people connect, mobilize, debate, and create online, shaping social reality through their interactions. Earlier in this chapter, I described how, pre-social media, feminist activism and scholarship were instrumental in critiquing mass media coverage and disseminating feminist press in alternative spaces (e.g. *Bitch Media* magazine). Yet the growth and

proliferation of social media during the mid-2000s⁵⁶ blurred the line between mainstream media and alternative media and permeated the division between news producers and news consumers. Thinking about media representations as one-way, media-to-audience communication is appropriate within the context of newspapers, television, and radio (what are, at present, often called traditional media). However, the growth of social media and the consequential ability to create, link to, repost, and embed material in real time, and within broad networks, means that mass media content is closer (both visually and temporally) to the social responses it generates. Moreover, online tools for individual expressions and reactions (tweets, forums, comments, videos, and so forth) are themselves media content.

The blurring of boundaries, ubiquity of social media, and trend toward user-generated content means that how the media represent VAW has become less distinguishable from how the public mediates, or makes sense of, VAW. Instead of approaching communication as something “the media” do, then, it is more useful to frame the relationship between communication and society as one of mediation (Lievrouw 2011). In this regard, mediation takes on a dual meaning involving both technological channels and social processes where technology and society are mutually influential (Lievrouw 2011). As an example: the telephone was originally specifically targeted to businessmen for “practical management and household purposes” and women’s use of the technology as a way to maintain social contact was criticized as frivolous (van Zoonen 2002:6-7). Yet the way in which women responded to and took up

⁵⁶ Four of the most prominent early social media sites were launched from 2003-2006: MySpace (2003); Facebook (2004); YouTube (2005); and Twitter (2006).

the new medium of the telephone is largely responsible for the development of telephone culture as a modern method of social connection (van Zoonen 2002).⁵⁷

While scholars have long studied the mutual shaping of society and technology more broadly (e.g. Williams and Edge 1996; van Zoonen 2001; Wacjman 2004, 2010), sociology as a discipline has lagged behind in exploring the Internet as a serious object of inquiry (Cavanagh 2007). In this dissertation I am exploring how those working to prevent VAW are responding to and taking up the Internet. I am focusing on social media because of the participatory nature of much of this work, and because of its currency and ubiquity.⁵⁸ The Internet has been a place for Internet rape sites (Gossett and Byrne 2002); it has also been a venue for women of colour to mobilize and challenge violence (Rapp, Button, Fleury-Steiner and Fleury-Steiner 2010). Social media does not cause violence and it does not prevent violence, but it can be involved in VAW for better or for worse, and shape the way violence occurs and the form that it takes (Fairbairn, Bivens, and Dawson 2013). Activists, advocates, service providers, writers, researchers, community educators, and lobbyists have been and remain critical to shaping discourse surrounding VAW using empirical and experiential knowledge (a form of public sociology), and it is because of this history that my dissertation focuses on these sectors and their experiences with social media.

There are examples of feminist writers, researchers, and advocates taking up and creating opportunities to re-make and re-present the news on the Internet by deconstructing and reconstructing narratives using a feminist gaze. One Canadian

⁵⁷ Doyle (2003) has also discussed how the presence of television cameras influences the behaviour of criminal justice officials in reality-based settings.

⁵⁸ Of course, as I discuss at various points in this dissertation, the Internet and social media are increasingly overlapping.

example of this is the Feminist Media Project,⁵⁹ which was initiated in response to the Vancouver trial of Robert Pickton, who, in 2007, was facing 26 first-degree murder charges in the slayings of women. The Feminist Media Project was started by a group of academics and journalists concerned with the potential for the Pickton trial to generate sensationalized, stereotype-reinforcing media coverage of missing and murdered women (a pattern previously discussed by Jiwani and Young 2006). The site offered analysis and commentary on media coverage, as well as news alerts, from a feminist perspective, and its explicit goal was to intervene in media representations by bringing together news articles, research into news media, and online discussion (Feminist Media Project n.d.).

Scholars have argued that the feminism and mass media relationship has shifted so that “for better or for worse, the media is now where feminism is located” (Dux and Simic 2008b:54). Mass media are, simultaneously, tools for disseminating feminist work as well as a focus of feminist critique. What we call the news in current media landscapes is now so much more than information transmission, and is additionally a process of mediation and participation. Thus, the possibilities for newsmaking (Barak 1988, 2007) to re-shape discourse are significant, but cannot be limited to the news. Calls for public sociology (e.g. Burawoy 2005a) and public criminology (Loader and Sparks 2010) have discussed academic engagement in mass media spheres more broadly. As I discuss in Chapter Two, from a feminist perspective there are many questions and debates that stem from public sociology. Many of these discussions, as I discuss in later chapters, are relevant to VAW prevention and social media, as well as feminist sociology more broadly.

⁵⁹ According to their website, the project was initiated in 2007 and was financially supported by Status of Women Canada and the University of British Columbia. The last news updates on the website are from 2009.

Various scholars discuss challenges surrounding the historical marginalization of feminists in the academy (Wise 1997), institutional challenges to doing feminist work in public spaces (Sprague and Laube 2009) and observe public backlash to feminism and feminist work generally (Chesney-Lind 2006; Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry 2007). As discussed earlier in this chapter, analyses of the women's movement demonstrate historic understanding of feminism as a "dirty word" (Mendes 2011) and the public view of feminists as hostile to men (van Zoonen 1992). As my dissertation will show, in recent years VAW prevention occurs in a media environment where social media can facilitate violence as well as prevent it. In this regard, there is a small but growing body of research indicating that technology-facilitated violence is emerging as an important part of feminist conversations about VAW prevention.

Technology-facilitated violence

Social media can be involved in VAW through online sexual harassment, sexual assault threats, non-consensual sharing of intimate material, recording and distribution of sexual assaults, cyberstalking or digital dating abuse, and luring sexual trafficking victims (Bluett-Boyd, Fileborn, Quadara, and Moore 2013; Fairbairn et al. 2013). At the same time that mass media (now including social media), have been instrumental in disseminating research and advocacy, the emergence of technology-facilitated violence presents additional questions and challenges for feminist media and anti-violence work. These might include issues of defining and measuring VAW related to social media; data collection; conflation and slippage between conceptualizations of cyberbullying and

sexual violence; and a critical need for intersectional approaches (Bluett-Boyd et al. 2013; Fairbairn et al. 2013).

Sm Kee (2005) argues that it is important to broadly define sexual violence to accommodate types of violence over time. Early research looking at sexual abuse online focuses on the use of online spaces to sexually solicit and exploit children and adolescents (e.g. Stedman 2007; Duncan 2008). Emerging research, however, suggests a broader approach is necessary to understand the role social media and other communications technologies play in VAW. Some researchers began this work pre-social media; for example, by exploring online videos of sexual assaults (Gossett and Byrne 2002) and sexual harassment on the Internet (Barak 2005). More recent scholarship explores the role of technology in stalking of intimate partners (Southworth et al. 2007; Baughman 2009; Dimond, Fiesler, and Bruckman 2011); technology-safety programming for survivors of intimate partner violence (Finn and Atkinson 2009); gender differences in cyberbullying (Li 2006; Erdur-Baker 2010); and verbal violence in online discussion culture (Leung 2011).

Emerging work reveals scholars and advocates calling for nuanced approaches in order to advance several important understandings, including: (1) sexual violence related to social media as something to be understood along a spectrum of behaviour (Bluett-Boyd et al. 2013); (2) the distribution of unauthorized images as more than simply privacy violation (Powell 2010); and, (3) slut-shaming of girls and young women online as sexual harassment (Fairbairn et al. 2013). Feminists are also bringing a critical gender lens to social and legal narratives about digital sexual expression (Karaian 2012; Hasinoff 2013), including the gendered dimensions and implications of child pornography

legislation (Bailey and Hannah 2011), and problematizing the “simplistic responsabilization” of girls and young women for technology related abuse following the sharing of intimate material (Salter, Crofts, and Lee 2013). Pressure to take on these conversations has been driven in large part by cases of victimization and suicides of young women following the distribution of photos or video footage of their sexual assaults (Almasy 2013), the non-consensual sharing of intimate photos (Keneally 2012), and/or sexual bullying in the form of “slut-shaming” (Newton 2013), and policy movement surrounding non-consensual sharing of intimate images has received particular notice (Department of Justice Canada 2013).

There is a paucity of sociological work on technology-facilitated VAW to date, and much to be done to explore the relationship between VAW and social media. Part of this work is carving out feminist understandings from within the conceptual arenas of cyberbullying (e.g. Li 2007; Erdur-Baker 2010) and cybercrime (e.g. Wall 2008; Brenner 2010). In moving from cyberbullying and cybercrime discourse to unpack VAW specifically, feminist understandings include: exploring the links between bullying behaviours and sexual violence perpetration (Basile et al. 2009), fostering knowledge about psychological and verbal violence as forms of abuse (Leung 2011); emphasizing power, control, and consent as core aspects of VAW, whether online or offline (Powell 2010); critical feminist discourse surrounding notions of rape culture, gender double standards, slut-shaming (e.g. Karaian 2012; Ringrose and Renold 2012); and calling for community (rather than individual) accountability and responses for violence related to social media (Fairbairn et al. 2013). As my findings and discussion will show, this work is underway in activist and advocacy circles. My dissertation contributes to this work by

exploring the harassment that those doing VAW prevention work experience.

Additionally, I explore what insights feminist theory (e.g. Haraway 1991) can provide to this emerging set of issues.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how VAW prevention work has had an important and shifting relationship with mass media over the past fifty years and explored three phases of this relationship. I first reviewed literature analyzing this relationship in the late 1960s and 1970s, explaining how battered women's activism became news. I then discussed mass media coverage of VAW through the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, explaining how news portrayals of VAW became sites of feminist critique, and then intervention. Finally, I consider how, in recent years, online spaces have become key arenas of advocacy and research surrounding VAW, as well as sites of media intervention and creation.

This literature review puts forward two overarching arguments. First, recent shifts in the media landscape, in particular shifts to participatory and social media, point to a need to continue to build knowledge around social media and violence prevention. Specifically, analyses of what is new or unique about VAW prevention in the realm of social media should be a key research priority. While we know much about how news media cover VAW in a one-way traditional media framework, we know less about how societal understandings of VAW are mediated through the two-way communications processes of social media. Second, studying VAW prevention in social media requires a feminist research base as well as an understanding of mutual shaping that accounts for the feminist work that has shaped current VAW prevention efforts in social media. This is in

order to avoid sliding into technologically deterministic views where social media are positioned as causing VAW prevention activities (and/or VAW acts) to occur, rather than shaping, facilitating, or enabling them (and vice versa). Overall, this literature review on feminist work to prevent VAW using mass media provides a basis to further explore how VAW prevention work continues, and is evolving, within social media. Understanding this relationship is important given that media is a core area of public sociology attention, and feminism an important longstanding example of public sociology. Additionally, the feminist critiques of media representation discussed here, as well as the emerging attention to online sexual violence, situate my survey and interview findings, and I will explore these themes in Chapters Six through Eight. In the next Chapter, Chapter Four, I explain my methodological framework and discuss how I collected data for this project.

Chapter Four: Methodological Framework

Introduction

In this chapter I describe the components of my methodological framework and explain the specific methods used to collect data. I begin by discussing feminist research approaches and considering what feminist methodology looks like from my standpoint. I then provide an overview of participatory action research and community-engaged scholarship, as these frameworks shape my public sociological research. In the methodology section, I also reflect on the relationship between public sociology and community-engaged scholarship and discuss how the arguments from Chapters Two and three come together to inform my methodology. The second half of this chapter is the methods section in which I explain the various stages of my dissertation research and how data was collected through public sociology, surveys, and qualitative interviews.

Part I: Methodology

Feminist methodological approaches

This section considers three questions: What is methodology? Is there a feminist methodology? And finally, how does feminist research differ from other research? For my purposes, it is best to consider the first two questions simultaneously. We cannot make claims about whether there is a feminist methodology without addressing what we mean by methodology. A number of scholars have considered the question “is there a feminist methodology?” (e.g. Reinharz and Davidman 1992; Eichler 1997; Sprague 2005; Allen 2011). The answer is both yes and no, or as Eichler (1997) puts it: it depends.⁶⁰ Yet

⁶⁰ Eichler (1997) proposes the metaphor of a thick braid with multiple strands to describe how feminism methodology weaves together various strands of knowledge production: 1) specific methods

all of these answers highlight a core notion: that methodology is inextricably linked to epistemology. This has the potential to be pathologically circular: because there are feminist epistemologies, there are feminist methodologies. Yet because methodology does not exist independently of epistemology and method, we can also say there is no distinguishable feminist methodology. Instead of getting caught up in this loop, my preference is to conceptualize methodology as a middle (or meeting) ground for sorting through how epistemology informs methods. Sprague (2005) argues that the distinct areas of method and epistemology are often presented in terms that problematically merge the two (the example that Sprague (2005) uses is “positivist methods”). Sprague (2005:5) argues that:

When we decouple the elision of epistemology and method, methodology emerges as the terrain where philosophy and action meet, where the implications of what we believe for how we should proceed get worked out.

Rather than playing ontological leapfrog from epistemology to methods, methodology is therefore our route through this ground, the place where we pause to make explicit the ways of knowing that shape our choice of methods and where the why and the how of research come together. Instead of attempting to have a discussion of “feminist methods” then, it is more appropriate to think of feminism as the epistemology that drives my choice of methods, and methodology as the place where I reflect on what feminism means in the practice of data gathering. In other words, questions about how to determine if my methods “are” feminist, or whether there “is” a feminist methodology are not the right questions. Instead, I need to ask, “how do feminist epistemologies inform my

(sets of practice of how to conduct research); 2) methodological issues (the broad theoretical orientation that informs the choice as well as shapes the character of various methods); 3) epistemology (a theory of knowledge). In addition to these three consistent strands, the braid may also include strands concerned with 4) a feminist ontology (a theory of being); and 5) developing non-sexist alternatives to existing methods without postulating the need for a new ontology.

choices of methods?”

To answer this question, I turn to yet another question: *How is feminist research distinct from other approaches to research?*⁶¹ I understand feminism as resting on several core premises that guide my research activities. My epistemological approach to this research is shaped primarily by the work of feminist sociologists such as Joey Sprague, Barbara Risman, Dorothy Smith, Margarit Eichler, Liz Stanley, Donna Haraway, and Sandra Harding, and feminist criminologists such as Meda Chesney-Lind. Feminists are an extremely heterogeneous group (Sprague 2005) and there is no single iteration of feminist practice that represents this complexity. However, drawing from various articulations of feminist ontologies and epistemologies, I am able to extract four core principles that shape my methodological framework.

1. Gender, along with many other areas like race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, and nation, is a powerful organizer of social life.

Gender has been described as a key organizer of social life (Sprague 2005), as an institution embedded in social processes and social organizations alike (Lorber 1994), and as a social structure (Risman 2004). Risman (2004:431) argues that the common pursuit of feminism is “to situate gender as embedded not only in individuals but throughout social life”. By conceptualizing gender as a social structure, Risman argues that we can move away from the “too commonly used” concept of institution that is used to refer to numerous aspects of society (such as the family). Of course, to view gender as a social structure is not to ignore individual agency and processes of mutual shaping.⁶²

⁶¹ Allen (2011) explains that it is important to ask the question “If there is a feminist methodology, in what way does it differ from non feminist methodologies?” prior to deciding if feminist theorizing can assist in the development of an appropriate research methodology.

⁶² Risman (2004) draws on Anthony Giddens’s structuration theory to make this point.

Rather, gender, like economics and politics (Risman 2004) operates as a social system in which individual agency occurs.

Moreover, there is increasing feminist recognition that an analysis of gender is not sufficient, and that women experience inequality differently based on race, class, sexuality, ability, age, and other factors. Risman (2004:442) argues that

There is now considerable consensus growing that one must always take into consideration multiple axes of oppression; to do otherwise presumes the whiteness of women, the maleness of people of color, and the heterosexuality of everyone.

In recent years this consensus is stronger than ever. Intersectionality, now a “scholarly buzzword” (Nash 2008:3), critiques the notion of the essentialized woman in feminist (and other) research, and acknowledges that identity is formed by interconnecting and mutually reinforcing aspects of race, gender, class, and sexuality (Risman 2004; Nash 2008). Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1989, 1991) analysis of structural, political, and representative intersectionality as a way of understanding violence against women of colour, as well as work by Patricia Hill Collins (1998, 2000, 2012) and bell hooks (1981a, 1981b, 2000) have led to shifts in feminist research where intersectionality is arguably “the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far” (McCall 2005:1771). As I note in later chapters, the widespread take up of intersectionality in online feminist work and VAW prevention (arenas that fit under Burawoy’s concept of “broader publics”) reflect its success as a feminist public sociological concept.

Nash (2008) explains that intersectionality serves several theoretical purposes. First, it subverts race/gender binaries in the service of theorizing identity in more complex fashion. Second, it aspires to provide a vocabulary to respond to critiques of

identity politics. And finally, it invites scholars to come to terms with the legacy of multiple exclusions of marginalized subjects from both feminist and anti-racist work, and to consider the impact of those absences on both theory and practice. Despite the emergence of intersectionality as a major paradigm of study, however, scholars argue that intersectionality was not initially considered in terms of its methodology in sufficient detail (McCall 2005; Nash 2008). However, this has shifted in recent years, as intersectionality now goes hand in hand with much feminist work, and feminist writing centers intersectionality in research design and writing (e.g. Lykke 2013).

2. Research is not value-neutral.

As discussed in Chapter Two, many feminists reject Burawoy's claim that public sociology (or any research) can be value neutral. When we think about gender as a social structure, and embed the pursuit of progressive social change into research, we position ourselves to conduct research seeking to reduce inequalities related to gender, race, class, and so forth. This is not a value-neutral endeavour. Those who purport to be value-free social scientists study gender merely to satisfy an intellectual curiosity (Risman 2003) (and of course we can still challenge their value neutrality); feminist approaches explore gender (and race, class, etc.) with the objective of learning about and reducing inequalities. Thus, a researcher does not put aside or disguise their politics but rather acknowledges that they are part of the research process and need to be explored reflexively. That feminist research is explicitly value-engaged (i.e. working to recognize and address gender inequality), rather than supposedly value-neutral, is one of the key sources of debate surrounding feminist research (Eichler 1997) and stirs up many intellectual tensions around the politics of knowledge, objectivity, and the role of the

researcher, which I discussed in Chapter Two.

3. The pursuit of progressive social change is central to research and therefore embedded in research design.

Feminist scholarship developed in the 1970s in opposition to mainstream research (described as “sexist, patriarchal, androcentric, status-quo oriented, positivist, objective, quantitative, alienated and alienating”) (Eichler 1997:11).⁶³ Feminism, as a distinct research context, requires critical examination of methods fitting for feminist purposes (Eichler 1997), bringing together questions of how best to do research while critically approaching what knowledge is and who is a trustworthy source of information (Sprague 2005:2).⁶⁴ As a result, the call to progressive social change is a central commitment of feminism and understanding how things work is not enough (Sprague 2005:3). In many ways this echoes the Marxian notion of changing the world rather than simply interpreting it (quoted on page one of this dissertation). However, instead of decoupling knowledge and social change and thinking about social change as something that is sought only after knowledge is extracted, feminist research frequently pursues social change throughout the research process. Embedding this pursuit of progressive social change into research design can be thought of as a commitment of praxis, in which knowledge “is not simply defined as ‘knowledge *what*’ but also ‘knowledge *for*’” (Stanley 1990:15, emphasis in original).⁶⁵ In other words, praxis involves integrating

⁶³ Eichler (1997:11) describes this not as the development of feminist scholarship, but as its re-emergence.

⁶⁴ Sprague (2005:12) notes that these questions are particularly relevant when studying inequality, since “there is a tendency to ask questions that make inequality seem either natural or the responsibility of those on the downside of social hierarchies” (Sprague 2005:12).

⁶⁵ Stanley (1990) includes three central theses under the concept of praxis. First, the notion of praxis cannot and should not be reduced to a label for any one feminist position. Second, praxis involves a rejection of the theory/research divide, and argues that theory and research should be viewed as activities that are symbiotically related. Finally, praxis involves a focus on

knowledge of social phenomena with processes for change. Sprague (2005) argues that a central question therefore becomes, “How should we do our research *in order to* increase the likelihood that it will actually help make the world a better place?” (Sprague 2005:2, emphasis in original). In this understanding, the research design is an important element to social change.

4. Individual experience is important to understanding social and political relations.

Part of the ongoing struggle of feminism is to present a counter-hegemonic worldview to patriarchy. Perhaps the most significant success has been to identify “the problem without a name” (Friedan 1963) as sexism or oppression (Stanley and Wise 1983). Identifying and naming this problem rests on two fundamental propositions: the essential validity of personal experience, and the feminist insistence that the traditional distinction between objective and subjective is false (Stanley and Wise 1983). In this regard, the feminist statement “the personal is political” reflects this feminist emphasis that not only is “the system” experienced in everyday life, but that the experience of power in everyday situations is, in fact, political content (Stanley and Wise 1983:53).

The above four claims reflect my research philosophy and are the pillars of my methodological framework. In my research I put these feminist epistemologies and ontologies to work through data collection that is further shaped and directed by feminist research traditions and public sociology. In Chapter Two, I outlined feminist critiques of public sociology and positioned myself as focusing on public sociology based on pillars of reflexivity, praxis, and interdisciplinary work. So far in this chapter, I have explained the feminist epistemological tenets that guide my research. Next, given that one of my

methodological/epistemological concerns. *How* knowledge is produced is “indissolubly interconnected” to the shape and nature of the *what* (Stanley 1990:15).

dissertation contributions is to theorize a potential roadmap for feminist public sociologists interested in reflexivity, praxis, and interdisciplinary scholarship, it is also important to make connections to practices that embody these principles. In recognition of the intersecting nature of public sociology, community-engaged scholarship, community-based research, and participatory action research, I spend some time distinguishing between these fields and explaining their relationship in my research.

Community-engaged methodologies

Community-engaged scholarship (CES) is a broad umbrella approach to research that begins with an interest in the problems of a group, community, or organization (Stringer 1996). The University of Guelph's Community-Engaged Scholarship Institute explains that community-engaged scholarship "involves the researcher in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community and results in scholarship deriving from teaching, discovery, integration, application or engagement" (n.d. para. 4). While the terms are often used interchangeably, there are arguable differences between community-engaged scholarship and related fields such as participatory action research, community-based research, and public sociology. These are worth discussing briefly to provide greater clarity surrounding where I situate public sociology in this field.

Participatory action research aims to challenge and unsettle entrenched ideologies by bringing together theory, method and practice as people work collaboratively to achieve new forms of understanding and produce practical outcomes (Frisby et al. 2009). McIntyre (2008:2) explains that, while there is no "fixed formula" or overriding theoretical framework for creating and carrying out the malleable process of participatory action research projects, this area has been heavily influenced by both

feminism and the work of educator Paulo Freire.⁶⁶ The term “participatory action research” is often used interchangeably with its relation, action research. However, whereas action research is a broader term and tends to be found in management and organizational theory, practitioners of participatory action research often originate from community development, sociology, education, and political science (McIntyre 2008). As such, participatory action research is frequently distinguished from action research through its focus on communities, social structures, equity, oppression, and access to resources for research participants, whereas action research tends to have an emphasis on individual and interpersonal levels of action and analysis, and a more concrete or immediate problem solving focus (Denscombe 2014).

Participatory action research is widely acknowledged as a valuable approach for building relationships with communities to address complex public health problems (including VAW) (Sullivan et al. 2005). Furthermore, feminist approaches to participatory action research in a VAW context may increase the likelihood of success among researcher-advocate collaborations by stressing the expertise of advocates, practitioners, and survivors, and reflexively acknowledging the value-driven nature of research (Williams 2004). Thus, feminist participatory action research combines research, education, and methods of data collection and analysis that are grounded in the context of the community and contribute something of value to the community in which the research is conducted (Reid 2004).

⁶⁶ Regarding the former, feminism has been a significant contributor to participatory action research through its “refusal to accept theory, research, and ethical perspectives that ignore, devalue, and erase women’s lives, experiences, and contributions to social science research” (McIntyre 2008:3). Freire’s contributions lie in his belief in the importance of critical reflection, focus on the “democratic dialectical unification of theory and practice”, and development of counter-hegemonic approaches to knowledge construction (McIntyre 2008:3).

Community-engaged scholarship is a label also often used interchangeably with community-based research and community-based participatory research. A core commonality of community-engaged research and community-based participatory research is that they recognize community as a unit of identity. Community is defined as “a group of individuals and/or organizations that are linked by specific geographical or political boundaries and share common interests, values, networks and/or demographic characteristics” (Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute Office of Community Engagement 2013:6). In models such as participatory action research and community-based participatory research, the community of interest is involved from the study’s inception and plays a (theoretically) equal role to researchers in terms of study design, recruitment, data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

My dissertation understands communities as more than fixed, physically or geographically defined entities. I also want to highlight that research (and, therefore, researchers) inevitably have relationships with the communities they study, whether intentional or not; researchers do not simply stand back and report on these communities. This is why it is important that feminist public sociology draw from community-engaged methodologies. In my research project, I have been involved in public sociology work as part of my feminist research process.⁶⁷ This results from my own politics as a feminist,

⁶⁷ I see community-engaged scholarship as roughly midway on a continuum between traditional research and community-based/participatory action research, facing towards the community-based end. I do not define my research as community-based or participatory research for several reasons. First, I am not explicitly focused on removing power differentials in this research process. Second, my survey and interview research objectives and design are informed, but not directed, by communities of engagement. Additionally, the porousness of my community of interest makes community-based, participatory research difficult, at least in the manner of participatory action research that I have presented here. I am exploring the experiences of individuals and organizations that are linked by their interest in preventing VAW and use of digital tools. Given the broadness and diverseness of this community, it is difficult to identify key individuals to speak for, and represent, VAW prevention workers using social media.

and from my desire to conduct research that is relevant, accessible, meaningful, and useful to this broad and loosely defined community of advocates, writers, educators, and service providers using social media for VAW prevention. Thus, community-engaged work (discussed in Chapter Five) is critical to shaping the direction and design of the survey and interview phases of my research. My experiences doing this work also drive my re-theorized public sociology presented in Chapter Five. I will return to these ideas shortly when I more concretely lay out the steps of my research process. As a final component of this section, however, I wish to return to some of the themes surrounding public sociology discussed in Chapter Two. My objective here is to synthesize these with principles of community-engaged scholarship to identify the latter's contribution to (what I argue is) the often abstract and intra-disciplinary nature of public sociology.

Public sociology and community-engaged scholarship

One of the differences between public sociology and the various approaches to participatory/community-based research is that the latter approaches make an explicit effort to acknowledge and shift power in some capacity. In Chapter Two, I offer an analysis of feminist critiques of public sociology and argue that the intellectual field of public sociology has provided a high profile discursive arena for sociologists and criminologists to ponder public engagement and social change. Yet, I argue, the successes of this work to date are primarily found in affirming the relevance of professional sociology to society at large, rather than valuing public sociology and/or effecting social change. Another way to express this is to employ the description of where the research “faces”. Community-engaged scholarship, although it is a blend of

traditional and community-based research, faces the direction of community. Public sociology, in contrast, faces the discipline of sociology. Discussions about public sociology are primarily about academia-centered sociology: how to practice it, how to improve it, how to go forth and translate disciplinary knowledge to the masses. Social change is assumed to occur through a sort of trickle-down or trickle-out model. Even within organic public sociology, where knowledge is produced in partnership with communities, the communities are regarded as pre-existing groups, and the ontological categories of academia and community are assumed to be more preexisting and static than is generally the case. The more interdisciplinary community-based/participatory model, on the other hand, has no such intense intra-disciplinary gaze, and is founded on the premise that sociological knowledge is produced on community-driven terms rather than vice versa. Additionally, community-engaged scholarship more explicitly acknowledges and “designs-in” the permeability of academic and community boundaries to research endeavours. The University of Guelph’s Community-Engaged Scholarship Institute mentioned previously is one example of this “designing-in”, as they prioritize building community relationships, addressing faculty reward and development for community-engaged scholarship, and training students in knowledge mobilization as key practices (para. 2).

At the end of Chapter Two, I stated that, moving forward, I am advocating for praxis, reflexivity, and interdisciplinary work as core areas of focus for scholars who wish to pursue publicly engaged scholarship. As a specific contribution, my dissertation aims to explore public sociology, social media, and VAW. How does doing VAW prevention as a public sociologist fit within current understandings of public sociology?

How is social media a tool for community-based stakeholders working to prevent VAW? Because of the linguistic determinism of public sociology (those who practice it are conceived as sociologists by definition), under the current framework it does not work to call my participants public sociologists. Yet this amorphous community of VAW prevention activists, advocates, writers, educators and service providers (“VAW prevention stakeholders”) encapsulates the fluid processes of public sociology while being more organically rooted in the pursuit of social change. By pursuing social change, I mean: shifting mainstream discourse to include more broader community and structural foci, working to make marginalized experiences/voices visible, and strengthening broader public understanding and appreciation for the severity of violence against women and importance of prevention. In these ways, these practices are organic public sociology without the disciplinary boundaries.

Because community-engaged scholarship is a framework and not a research method (see Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute Office of Community Engagement 2013), I am not explicitly “doing” community-engaged scholarship. However, the principles and traditions of community-engaged scholarship are my guide to mitigating some of the issues I have identified regarding public sociology and operationalizing feminist methodological principles such as recognizing the political nature of all research. Public sociology can draw from the core values of community-engaged scholarship that emphasize collaboration and interdisciplinary work and strive to address professional and institutional challenges in conducting community-engaged research. Thus, insights gleaned from participatory action research/community-engaged scholarship literature directly contributed to my research approach in three ways: (1) I

spent significant time doing public sociology activities prior to collecting survey and interview data to enhance my understanding of VAW prevention work; (2) I followed and regularly read feminist/VAW prevention social media content such as blogs, Twitter accounts, and feminist listservs for background understanding of concepts (e.g. hashtag activism), emerging issues, and current events; and (3) Stemming from exploratory interviews, I added an interview question asking participants about how academia/sociology can most effectively contribute to VAW prevention. Burawoy's public sociology discussed in Chapter Two does not, in its current form, give adequate attention or analysis to the relationships between academics and community partners in terms of developing collaborative research, nor to the role of sociologists as facilitating connections and partnerships as part of the research process. It tends to look at the partnerships as obvious and pre-existing, rather than exploring the possibility of communities that may be fluid and dynamic, and mobilized around issues as opposed to institutions. In this regard, it is important to move beyond the starting point of pre-established publics to promote sociologists working to bring together diverse forms of expertise and experience to create new types of publics and communities in pursuit of social change.

Final thoughts on methodology

As Chapter Three explains, in recent decades we have seen academics, journalists, activists, and other diverse community partners work collaboratively on certain initiatives surrounding VAW. Feminist work more broadly has also been important in its contributions to online community and community-engaged research, both of which are

areas under-theorized by public sociology to date.⁶⁸ We have seen extraordinary changes in how news and information is shared, and how communities form and act in social media. Within social media platforms, the notion of communities is much more fluid, constantly evolving, and frequently mobilized around specific social issues or campaigns rather than by institutional, geographical, or physical forms such as schools or neighborhoods. VAW prevention work has evolved to shape, and be shaped by, social media. Public sociology must continue to evolve within these spaces, and notions of publics, and communities, redefined accordingly.

The methodological toolkit I have assembled for my project is driven by feminist epistemologies and informed by public sociology. In the first part of this chapter, I have outlined the core tenets of feminist epistemologies that drive my research: gender, along with many other areas like race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, and nation, are powerful organizers of social life; research is not value-neutral; the pursuit of progressive social change is central to research and therefore embedded in research design; and individual experience is important to understanding social and political relations. I have also reflected on the overlaps and slippages between community-engaged scholarship, community-based/participatory research, and public sociology, highlighting how my research will both be driven by core ideas from these bodies of work while also attempting to rework public sociology as a research framework. In the next section I explain how feminist methodology is translated into research practice through the various stages of my dissertation research and the specific methods used to collect data.

⁶⁸ However, the recent cluster of digital public sociology activity in the United Kingdom, spearheaded by Mark Carrigan (2013) from the University of Warwick, represents a potential area for innovation in this regard.

Part II: Methods

Translating feminist methodology into research practice

Feminist scholars have devoted significant attention to explaining how methodology can be translated into research practice (for example, see Kirsch 1999; Jayarante and Steward 2013). In my research, I draw from six feminist research strategies (see Jayarante and Steward 2013:54-55). The first four strategies deal with the development of the research focus and choice of methods. First, when selecting a research topic or problem, we should ask how that research has potential to help women's lives, and what information is necessary to have such an impact. In this regard, I approach this research from the position that studying VAW is of ongoing importance, and that research in this area should make an effort to explore areas historically under-researched and/or where community stakeholders identify that further research is needed. Extensive research has been conducted on individual and community-based VAW prevention efforts (e.g. mandatory charging policies, domestic violence support services, sexual assault prevention programs) and more broadly on representations of violence against women in media (e.g. news reporting of intimate partner violence and sexual assault, sexist and violent imagery in advertising). These are important areas of ongoing research. However, the role of social media in VAW prevention has not been sociologically explored. My experiences following the activities of various individuals and organizations online suggests that the use and proliferation of social media as a tool for VAW prevention is a very real and increasingly significant piece of social change efforts in this area. Therefore, one of my core objectives in this research is to illuminate the existence of these practices to contribute to empirical sociological knowledge of

VAW prevention. At the same time, I wish to further unpack the nuances of VAW prevention activities to extrapolate and translate concrete strategies for public sociologists who wish to engage in digital spaces.

A second feminist research strategy is that when designing the study, we should propose methods that are both appropriate for the kind of question asked and the information needed and which permit answers persuasive to a particular audience (Jayarante and Steward 2013). In my case, I am interested in two core questions: (1) how do people working on VAW prevention use and experience social media? And (2) what is the role of feminist public sociology in preventing VAW? These two questions have different audiences. In the first, the audience is both community and academic, as my intent is that these empirical findings can be useful for stakeholders interested in one or more themes of gender and feminist thought, inequality, violence, and/or social media whether they identify as community-based, academic-based, or somewhere in-between. In the second question, my audience is specifically those who work at the in-between: researchers and/or academics who are interested in feminism beyond the university, community-based VAW prevention, and/or mediated knowledge translation more broadly. Because of these dual objectives and multiple audiences, as well as the exploratory nature of this research, a multi- and mixed-method approach is most appropriate for my study. As I will discuss shortly, this involves public sociology, survey research, and qualitative interviews.

The third and fourth strategies Jayarante and Steward (2013) identify are that (3) whenever possible, we should use research designs which combine quantitative and qualitative methods; and (4) in every instance of use of either qualitative and quantitative

methods or both, we should address the problems associated with each approach. Although there is an emphasis on qualitative methods in this research through public sociology and qualitative interviews (Chapters Five and Seven), my survey research (discussed below and in Chapter Six) helps to provide a quantitative descriptive picture of participants' social media use and objectives. I discuss the strengths and challenges of these multiple methods in the data collection section below, as well as within the chapters that follow.

The final two strategies have to do with knowledge translation and dissemination, and integrate well with a public sociology framework more broadly. A fifth feminist research strategy is that we should always attempt some political analysis of the findings. And finally, "as much as possible, given a realistic assessment of the frantic pace of academic life", we should actively participate in the dissemination of research results (Jayarante and Steward 2013:54-55). I will return to these themes in my conclusion (Chapter Ten), where I discuss research mobilization and future research directions. In the next several sections, I explain how I collected data for this project.

Public sociology

My research interests of VAW and public sociology led to my involvement in various community-based settings and networks. This engagement was influential in shaping my research foci and helping me connect with various networks. Prior to starting data collection, I had been a member of the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women's (OCTEVAW) Public Engagement committee. Shortly after becoming involved with this coalition, an OCTEVAW contact (knowing my interest in feminism, VAW, and

media) suggested that I look into becoming involved with Women, Action, and the Media (WAM). WAM is “an independent North American nonprofit dedicated to building a robust, effective, inclusive movement for gender justice in the media” (Women, Action, and the Media 2014), with chapters in various cities across the United States and Canada. In the spring of 2012 I, along with a colleague, established WAM Ottawa. We co-led this chapter until I moved to Toronto in July 2013. The resources and contacts made through these networks were important in terms of my broader awareness of feminist media activism, gender, and VAW. As I explain in more detail in Chapter Five, in addition to being inspiring and informative, these networks facilitated connections and platforms for public sociology.

My method of public sociology was essentially to engage with the feminist community in Ottawa to produce and disseminate knowledge around VAW and media representation. My public sociology developed organically, as I did not have an end point or goal. Instead, I approached this work with three objectives. First, I wanted to put my MA research findings and recommendations (Fairbairn 2008) into practice by working with a VAW prevention organization as well as local journalists on a media toolkit (what eventually became the “Media Hub”). Second, I wanted to connect with others with similar feminist media interests and identify areas for collaboration. And third, I wanted to identify a research focus or “problematic” (Smith 1987)⁶⁹ for a second stage of

⁶⁹ A problematic is more technical than might be explained by a research participant but more general than a research question (Deveau 2009). It may be something the researcher is living and experiencing, or something that others are experiencing of which the researcher becomes aware (Deveau 2009). The purpose of the problematic is to set out a project of research and direct attention “to a possible set of questions that may not have been posed or a set of puzzles that do not yet exist in the form of puzzles but are ‘latent’ in the actualities of the experienced world” (Smith 1987:91). In other words, the problematic explains what you are paying intellectual attention to, or what you are seeking to explore that has not been explicitly named or studied in your field.

dissertation research that would further explore feminist media-based work related to VAW. From these objectives, I became involved in various public speaking and media activities, as well as workshops, resource development, and community-based research.⁷⁰ In Chapter Five, I attempt to break these down according to traditional public sociology activities (N = 23) and organic public sociology activities (N = 9). Traditional public sociology includes: talking about my research to media or community audiences (e.g. radio or newspaper interviews, participating in panels or lunch and learns) and guest lecturing on some aspect of VAW and media in a university classroom. Organic public sociology includes knowledge dissemination and/or knowledge production activities that take place in collaboration with a community group or other activists/advocates.

The purpose of my public sociology is to provide a reflexive, feminist account of how public sociology can be part of the research process, and explore how my experiences fit (or do not) within Burawoy's framework of public sociology. To reflect and analyze this part of my research, I re-read all material related to the activities described above (presentations, workshops, panels, media participation, etc.). This included all notes and reflective documents that I had kept throughout the process, and reviewed media content (video workshops, radio interviews, etc.). I then "interviewed myself," reflecting on my purposes and goals in undertaking these activities, my successes and challenges, and how I would categorize my work in relation to Burawoy's public sociology. Chapter Five presents an account of my findings on my public sociology.

⁷⁰ Links to these public sociological activities are provided in Appendix A. The final report for the community-based research project is Fairbairn et al. (2013).

Lessons from exploratory interviews

My first four interviews were exploratory in nature and took place between November 2012 and February 2013. For these exploratory interviews, I identified interview participants by following online feminist media and VAW activist work. I contacted four participants (representing a cross section of those working in advocacy, activism, the news media, and research) via email and asked if they would be willing to talk to me about their work and perspectives on media and VAW. Each of the participants I approached agreed to participate in an exploratory interview.

My methods for conducting, transcribing, and analyzing interviews are outlined shortly, and an in-depth analysis of all interview findings takes place in Chapters Seven and Eight. However, it is useful to understand how these exploratory interviews shaped later stages of the research process. Specifically, these exploratory interviews inform my survey and follow up interviews in four ways. First, they underscore that “the media” is an incredibly broad area of study, and my project would benefit from further narrowing my research focus. I chose to more explicitly focus on social media, given that public sociology and VAW are under theorized in relation to social media and that community interest in social media was clear from my public sociology work. Therefore, social media became the connecting thread to draw together a diverse group of stakeholders working to prevent VAW in a variety of ways (writers, service providers, etc.). Second, it is also apparent from these interviews that people understand and define social media differently. For some, there is little difference between the Internet in general and social media. Others go automatically to Facebook and Twitter when talking about social media, and need prompting to think of other sites and platforms (YouTube, Apps,

Instagram, wiki sites, etc.). Because of this, I asked very specific questions in my survey about what social media platforms participants use.

The third point also involves definitional issues. My exploratory interviews highlight that participants use VAW to refer not only to individual incidents of violence, but also as a lens with which to make sense of a variety of different social phenomena. Like feminism, VAW is something to be understood theoretically (how do people define and understand VAW?) as well as a practice (how does this understanding shape their prevention activities). Because VAW is socially constructed⁷¹ and therefore meaning is constructed in and through language,⁷² representation⁷³ plays an active role in creating social issues and events, including the identification of social problems. Simply put, social problems are what people think they are (Fuller and Myers 1941; Spector and Kitsuse 1977). In this way, my research reifies VAW by treating it as an object of inquiry. VAW has been taken up as a field and an object of research, activism, and advocacy work. As socially constructed phenomena, processes of representation and language (“interpreting the world”) also shape or alter the phenomena (“changing the world”). Through my research process, I came to define this fluid space of interpreting and changing VAW as VAW prevention. While this is only one potential understanding of VAW prevention, my use of this term integrates hard-to study ecological model components (e.g. attitudes, beliefs, and social norms) with constructed understanding of

⁷¹ The constructionist approaches share a common desire to understand “how people assign meaning to their worlds” (Best 1989:252). A core notion within this approach is that “things don’t *mean*: we *construct* meaning, using representational systems- concepts and signs” (Hall 1997:25, emphasis in original). By focusing on the public, social character of language, constructionists observe and analyze how meaning is created (Hall 1997).

⁷² Language, according to Hall (1997:61), is defined as “any system which deploys signs, any signifying system”.

⁷³ Hall (1997:28) defines representation as “the production of meaning through language”.

VAW (language, representation, media, texts) in the pursuit of social change (VAW prevention). In this way, there is intended slippage between the notions of communication and prevention. Furthermore, because VAW is such a broad term, I chose to focus on sexual violence and intimate partner violence as specific forms of VAW and to include questions in my survey asking respondents about their definitions of sexual violence and intimate partner violence. In this way, while mapping VAW work in social media, I also aim to provide reflexive definitions derived from my research community.

A fourth point from my exploratory interviews is that there is a great deal of fluidity between individuals' and organizations' roles when working at the intersections of VAW and media (for example, advocate/writer/researcher; activist/blogger/journalist). This is not surprising, given that social media enables converging roles of content creators and diverse audiences for content consumers. Additionally, being a feminist, for many people, may create an additional role as an advocate or activist on top of other work (writer, researcher). Therefore, the exploratory interviews pointed to caution against creating boxes that were too rigid in terms of prescribing participants' identities. Because of this, I identified my potential survey research participants as those whose work relates to VAW and who use social media and created a list of potential identities that included: academics, activists, advocates, journalists, writers, bloggers, service providers, community organizers, researchers, and policy makers.

Survey

The purpose of my survey is four-fold. First, I want to construct a broad picture of this loosely defined community. Although I had pre-existing expectations of whom to

survey (academics, activists, advocates, journalists, writers, bloggers, community organizers, researchers, and policy makers), learning about who would respond to this survey invitation was in itself a finding pertaining to VAW, social media, and public sociology. For example, theorizing public sociology in this context requires an understanding of the stakeholders that I am defining as a public. Second, my survey aimed to identify patterns of social media use and to paint a descriptive picture of the frequency and nature of social media use for those who identified themselves as working to prevent VAW. This is a practical and tangible resource for those interested in working in this area. Third, I wanted to recruit participants for follow-up interviews. Finally, the survey results allowed me to identify broad themes in terms of users' perceptions of, and experiences with, social media in relation to their work that would inform my interview approach.

The survey was conducted using the online survey tool Fluid Surveys. It was designed from November 2013 to January 2014, tested with four participants in February 2014,⁷⁴ and launched in March 2014. The survey consisted of 31 questions that were a mix of closed and open-ended questions. It was initially open for one month, from March 13 to April 15, 2014, and was then extended for two weeks to allow for additional survey responses. To disseminate the survey, I created an initial list of 380 potential respondents. These contacts were wide-ranging and included individuals and organizations in Canada and the United States that I was able to identify as having an online presence of some sort (e.g. website, online publications, blog, Twitter account) as well as an explicit or implicit connection to prevention of VAW. Examples of explicit connections to VAW prevention

⁷⁴ The test group included one representative from each of the following sectors: academic, activist, policy official, and communications professional.

could include, for example: a VAW non-governmental organization, rape crisis centre, researcher whose primary interests are listed as VAW and/or are listed as part of a VAW research network, government policy initiative focused on VAW prevention, and/or activists whose work I had followed/read enough to be confident that VAW was a core area of focus. Examples of implicit connections to VAW prevention work could include larger councils or organizing bodies whose missions focus on social justice and/or marginalized groups, community resource centres, journalists who have written on VAW previously, and feminist bloggers/activists whose work I was not familiar enough with to know if VAW was a core area of focus.

I gathered initial survey contacts through a number of avenues. First, I started with a list of VAW organizations and service providers that I had compiled previously for the community-based research project on sexual violence and social media (all organizations' email addresses are publicly available online). Second, I maintained a Google alert for the terms "Canada violence against women" and "social media violence against women" for fourteen months (January 2013 to March 2014) prior to the launch of the survey. From these news stories, I tracked individual and organization names that were mentioned in stories about violence against women. Where an email address was available online, I added them to my survey contacts. Finally, I added academics/researchers and government agencies that I was familiar with based on my previous research (e.g. literature review). While by no means exhaustive, this initial list represented a solid starting point from which to snowball sample for additional participants.

The initial email for survey recruitment is included as Appendix B, and the

information given prior to entering the survey is included as Appendix C. When circulating this invite, I requested that participants also circulate the survey among their networks in order to get a more wide reaching distribution into local networks that may not have prominent online presence and/or who would perhaps be more likely to respond if they received the survey invitation from a known contact. I also sent the survey through two listserves that focus on gender/feminist issues and whose subscribers include activists, advocates, researchers, academics, journalists, and policy analysts (among other roles). Each list has hundreds of members, primarily in Canada and/or the United States, although the lists also include members from other countries. Finally, I used Twitter to disseminate an invitation to the survey (at this time I used Twitter almost solely to follow individuals and organizations involved in VAW and/or media). I tweeted the survey invite on two occasions, March 17, 2014 and April 23, 2014. The tweet read: “Does your research/reporting/advocacy focus on #VAW? I would love to hear about how you use social media in your work”, followed by a link to the survey. To help ensure that only those who had some connection to VAW (as defined for this project) participated, one of the first questions in the survey (after the demographic questions) asked the question “how often does your work focus on sexual violence and/or intimate partner violence”. This question was set up so that if the respondent selected “never” as their response, they would be exited from the survey.

As specified in the recruitment documents, both completed and partially completed responses are included in my analysis. My decision to make all survey questions optional was based on the anticipated diversity of survey participants’ roles, as well as the fact that the survey is quite long (31 questions) and includes a variety of

multi-pronged questions about various social media sites. Because of these factors, I acknowledged at the outset that not all participants would be likely to complete all sections, particularly given that sectors such as journalists and front line service providers are frequently rushed with deadlines and client service. Thus, I anticipated that I would be able to gather complete and detailed data from some participants as well as less detailed but still valuable information from others.

I began initial data analysis with 128 survey responses (cases).⁷⁵ After initial surveying of the responses, I excluded 15 cases from further analysis because they only contained basic demographic data (questions 1-6). Four cases from outside Canada and the United States were also removed to maintain consistency with the focus of my study. The analysis, therefore, is based on a sample of 109 cases. However, due to variation in the number of participants answering each individual question, the number of total responses varies by question in this analysis.⁷⁶ Although this presents certain limitations, my intent with this survey is not to conduct in-depth quantitative analysis of social media use, but to identify what VAW prevention in social media involves for participants, and to explore emerging themes in terms of benefits and challenges. I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to conduct descriptive analysis (frequencies) of quantitative data, and Microsoft Excel for qualitative analysis of text responses (further detail on the qualitative analysis is presented in Chapter Six). I present my survey findings and analysis in Chapter Six.

⁷⁵ It is difficult to calculate or estimate a response rate for the survey because I used snowball sampling to disseminate the survey (i.e. I asked participants to share the survey to their contacts).

⁷⁶ There was a noticeable participant attrition throughout the survey (i.e. tapering off of response rate). I speculate that this is due to the specific (and potentially tedious) nature of questions 15 through 23, where participants had to answer a number of questions with additional drop down menus that asked about their objectives in social media use surrounding violence against women.

Interviews

Qualitative interviewing is a historically important method of feminist research (Oakley 1981). A qualitative interview is:

An interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry but not a rigid set of questions that must be asked in particular words in particular order (Babbie and Benaquisto 2002:332).

In total, I conducted 19 in-depth, semi-structured interviews (4 exploratory, 15 follow-up).⁷⁷ These interviews took place in person (N=3), by phone or Skype voice call (N=10), by Skype or Google Hangout with camera (N=4) or by Google chat (text only) (N=1).⁷⁸ Interviews ranged in length from 21 minutes to 1 hour and 35 minutes, and the average interview was 56 minutes long. I conducted follow-up interviews (N=15) from July to November 2014.⁷⁹ Interviewees were primarily though not exclusively recruited from the survey, where the final question of my survey asked participants if they would like to participate in a follow-up interview. Thus, my interview participants were not a random sample, but were found through nonprobability sampling (see McPhail et al. 2007). Such sampling is appropriate, given that I do not wish to generalize my findings to the general population, but want to gain a deeper understanding into the experiences of those committed to VAW prevention.

From the 109 surveys, thirteen respondents were recruited for follow up interviews.⁸⁰ Additionally, I recruited two participants based on their extensive

⁷⁷ 18 interviews were held with 19 different participants (one interview involved two participants simultaneously).

⁷⁸ To accommodate one interviewee's request, one interview was conducted in writing by Google chat in synchronous (real-time) communication. This interview was approximately 90 minutes in length.

⁷⁹ The majority of the interviews (N=12) were conducted in July and August 2014.

⁸⁰ Initially, twenty-seven of the 109 survey respondents indicated that they would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. Of these, I excluded six respondents because either (1) the participant had not provided contact information (N=2), or (2) the participant expressed that they did not use social media much and were therefore not sure they had much to contribute (N=4). I therefore

engagement within social media and referrals from other participants, for a total of 15 follow up interviews. Although each respondent had unique perspectives and experiences, emerging patterns and themes were clear after 15 follow up interviews, indicating saturation (Mason 2010). Although small, fifteen is an acceptable sample size for qualitative research (Bertaux 1981). Additionally, the added research foundation and comparative context provided by my public sociology research, exploratory interviews, and survey research strengthen these interview findings. As part of the informed consent process, I sent participants a letter of information during the interview scheduling process explaining the study and any potential risks of participating in the interviews (The letter of information is included in Appendix D). The letter explained that neither they nor their organization would be identified in this dissertation or any future publications. Prior to starting the interview, I asked and received permission from participants to record the interview.

My approach to interviewing was shaped by three principles. The first is that beginning from a point of individual (women's⁸¹) voices and experiences will reveal greater understanding of how these experiences are organized and influenced (Smith 1987). My interest in interviews is not to pursue universal understanding about "how

chose to focus on respondents who were more engaged with social media. However, I did consult these respondents' survey responses regarding social media use and confirmed in all cases that they were on the more infrequent end of the social media use spectrum. Additionally, these four excluded responses were also from Ontario. Because of a large overrepresentation of Ontario survey responses, I followed up with every respondent from outside of Ontario, but only those from Ontario who were more heavily using social media for VAW prevention work. Of the 21 remaining potential participants who I contacted to schedule a follow up interview, I received responses from eleven respondents, ten of which indicated they were available for a follow-up interview. It is hard to say why the attrition rate was so high, although it may have been due to the lag between survey completion (March 2014) and scheduling the interviews (Summer 2014).

⁸¹ Although I anticipated that the majority of my interview participants would be women, I did attempt to seek out two men involved in VAW prevention work as participants, but was unfortunately unsuccessful.

VAW prevention is done in social media” in a grand theoretical sense (this is not possible anyways). Instead, I want to understand how individuals doing VAW prevention work use and experience social media, in their own words. Emphasizing individual experience, in this case, meant treating experiences as knowledge and not differentiating “facts” from “point of view”. This is in conflict with some advice for qualitative researchers. For example, Babbie and Benaquisto (2002:320) tell aspiring qualitative researchers in the field that:

You should also be wary about the information you get from informants. Although they may have more direct, personal knowledge of the subject under study than you do, what they “know” is probably a mixture of fact and point of view.

Feminist methodology steers away from such distinctions, recognizing all knowledge as situated and partial (Harding 1992). In my interviews, I was interested in understanding VAW and social media from the point of view of participants.

A second principle that shaped my interviews is that research is not value-neutral. My values as a feminist and someone interested in preventing VAW were made clear to participants. Additionally, when participants’ told me about their own successes and challenges, I acknowledged them and expressed emotions (excitement, understanding, frustration, empathy) as conversational norms would suggest. Because many interviews were conducted over the phone and therefore body language was not always available, I relied on voice tone to convey my engagement with what they were saying. Finally, interviews were semi-structured, meaning they were guided by a set of key exploratory questions and I asked follow-up and clarification questions as we proceeded. I approached each interview as a conversation, using several broad questions as to guide the conversation (Appendix E), as well as occasionally drawing from participants’

websites and/or social media profiles (e.g. “I see from your website you use Instagram. Could you tell me about that?”). In general, the conversations flowed easily and, I believe, were comfortable for both participants and myself. Participants were used to public engagement and were highly conversational and articulate. My public sociology work and survey research also provided a valuable foundation for these interviews, as I understood the references to social media sites, campaigns, and feminist and/or VAW specific terminology from this work.

To analyze interview data, I listened to each interview a minimum of two times: first during transcription, and again while coding in order to check for transcription errors as well as to take into account the interviewee’s tone and expression. I coded data using NVivo qualitative analysis software using a combination of coding and memoing.⁸² I focused on open coding, which “entertains all possibilities”, tries to identify as many ideas and themes as time allows, and does not yet focus on how these many themes are related (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995:151). For memoing, in addition to making handwritten notes during the interview, I also made notes related to emerging patterns and connections while I coded. Each interview had between 60 and 272 coded passages, and the number of different nodes (key words, ideas, or topics) contained within each interview ranged from 41 to 136. Quotes and passages were frequently coded in multiple categories. For example, the statement “We will try and start conversations using Facebook, in order to engage wider audiences” would involve multiple themes such as “Facebook”, “conversation”, “audiences”, and “goals/objectives”. This coding resulted in

⁸² Babbie and Benaquisto (2002:381) define coding as “the development of concepts and categories in the recognition and ordering of themes.” Memoing refers to “the writing of notes and commentaries concerning ideas, patterns, and themes that occur to the researcher in the process of reading and coding data.”

361 topics, or “nodes” as they are called in NVivo. Some of these nodes were descriptive categories based on interview questions (e.g. “participant’s roles”), some were emerging themes (e.g. “conversations”), and some were groupings of references to certain campaigns, current events, or social media sites (e.g. “Twitter”). This coding system allowed me to identify broad emerging themes by observing frequently occurring concepts, ideas, or keywords (e.g. “backlash”) as well as making note of specific references (e.g. “the what about men question”). The full list of nodes/themes is included in Appendix F.

Following this open coding, I turned to focused coding, where “the researcher considers the utility of the themes and how they may be related” (Babbie and Benaquisto 2002:382). Here, I went through the nodes to look for overlap or strong relationships, such as that between “anti-feminist backlash” and “men’s rights associations.” To write up my interview results, I looked at what nodes had the highest number of coded passages, as well as what themes were most salient to my research question (e.g. how participants define prevention, what social media platforms they use). As I wrote, I continuously referred to the coded interview data to ensure that my interpretations and organization of the interview findings remained grounded in participants’ words. Nonetheless, at the stage of data analysis, the researcher has a great deal of power (Letherby 2003), because they are the narrator who is authoring a document that is “structured primarily by a researcher’s purposes, offering a researcher’s interpretations registered in a researcher’s voice” (Stacey 1991:114). To mitigate this power, I rely heavily on participants’ own words to describe and illustrate research findings presented in Chapters Seven and Eight. Following Opie (2013:367), I selected quotations guided by

six criteria: (1) the intensity of participant's speaking voice (indicating emotional attachment/importance); (2) the contradictory moment (where participants may contradict themselves or acknowledge the contradictions of their actions); (3) emotional content or tone (indicating emotional attachment/importance and complexity of message); (4) and the extent to which the participant uses whole sentences, rather than the more usual recursive/repetitive speech patterns (which may indicate certainty and/or a strong belief). In addition to Opie's criteria, I chose quotes that (5) eloquently and/or explicitly stated things that I had heard other participants talk about less eloquently or obviously, as well as quotes that (6) help to define where boundaries are constructed or challenged (e.g. "we do *a*, but not *b*"), since this is a preoccupation of my research.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various components of my methodological framework and explained the specific methods used to collect data. To describe the foundation of my research, I began by discussing feminist research approaches and considering what feminist driven methodology looks like. I outlined the core tenets of feminist epistemologies that drive my research: gender is a powerful organizer of social life; the pursuit of progressive social change is central to research and therefore embedded in research design; research is not value-neutral; individual experience is important to understanding social and political relations; and a focus on intersectionality. I then provided an overview of participatory action research and community-engaged scholarship and discussed how these frameworks shape my public sociological research. In the second part of this chapter is the methods section in which I explain the various

stages of my dissertation research and outline public sociology, surveys, and qualitative interviews as the specific methods I used to collect data. Survey and interview findings will be presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. In the next chapter (Chapter Five), I reflect on my experiences with public sociology.

Chapter Five: My Public Sociology

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my experiences doing public sociology. In Chapter Two, I argue that Burawoy's program of public sociology does not, in its current form, give adequate attention or analysis to the relationships between academics and community partners in terms of developing collaborative research, nor to the role of sociologists in facilitating connections and partnerships as part of the research process. Instead, it tends to look at partnerships as obvious and pre-existing, rather than exploring the possibility of communities that are mobilized around issues as opposed to institutions. This is a key part of my experience in this chapter: knowledge mobilization among various stakeholders who are invested in VAW prevention and media.

In Chapter Three, I explain that feminist media work has taken a more active role in media coverage of violence against women, and that social media represents further opportunities for this participation and re-making of media representation. Later chapters of my dissertation will explore the role of social media in further detail: How is social media a tool for those working to prevent violence against women? How do they translate their expertise in this dynamic communication space? In Chapters Six through Eight, I answer these questions by analyzing and reflecting on the responses of others. In this chapter, however, I focus more broadly on public sociology and VAW. Here I want to turn the gaze onto my own role and activities to consider how public sociology is not simply an after-product of sociological knowledge (i.e. dissemination), but how public sociology, as a reflexive, praxis-based, and interdisciplinary model, can be part of the research process.

This chapter is organized into three sections: First, I explain the activities that I include as public sociology, including a discussion of my key objectives in doing public sociology. In the second section, I discuss the benefits and challenges of this work through key themes of roles and boundaries, expertise as well as time and resources. In the third section, I unpack why and how we might move beyond the dichotomous traditional/organic understanding of public sociology, and I conclude by describing how public sociology shaped my focus on social media and informed my survey and interview development.

Part I: Doing Public Sociology

When does one “begin” to do public sociology? Is it when we start talking informally to others about the focus and importance of our research? Or is it when we start disseminating our ideas in an official capacity as a guest lecturer, give public talks, do media interviews, and/or publish books? Our responses to these questions influence how we define and denote public sociology. In this chapter, I am drawing from my experiences from a three-year period, November 2011 to October 2014. The starting point of what I consider public sociology for this chapter is November 2011 because that was when I connected with the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW),⁸³ a local VAW organization, and began to pursue public engagement and knowledge mobilization around VAW. As I will explain further in this chapter, this relationship led to a number of other collaborations and community projects that are

⁸³ OCTEVAW has been provided with a copy of this chapter and the Executive Director is aware that the Coalition is identified here in relation to the work I have done with them.

highly relevant to my research interests of VAW, media, public sociology and community-engaged scholarship.

In this chapter, I attempt to locate my public sociology according to Burawoy's distinction of traditional and organic public sociology. As I will discuss in later parts of this chapter, this distinction does not work well for my own work as a public sociologist, nor, as I later discuss in Chapter Nine, for much social media work around VAW. For the moment, however, I want to simply present a breakdown of the key activities that are part of my public sociological work discussed in this chapter. I identify three clusters of community-engaged activities relating to the VAW prevention (what Burawoy would call "working with publics"): (1) public speaking and media activities to disseminate knowledge; (2) leading a community-based research project; and (3) workshop and resource development around VAW and media. In the following sections, I discuss these activities and locate them roughly within traditional public sociology (Table 3) and organic public sociology (Table 4). I also outline my goals and objectives in this work and explain why I consider these to be public sociological projects.

Traditional public sociology: Public speaking and media activities

My "traditional" public sociology work pertaining to gender, violence, and media is summarized in Table 3. With the exception of one interview with a radio station in Alberta, all events and interviews took place in Ontario. There are two criteria for including activities in Table 3. First, do they reach out to a non-academic audience (someone who is not a graduate student or university professor)? Second, is the goal of my participation in this activity to have audience members walk away with a deeper

understanding of some aspect of the relationship between media and VAW? My role within these activities generally falls into one of three categories: (1) to talk about my research to community audiences; (2) to guest lecture in a undergraduate university classroom; or (3) to participate in a community-based panel discussion of a specific issue broadly related to my work.

Table 3: Traditional public sociology (public speaking and media), 2011-2014

Year	Role	Venue	Core Focus
April 2012	Panelist	Community event/film screening	Changing media coverage of violence against women
April 2012	Lecture	University lecture	Content analysis workshop: Media representations of VAW
June 2012	Presenter	Journalist lunch and learn	Connecting VAW and “honour killings” in news coverage
June 2012	Newspaper interview	Community event	Connecting VAW and “honour killings” in news coverage
Sept 2012	Presenter	Community media course	Issues in gender and media
Sept 2012	Radio guest	University radio station	Gender and media activism
Dec 2012	Newspaper interview	Community event	Diversity and media
Dec 2012	Blog post	Legal studies blog	Community campaign: Shine the Light on Violence Against Women
Feb 2013	Panelist	Community forum	The media’s role in creating stereotypes and normalizing violence
April 2013	Blog post	Gender and media blog	Suicide of Rehtaeh Parsons, sexual violence and social media
April 2013	Guest lecture	University lecture	Social media, cyber environments, and VAW

May 2013	Panelist	Community event/film screening	Gender, media, and sexualization
May 2013	Keynote presenter	Community forum	Sexual violence and social media: Building a framework for prevention
May 2013	Radio guest	Radio station	Sexual violence and social media: Building a framework for prevention
May 2013	Radio guest	Radio station	Sexual violence and social media: Building a framework for prevention
May 2013	Television interview	Television station	Sexual violence and social media: Building a framework for prevention
May 2013	Television interview	Television station	Sexual violence and social media: Building a framework for prevention
Feb 2014	Presenter	University event	Sexual assault awareness week: Sexual violence, social media, & feminist activism
May 2014	Presenter	Community event	The role of news reporting in ending violence against women
June 2014	Keynote presenter	Community forum	Sexual violence and social media: Building a framework for prevention
July 2014	Lecture	University class	Sexual violence and social media
Aug 2014	Lecture	University class	Digital activism and sexual violence
Sept 2014	Radio guest	University radio station	Media representations of intimate partner violence, social media, and prevention of VAW

Trying to categorize what activities that I consider public sociology is a difficult process at times. For example, guest lectures in university classrooms are not something that I initially saw as public sociology. Yet, if “students are our greatest public”, as Burawoy says (2005b), then teaching is public sociology. Other scholars have argued that

teaching is public sociology (Hays 2007; Uggen and Inderbitzin 2010; Schneider 2014) and feminists have always taken teaching seriously as a strategy for social change (Risman 2006). Yet there has been little discussion to date on how teaching can be public sociology. I approach teaching as public sociology, particularly when the focus is on teaching about social problems, their causes, and their potential solutions. As such, I have included select guest lectures that specifically focus on VAW and media, as well as two lectures on online sexual violence and digital activism from my course “Sexuality, Sexual Violence, and the Internet” taught in July and August 2014.

Conference presentations are not traditionally public sociology, as they are geared towards academic audiences. Additionally, these events are more focused on how to understand social problems and have less emphasis on what actions to take to change society.⁸⁴ That is, in more traditional academic settings, the audience is assumed to be more passive than active, and thus rarely given the “audience responsabilization” element of telling them what needs to be done to address the social problems identified. But is a university conference presentation public sociology if there are community members present? For example, the Carleton University/University of Ottawa *Critical Perspectives: Criminology and Social Justice* conference specifically makes an effort to include broader community participants and audience members. While the lines can become blurry in cases such as these, for my analysis I am not including conferences on my public sociology list.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Of course, this may vary by discipline. For example, legal studies conferences may include law reform as an area of significant attention.

⁸⁵ In examples such as these, I would argue that role also matters. For example, the conference organizers working to reach out and engage broader audiences, and bring new (and often marginalized) voices to these events, are doing public sociology. As a presenter, however, my

Goals and objectives

Throughout my public sociology work, I find myself trying to underscore three key ideas. First, media representations of VAW are important because they both reflect and reproduce societal understandings of gender and violence. Second, although mainstream media have immense power, audiences are also active, and the media do not “do” things to society in a one-way relationship (particularly in an era of web 2.0 and social media). And third, I emphasize that, moving forward, we need to recognize, engage with, and build on the work being done in various areas that are challenging and re-presenting VAW. As I discuss in Chapter Three, decades of feminist work has gone into fighting the notion that sexual and intimate partner violence against women are isolated acts that are not preventable. This is an idea that I want to convey through public sociology: that media representations of VAW are problematic not just because they misrepresent the nature of these crimes (which is often the case), but because they may debilitate social action. Thus, these last two points about the reciprocal nature of audiences and media and acknowledging feminist efforts to reframe and prevent VAW are part of what turns a passive audience into an active one. For example, in one panel discussion about gender and the media, I state that:

I really think we have to recognize and talk about all the work being done in various areas to engage, challenge, and represent women in the media. It is important that we understand that, as valuable as this film [Miss Representation] is for drawing attention to and starting a conversation about harmful representations in mainstream media, it also is framed a certain way and does not talk much about the active efforts that women and pro-feminist men have undertaken to challenge these portrayals through presenting new content in new media (Community event notes, 2012).

participation in such a conference may not be very different than other more traditional academic conferences.

As a sociologist in community-based settings, I have the opportunity to bring the sociological imagination into conversations in various platforms. In the example of VAW, this means calling for attention to the connections between individual acts of violence and larger patterns of gender based violence. In news media coverage, for example, there is a great deal of individual victim-blaming and perpetrator-exoneration that occurs (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013). In the same panel discussion, I presented three headlines regarding intimate partner violence to the audience. The first two of these headlines are actual headlines from my previous research (Fairbairn 2008). The last headline is imaginary; it is our end goal.

- 1) “Wins court sympathy: Killed cheating wife, man jailed two years” (Globe and Mail, 1978)
- 2) “Internet romance led to murder”...“(the victim’s) first mistake was trusting (the perpetrator)” (Toronto Star, 2000)
- 3) “The end of an era: Women no longer abused and killed by male partners as gender inequality, patriarchal norms, and societal tolerance of violence against women become a thing of the past” (Imaginary, our end goal).

In addition to making a connection between individual acts of violence and broader patterns of gender inequality and patriarchy, these quotes are used to convey the notion that an obstacle to preventing VAW is when it is largely seen as inevitable.

What Burawoy calls professional sociology is research that helps us to describe the nature and prevalence of social problems. This is important, but public sociology needs to be able to translate this into a tangible way forward. In my experience, public sociology is different from what Burawoy calls professional sociology because of the problem/solution relationship. In public sociology, I have found it is largely insufficient to only offer critiques (What is the problem? What is the media getting wrong?). Instead,

there is a demand for praxis: what is to be done? For example, one panel that I participated in sent me a list of questions asking about the problems with mass media coverage of VAW, but the organizers also included questions such as “What is being done in mass media to portray women more realistically in order to reduce objectification, and thus violence?” “What mediums are most useful for creating social change?” And, “how can we use media to go forward to promote better images of women?” In these public sociology settings, expertise is more than describing a problem in terms of where we are at as a society, but also involves being able to identify where we need to go.

Organic public sociology: Workshops, resource development, and community-based research

Table 4 summarizes a second cluster of public sociological activities that I classify as organic public sociology. I will discuss this division of traditional versus organic public sociology in more detail shortly. First, however, it is important to explain why these activities are grouped together as public sociology. The core criteria for being included in Table 4 are that (1) the activity was conducted in collaboration with a community group or other activists/advocates, and (2) the activity had a knowledge dissemination and/or knowledge production focus. This knowledge dissemination/production focus is what differentiates public sociology from volunteerism. For example, I worked as part of the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women on a campaign to engage local businesses around raising awareness for VAW by displaying purple in their windows to represent VAW. This in itself is not public sociology because it is focused on raising awareness of a problem such as VAW

Table 4: Organic public sociology activities (Workshops, resource development, and community-based research), 2011-2014

Date	Role	Core Focus
2011- 2014	VAW coalition committee member	Public education around VAW
Sept 2012	Workshop facilitator	Issues in gender and media
Oct 2012	Video workshop	Media literacy training: Media representations of violence against women
Dec 2012	Workshop organizer	Diversity within diversity, exploring intersectionality, independent media and gender
2012-2013	VAW coalition sub-committee member	Social media steering committee
2012-2013	Principal investigator	Community-based research on sexual violence and social media
March 2013	Community event tabling/poster presentation	Connecting with people interested in issues in gender and media
March 2013	Workshop organizer	Feminist media activism
2013-2014	Media hub chair	Collaborative creation of media hub, micro-site of resources for journalists reporting on VAW

rather than understanding its impacts, causes, and solutions (although we hope that increasing awareness will lead to more understanding and actions, so this distinction is arguably artificial).⁸⁶ Additionally, my role in this work was logistical (e.g. canvassing businesses, collecting donation boxes) rather than information or knowledge based.

However, I consider it public sociology when I wrote a blog post about this campaign and its purpose in ending VAW for a legal studies blog (Table 3). Of course this line is

⁸⁶ This example highlights the difficulty of taking a binary yes/no approach in defining public sociology activities and quantifying this work. If an important part of public sociology is building relationships with communities and collaborative partners, then being involved in activities that we do not consider public sociology is likely, as they are part of the larger picture of public sociology.

blurry, but it is important to reflect on what differentiates public sociology from volunteering around a particular cause or issue.

The activities included in Table 4 represent a broad approach to VAW prevention. As I will reiterate in later chapters, working to advance gender justice in media broadly is an important component of VAW prevention, and media misrepresentation through sexist coverage, hate speech, and invisibility of marginalized women needs to be considered in relation to violence more broadly. Thus, organizing and/or facilitating workshops related to gender justice and media is a part of my public sociology around VAW prevention. As a whole, my objectives with these activities are to synthesize feminist sociological knowledge around VAW and media, and translate this knowledge into a format or resource that enables wider, but also more targeted, dissemination. In the media literacy video workshop, for example, a colleague and I identify and discuss ten key questions to ask about news coverage of VAW. The project was designed and initiated by our local project partner, who filmed and edited the discussion, interspersing our conversation with music and displaying each question on the screen. The conversation was filmed in the living room of one of our homes and is informal and unscripted, other than the ten key questions, which were collaboratively developed beforehand.

Within these organic public sociological activities, there is some variation in terms of objectives. For example, the goals of the community-based research on sexual violence and social media (Fairbairn et al. 2013) are slightly different from the other organic public sociology activities listed in Table 4. Here, instead of striving to disseminate pre-existing knowledge around gender, media, and/or VAW, we set out to gather knowledge in a new area. The opportunity to lead this research project came about

through my pre-existing relationship with OCTEVAW.⁸⁷ Researching how violence was perpetrated online (rather than prevented) was not an initial area of focus for me, but was a new area identified by community groups. However, this community-based research experience was an important and timely project, and crystallized several key points about public sociology from my perspective.

My first takeaway point is that emerging social issues and new social phenomena are often identified and known at a grassroots level before academic research has taken note. In 2012, the organizations that funded and partnered on this research were aware of events at a local community level that lead them to want to further explore the role of social media in sexual violence.⁸⁸ In undertaking this research, I found the gap striking between academic research around sexual violence and what was evidently already known on social media. Whereas grassroots organizations were focusing on a spectrum of violence including the non-consensual distribution of intimate images (“revenge porn”), recording and dissemination of sexual assaults, sexualized cyberbullying/sexual harassment, online sexual exploitation/ child luring, and cyber stalking/digital dating violence (Fairbairn et al. 2013), academic research lagged behind, predominantly centered on these latter two themes of online child luring (e.g. Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak 2008) and cyber stalking among adult women experiencing domestic violence (e.g. Baughman 2009). This gap was particularly notable in North America, as the small body of literature focusing specifically on sexual violence and social media stemmed primarily from Australia (e.g. Powell 2010) and the United Kingdom (e.g. Salter and

⁸⁷ This research was funded by Crime Prevention Ottawa and conducted in partnership with the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women.

⁸⁸ Communicated by Crime Prevention Ottawa during a CBC radio interview, May 28, 2013 (Appendix A).

Brynden 2009). I took specific note of the absence of sociological research in this area. While sociologists have been foundational to broader (offline) understandings of VAW, this emerging intellectual territory was primarily marked by studies based in psychology, law, and internet/computer science research (e.g. Salter and Brynden 2009; Dimond et al. 2011). In a public sociology model where the sociological knowledge starts in the academy and is pushed outwards to the community, there was little traditional public sociology being offered to this emerging set of issues as a result of the paucity of professional sociology in this area.

A second point about public sociology is that one case or event can dramatically influence the take up of a public sociology project, just as one case can lead to a social movement or spark a law reform effort. On April 7, 2013, Rehtaeh Parsons, a 17 year old Nova Scotia high school student, committed suicide after a year of digital abuse related to images of her being sexual assaulted were shared on social media. Many Canadians were already familiar with the case of Amanda Todd, a 15 year old British Columbia student who committed suicide following months of online sexual exploitation, blackmailing, and bullying. Rehtaeh Parsons' death crystallized a set of issues around sexual assault, victim-blaming,⁸⁹ non-consensual distribution of images, and the inability of the criminal justice system to adequately respond to sexual violence (in general and online),⁹⁰ and evoked massive public response.

This case had a powerful effect on the community-based research project, as well as on me personally. Rehtaeh's death happened after data collection for the community-based project, as I was writing up the final report for this project. Although I had been

⁸⁹ Many comments and responses to this case on social media focused on the fact that Rehtaeh Parsons was intoxicated the night of the assault as evidence that she was partly to blame for her assault.

⁹⁰ Despite having images of the assault, police felt they were not able to lay charges.

reading, writing, and talking to people about this research for months, I found it very difficult to process this concrete, current, and sad example. I was not regularly blogging during my research, but I wrote a blog post about Rehtaeh's death. I made almost no effort to disseminate it or have it read widely; it was purely an exercise in emotional processing. As I will talk about towards the end of this chapter, the emotional investment in doing public sociology is an important factor for researchers to consider, and one that is relatively neglected in the current body of literature in this area.

In terms of the effect on the community-based research, this case brought focus to the research framework, providing an answer (in the form of an example) to the question, "what is sexual violence involving social media?" It also brought short-term, intense media and community attention to our research launch. At the research launch on May 28, 2013, I presented the draft findings at a forum at Ottawa City Hall to over 120 community stakeholders, an audience that included anti-violence workers and youth serving organizations and educators, as well as police, school board officials, and church representatives.⁹¹ The mayor and a local city councilor spoke at the launch, and several media outlets covered the event (see Appendix A). Prior to the event, I received media training with Crime Prevention Ottawa and Waterwood Communications to help me to translate research findings and express ideas in a broadly accessible way.⁹² In addition to leading to increased attention to our research project and community forum, the Rehtaeh Parsons case also created a frame or "hook" for the story. For example, the CBC Ottawa

⁹¹ We held focus groups with these stakeholders to gather reactions and feedback for the final report (Fairbairn et al. 2013), which was released three months later.

⁹² I would recommend such training to anyone interested in public sociology. Discussions about knowledge dissemination beyond the university often focus on accessibility through non-academic tone/jargon, yet it was striking to me to be informed of what this looks like in practice (for example, we had to come up with a different way to express the idea that something was "gendered").

Morning show interview that we did on the day of the community forum opened with the statement:

Rehtaeh Parsons became well known for all the wrong reasons. The 17 year old from Nova Scotia took her own life. She told her family she'd been raped, and bullied for months. Her story raised questions across Canada about sexual violence, and the role of social media. It also shed light on social agencies and how in this multi-media environment, they can sometimes struggle to keep up.

In general, increased attention and public engagement with research is a positive thing. It does however mean that, as researchers, we do not get to carefully control our message to the extent that we might wish. It also raises questions about the ethics of how we use the circumstances of an individual's suffering and/or death in publicly engaged research.

A final observation about public sociology has to do with the researchers' commitment to ongoing work. Earlier in this chapter I talked about the objective of making connections from social problems to offer solutions and/or present a way forward. For example, the media training I mentioned earlier for my research on sexual violence and social media focused on questions such as "What did you discover and how does it impact me and my family?" "What can we as a community do to address the problem?" and "Where will we go from here?" Public sociology is not sufficient as an intellectual exercise, and is never a finished product. By this, I mean that social problems rarely finish or end in our lifetime; they evolve, are understood differently, increase or decrease in magnitude, and so forth. Yet research projects do end, and so there are important questions to raise here about the responsibility of the researcher doing public sociological work. It is not feasible or ideal that public sociologists remain involved with all initiatives and strategies developed from, or through, our research.

Yet as public sociologists, how do we transition from the end of a research project in a way that supports the stakeholders/organizations that we work with? For example, this community-based research project launch that I wrote about earlier was the end result of seven months of research. As a researcher, my obligations were to use the feedback and recommendations to complete a final report. However, I also felt a responsibility to work with and support different groups and organizations in implementing projects and programming stemming from the project, particularly given that so many people were extremely supportive of the project. In moving on (or returning to) other projects, there is a “drop the research and run” feeling that is difficult to navigate. What role as public sociologists do we have to follow up our work, what responsibility to offer concrete solutions and/or to stick around to support the implementation of policies or programs we recommend?

I will discuss the relationship between the activities in Tables 3 and 4 in further detail in relation to Burawoy’s framework of public sociology in a later section. For the moment, however, I turn to a discussion about various benefits and challenges of public sociology through a discussion of three key themes: roles and boundaries, expertise, and time and resources.

Part II: Key Themes

Roles and boundaries

As I have discussed in Chapter Two, critical voices around public sociology often worry that public sociology will hurt the discipline of sociology (Uggen and Inderbitzin 2010). Rather than calling for “a complete retreat from public activities”, these voices

advocate “that social scientists simultaneously wear two hats- one as a citizen in participatory democracies and the other as professional social scientists” (Uggen and Inderbitzin 2010:728). This argument is problematic because it upholds an artificial boundary between the citizen and the academic. Yet, it is still useful to think about in the context of roles and boundaries within public sociology.

Reflecting on the three years this chapter spans, I see negotiating this boundary as a recurring challenge for my public sociology. However, I do not think about it through a label of academic and citizen (citizenship feels too official and is not something available to all), but as researcher and community member. I view this as a very personal process, meaning that how people navigate and negotiate their researcher/community identity is going to look different for every individual. One way to approach this negotiation is by thinking through the relationship between understanding the world and changing the world. Critics of public sociology note that

understanding the world takes quite a different set of skills from what is required for successfully changing it. And the refusal to recognize the difference between the two can only undermine the successful pursuit of both (van den Berg 2014:69).

Given the broad nature of this argument, I cannot really agree or disagree with this idea as an absolute. However, in my experience with public sociology these ideas can blur. For example, through public sociology, my theoretical understanding of VAW and media has become richer, more-in depth, and increasingly situated in the lived realities of different people.

This ongoing, mutually shaping relationship between understanding the world and changing it has research implications. It means that, as a researcher, I have had to reflexively reshape my theoretical understandings of VAW and media relationships. For

example, in Chapter Three, I discuss how a great deal of feminist work (including my own) critiques news coverage of VAW. Although some of this work (e.g. Ryan 2006; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013) argues that it is important to involve journalists in this process for mutual education, much sociological work, implicitly or explicitly, separates the news process (journalists, editors) from victims/survivors of VAW (those they report on). Yet journalists can be allies and leaders in this process, as many have vested interest in improving mainstream media coverage of VAW. Additionally, many people working in media are themselves survivors of violence.⁹³ It is, therefore, important not to set up a journalist/citizen boundary as a barrier to partnerships and collaborations. For example my experience collaborating on OCTEVAW's Media Hub for journalists reporting on VAW is based on the premise that setting up an us/them relationship with VAW prevention advocates and mainstream media outlets is not productive. Instead, I have found that working with journalists helps to understand (1) the professional culture and systemic barriers related to reporting of VAW and (2) to develop strategies to translate feminist sociological understandings of VAW into practical and tangible reporting practices.

An additional role/boundary issue that I have found surprisingly difficult to navigate is that of how I label my own personal connection to VAW. I do not identify as a survivor of violence, but violence has impacted my life. I have friends and family members who have experienced violence in many forms, and I grew up in a home where I witnessed abuse. Like most women, I have also experienced sexual harassment and

⁹³ For example, Ottawa Citizen journalist Shaamini Yogaretnam (2014) has written about her experience being sexually assaulted.

been in many situations where I felt threatened or unsafe.⁹⁴ While I have generally recognized that my research interests are inevitably shaped by my own personal connections to these issues, before doing public sociology work I did not give a great deal of thought as to how to articulate this. In academic sociology settings, these are not things that get discussed. In public sociological settings, there are times (primarily, but not exclusively, media interviews) where I was asked about where my research interests derive from, what are my connections to these issues, and so forth. I find it a difficult line to walk, because not discussing my personal connections feels like an attempt to maintain some sort of false objectivity or researcher privilege, while to rely too heavily on those experiences skews my reality that my research actually feels far more personal now than it did in the beginning. In other words, although I would still like a better answer to the question of why I became involved in this area, the initial reasons matter less than why I continue. Social media has played an important role in this process, for every time I open Facebook or Twitter I see posts and stories from people who are talking about and sharing their experiences about a topic that I research (through a platform that I also research), making it impossible for me to demarcate a personal/professional boundary, even if I wished to do so.

Expertise

An additional theme central to my experiences in public sociology is unpacking the notion of expertise and the question of who is the expert. In non-academic settings, individual experiences and ideas are given more weight relative to broader theoretical

⁹⁴ In recent months, Twitter hashtags such as #YesAllWomen have drawn public attention to the various ways that sexual abuse and harassment, or fears of this abuse, shapes the daily lives of women.

ideas and concepts than in the academy. At times this is problematic, such as when “tough on crime” criminal justice policies are developed in response to individual cases without regard for evidence-based research. But recognizing experiential knowledge also acknowledges that academics are not the only ones who theorize, and that drawing together different forms of expertise to address social problems is beneficial. For example, Ryan (2004:113) argues, “public sociology, at its best, synergetically links uncommon partners to deepen knowledge and equalize social resources.” Here, the role of the public sociologists is not to “be” the expert, but to facilitate the coming together of various forms of interdisciplinary expertise:

As a public sociologist, I work with collective actors to apply theoretical constructs to an actual situation...working as a team, the collective actors and I attempt to draw insights and directions from existing social movement paradigms. To impose theories on activists would be to ignore the fact that all human beings theorize...Far more easily than working alone, collective actors and I in tandem link concepts into workable and transferable paradigms and related transformative practices (Ryan 2004:111).

Creating spaces for this type of public sociology practice is important. Feminist writing has often challenged claims of authority and social expertise, arguing for recognition of the socially contextual nature of knowledge (e.g. Stanley and Wise 1993). Postcolonial feminist scholars such as Lal (2008) have also problematized the notion of expertise and expert knowledge, explaining that

The mass appeal of scientism and the public trust in ‘expert’ knowledge are both produced and maintained by the ‘professionalism’ of academia, as well as by the state’s legitimation of positivist social science through its sponsorships of and clientist relation with policy research (p. 178).

As I will discuss further later in this chapter, it is problematic when sociologists position themselves as owning expertise or social science knowledge because this sets up a sort of saviour relationship. However, this does not mean that the theoretical insights, research

methods, and specialized knowledge that sociologists (and other academics) have should be kept insulated in professional academic settings. In fact, as I discuss shortly, it is both logistically and strategically necessary to embrace the role of an academic expert at times, while recognizing it is not the only type of expertise.

Reflecting on my own public sociology work, I acknowledge that I have often been uncomfortable with the role of the expert, particularly starting out as a graduate student/researcher. I am still uncomfortable with the framework and label of being an “expert” in a particular area, and worry that it reinforces hierarchies that I am often not comfortable with. I am sensitive about claiming authority to speak for others, particularly when it comes to media platforms where definitive and, at times, overly simplistic statements often receive more attention. However, this discomfort has lessened, or at least, become more nuanced. There are four tools of understanding that have contributed to this. First is the circular process of public sociology. Here, my community-based research and engagement helps me to be increasingly comfortable “talking sociologically” about VAW, which then leads to further community engagement as I develop expertise and skills that I can use in partnership with stakeholders.

Second, I have become more comfortable with expertise by acknowledging that public sociology work recognizes and requires different forms of knowledge and resources and that, as such, I need to be both knowledgeable and a resource for others in some capacity. In other words, VAW prevention involves an interdisciplinary set of issues where all involved have some sort of expertise. For me, working to “link concepts into workable and transferable paradigms and related transformative practices” as Ryan (2004:111) describes this process, works. Third, building on my earlier point about

limited resources in VAW prevention, I realize that the adoption and use of the label of expert is both practical and strategic in different situations. Academia may be necessary and useful to our understandings of social problems, but it can also help to bring a different sort of legitimacy to activist and advocacy knowledge. That is, the institutional backing that a PhD represents may be a selling point for audience reception, whether that is the broader public, mass media, or (perhaps most importantly for community organizations), funders. For example, my status as a PhD candidate (i.e. researcher), and partnerships with other researchers, presumably played a role in obtaining funding for community-based research on sexual violence and social media. However, I would not have had the opportunity to do this research without a partnership with a local anti-violence organization.⁹⁵

Finally, I have also been able to reconcile some of my struggles with boundaries, roles, and expertise by incorporating a framework of community-engaged scholarship into dominant ideas about public sociology. I explain in Chapter Four that the difference between community-engaged scholarship and public sociology can be found in where they are facing: community-engaged scholarship faces the community and thus prioritizes these interests; public sociology is ultimately concerned with the role and relevance of sociology in affecting social change, and thus orbits around the discipline. One of the pathologies of public sociology is that it can feel like you are either “taking” or “giving” knowledge (taking from publics to give to sociology or vice versa). Burawoy (2005:288) says that sociology is “connected to society by an umbilical cord”, which I find to be a

⁹⁵ This example also demonstrates that public sociology is often a mutually beneficial process. Aside from the personal motivations and satisfactions of working on this project, the professional benefits (in terms of research experience, exposure, connections, and income) that I derived through this project are evidence of a mutually beneficial partnership.

strange metaphor given the one-way dependency implied. Instead, I see sociology as embedded in society. Within a framework of community-engaged scholarship, partnership and collaboration more organically come to the forefront of the discussion, and expertise is something that is shared and fostered rather than owned and operated by a particular discipline. In practice, this could mean that public sociologists need to investigate research questions that are most relevant to the communities they work with, rather than the most evident disciplinary question (though of course these can overlap). Or it might mean that community reports or alternative knowledge dissemination strategies (e.g. social media campaigns) take priority over academic journal publications. Moving forward, I would like to see discussions about public sociology overlap more with ideas from community-engaged scholarship.

Time and resources

A third theme that is important to discuss in relation to practicing public sociology surrounds the time and resource investment. As most people who do any kind of service or community work are likely well aware, when you join networks and become involved with community projects, there are often numerous, even overwhelming, opportunities and/or projects to collaborate in or where a contribution can be made. This is, overall, a positive situation because, as researchers, it is motivating and satisfying to interact with others who are excited about our work and to see it put into action. For example, working with anti-violence advocates and journalists on the Media Hub project to create resources for good reporting of VAW is a tangible follow up from my previous research (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013). Additionally, talking about sociological

understandings of gender, media, and violence in an interdisciplinary workshop setting is energizing and helps to combat tendencies of academic isolation.

Yet, particularly as a graduate student, public sociology is a balancing act. There is a balancing of identities, personal motivations and professional requirements, time, resources, and priorities that needs to take place. I struggled to time manage between community engagement work and more traditional academic pursuits (dissertation writing, publishing, funding applications). Here, I suspect I am not saying anything that anyone working in both academic and community-engaged settings does not know, but it is nonetheless (or perhaps because of this) worth stating explicitly. Other scholars have noted that institutional incentives and supports are needed to encourage publicly engaged scholarship (e.g. Currie 2007, Uggen and Inderbitzin 2010). I think this is worth re-stating, and adding that, beyond supporting the practice of public sociology, we need to think of ways to make it sustainable. For example, the University of Guelph's Community-Engaged Scholarship Institute publishes information online regarding how scholars can best include community-engaged research on their curriculum vitae. Another idea would be to develop institutional policies for how universities will support those who experience harassment or trauma related to their public sociology. We have sexual harassment policies pertaining to our physical workplace (the walls of the university), but as a graduate student (and perhaps this is also the case for faculty), the financial and psychological costs or risks of public sociology remain individual responsibilities. There are practical benefits to doing public sociology. For example, public sociology work helps one to develop as an academic: making presentations, coordinating or facilitating projects, and discussing one's work in a variety of non-academic platforms are all

important parts of an academic career trajectory. However, in addition to time and energy costs, there are also logistical requirements like finding locations to hold events, fundraising, and learning how to use social media to publicize campaigns and events.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, there is an emotional resource investment, particularly when working in fields involving violence. Discussions of public sociology have rarely focused on emotions. One exception is Mopas and Moore (2012), who argue for a greater respect for the public's emotional responses to crime in moving the public criminology agenda forward. I agree, but wish to argue that we should also turn that consideration of emotions onto ourselves as public criminologists and public sociologists. What emotions drive us to do the work we do, in the way that we do? In public sociology discourse, sociologists are often positioned as rational experts who can bring knowledge forward or work in a dedicated and reasonable manner with publics to produce and disseminate knowledge in advance of a social justice agenda. Only occasionally have scholars directly discussed their emotional experiences with public sociology, such as expressing their fears or anxieties around how public sociology will be practiced (Lal 2008) or describing the backlash or adverse consequences stemming from doing (feminist) research in the public domain (Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry 2007). My research findings discussed in Chapters Six through Eight will highlight some of these costs and challenges from the perspectives of participants doing VAW prevention work, many of whom have (or previously have had) an academic component to their identity such as graduate student or researcher. These are certainly important conversations to have; yet I have not read anything reflecting specifically on the emotionality of public sociology from the researcher's perspective.

In doing research on VAW, it is difficult to tell to what extent doing public sociology requires additional emotional resources above and beyond those required to read and write about sexual violence and intimate partner violence daily. In VAW work surrounding survivors of violence, there is frequent discussion about mental health and self-care (I discuss these themes further in Chapters Seven and Eight). In graduate school, there are workshops on work-life balance and dealing with academic pressures, but less conversation about the emotional costs of research. In public sociology literature, amidst ontological and epistemological conversations about the nature of social science knowledge and institutional structures that shape public sociology, one feature that is rarely discussed is that how sociologists do public sociology is also very personal. Drawing from my own experience, saying that public sociology is a personal process means that, while I receive tremendous personal motivation and satisfaction from doing this work, it is also quite challenging. For example, I do not enjoy the spotlight, and I see it as a means to an end that is thus required in certain situations. Public speaking, research presentations, and media work are strategic and pragmatic endeavours that I have accepted as necessary to do research, teaching, and service in community-engaged ways. I already know that researching VAW can be a depleting and difficult topic, and, therefore, find myself gravitating more towards partnerships and collaborative work that allow me to do public sociology in ways that fit my personal preferences.⁹⁶

Overall, the strength of public sociology work is in the blurry boundaries, in the blending of research and expertise with community knowledge and knowledge

⁹⁶ I do however realize that, while my decision to take a more back stage approach to public sociology is based on personal preferences, these preferences are shaped by broader social factors. For example, focusing more on collaborative work/partnerships, rather than individual blogging or social media activism, allows me to maintain privacy and avoid potential harassment that many writers, bloggers, and activists cannot avoid.

mobilization capacity. The challenges of navigating this terrain should be discussed and worked on at a variety of levels, taking into consideration the time and resource investments experienced by public sociologists. Additionally, as I have argued in Chapter Two, the success and sustainability of public sociology requires attention to power and inequalities within and beyond the university. I am in a relatively privileged social position being a white, straight, able-bodied, cis-gender⁹⁷ woman, and I know that challenges in working in public realms are qualitatively different for scholars of colour, LGBTQ people, and individuals living with disabilities.

In the next section, I will discuss the relationship between the activities in Tables 3 and 4 in further detail in relation to Burawoy's public sociology program. Here, I consider why and how we might move away from a dichotomous framework of traditional and organic public sociology.

Part III: Moving Away From The Traditional/Organic Public Sociology Divide

Audience

As a reminder, *traditional public sociology* focuses on a one-way process of education where sociological knowledge is disseminated to a mass audience. In traditional public sociology

the publics addressed are generally invisible in that they cannot be seen, thin in that they do not generate much internal interaction, passive in that they do not constitute a movement or organization, and they are usually mainstream (Burawoy 2005a:263).

Organic public sociology, on the other hand, refers to the sociologist working in close connection with a "visible, thick, active, and often counter-public" (Burawoy 2005:264).

⁹⁷ According to Basic Rights Oregon (2011: para.1) "Cisgender is a term used to describe people who, for the most part, identify as the gender they were assigned at birth."

Within organic sociology, there is a philosophy of mutual education, and the intellectual/public boundary is less clear than in professional, policy, critical, and traditional public sociology.

My work discussed in this chapter focuses on disseminating sociological knowledge both traditionally and organically. Uggem and Inderbitzin (2010) identify evaluating and reframing cultural images of the criminal as perhaps the clearest example and task for public criminology. In a similar vein, my public sociology work around VAW and media focuses on how we can tell a different story about VAW, re-framing it from a focus on individual acts of violence to a broader, systemically rooted, set of issues. However, I find an immediate incompatibility with the traditional/organic dichotomy, because it seems to take for granted that the academic is working as an individual in traditional public sociology and collaboratively in organic. In this way, I find the distinction between traditional public sociology and organic public sociology to be largely artificial. For example, looking at the activities in Table 3 (traditional public sociology), it is clear that many of those activities would be irrelevant or non-existent if it were not for the activities in Table 4 (organic public sociology). For example, if I had not conducted community based research on sexual violence or social media, or was not working with other feminist advocates to hold media workshops and training about violence against women, there would be far less for me to speak to the news media about.

Because my traditional public sociology is frequently derived from my organic public sociology, it is tempting to think about the organic public sociological activities of Table 4 as the “inputs”, and the traditional public sociological activities of Table 3 as the “outputs”. This order of operations does not quite work, however, because there are also

outputs involved in organic public sociology in the form of knowledge creation and dissemination. For example, creating media tip sheets and video workshops for improving reporting on VAW is both a process and an outcome. Acker (2005:330) argues that feminist sociology was more an outcome of the feminist movement than a cause and that “the road may lead from practice to theory as well as from theory to practice”. The same argument applies to traditional and organic public sociology, where traditional public sociological activities (talks, Op Eds, interviews) can stem from organic public sociological engagement, or can also lead to it.

Ultimately, it may be more helpful to move away from focusing on the methods of public sociology as traditional or organic, to focusing on the question of audience. In the activities presented in Table 3, I am more often than not speaking to a broader audience of those who, generally speaking, I do not assume to be well-informed about VAW and/or to be already doing anti-VAW work in a conscious, active way. The audience in Table 3 is external: the object is not to “preach to the converted”, but to reach outside existing networks of feminist media/VAW prevention interest and publicize, to bring new voices in, to let mainstream audiences know about what is happening and the problem at hand. In this context, as a public sociologist, I am interested in getting the non-engaged audience interested. Thus, important questions here are “what should you know?” and “what can you do?” The activities presented in Table 4, on the other hand, focus on sharing knowledge within and among those who already have an expressed interest in gender, media, and VAW.⁹⁸ Because these stakeholders, generally speaking, already have a baseline knowledge of the feminist perspectives on VAW outlined in

⁹⁸ Yet, within certain circumstances and current events, this research can be taken up much more broadly, as was the case with the community-based research on sexual violence and social media.

Chapters One and Three, the questions therefore become “what do we know?” and “what can we do?”

Ownership

Another reason why Burawoy’s traditional versus organic public sociology distinction does not work in my experience of public sociology stems from the assumption of university ownership over public sociology. By ownership, I mean that Burawoy takes for granted that the starting point of public sociology for the academic is in the academy, and then she goes out to pursue traditional and/or organic public sociology. This fits with Burawoy’s understanding of sociology and society as connected by an umbilical cord. In this framework, public sociology is not a set of tools whose ownership can be transferred to a community, and it is not something that can be practiced without the sociological license of higher education. It is a practice owned and operated by sociologists in the academy.⁹⁹ My concern in this regard is that public sociology is reminiscent of saviour complexes, of people convinced that they know best going out to “fix” those who don’t know better.¹⁰⁰

I am not arguing that sociologists do not have unique expertise to offer other social sectors. In fact, there are a vast number of situations where I think sociological

⁹⁹ For the sake of illustrating this idea, I will use the example of dance here. Nobody owns dancing as a practice. Although there are professionals who are paid to dance, and to teach others to dance, as well as abilities that limit or expand people’s ability to dance, as a general principle, everybody can dance. And when they engage in this practice, it is recognized and acknowledged as dancing. Sociology is not generally understood in this way, but is instead a more credentialed practice, like medicine or law. While we encourage broader publics to think critically and to use their sociological imagination, to date the discourse around public sociology is predominantly that it can only be actually practiced by sociologists.

¹⁰⁰ These critiques can be leveled at a variety of social and historical patterns, from middle-class undergraduate students wanting to go to a developing country for a week on spring break to do volunteer tourism to broader colonial systems where white people want to “educate” colonized populations.

knowledge is essential to improving individual and community knowledge about social problems, as well as broader policy and systemic change. For example, sociological studies telling us that intimate partner homicides are more often premeditated than other types of homicides (Dawson 2006) has significant implications for legal and policy practice, as well as individual and community understanding of these crimes.

As it stands, I have presented what are arguably two contradictory statements: First, public sociologists need to provide forward-looking roadmaps stemming from their social problems research (i.e. what can you do, why should you do this, what are the ways to approach addressing certain social problems). And second, public sociology does not have ownership over expertise and should avoid saviour complex approaches to addressing social problems. However, this tension can be reconciled if we focus on research processes in combination with research outcomes. Much feminist work has taught us that how we do research is equally important to the end knowledge product (e.g. Stanley and Wise 1993; Naples 2003; Smith 2005). If we focus on a public sociology research practice that is reflexive, praxis-based, and interdisciplinary, then we are more likely to understand how we can use our sociological toolkit to disseminate research and facilitate expertise in ways that recognize we are embedded in social networks rather than attached by an umbilical cord, and that recognize sociology for the social production that it is (Brewer 2005).

As my work demonstrates, public sociologists are often working collaboratively, and may end up doing media work and other mass public education events because of knowledge gained from their community engagement and the relationships and networks they have built. As I have discussed in Chapter Two, public sociology debates have been

largely defined in relation to professional sociology. Burawoy’s categorization of the field of sociology as professional, critical, policy, and public sociology has been thoroughly debated and dissected. However, the field of public sociology has only been broken down along a dichotomy of traditional and organic public sociology, and I have outlined above why I do not find this division useful. We need to create a theoretical space where public sociology can be borne out of community, and where individual public sociologists can more easily navigate their blurring roles.

Figure 2: Public sociology as a university-community model

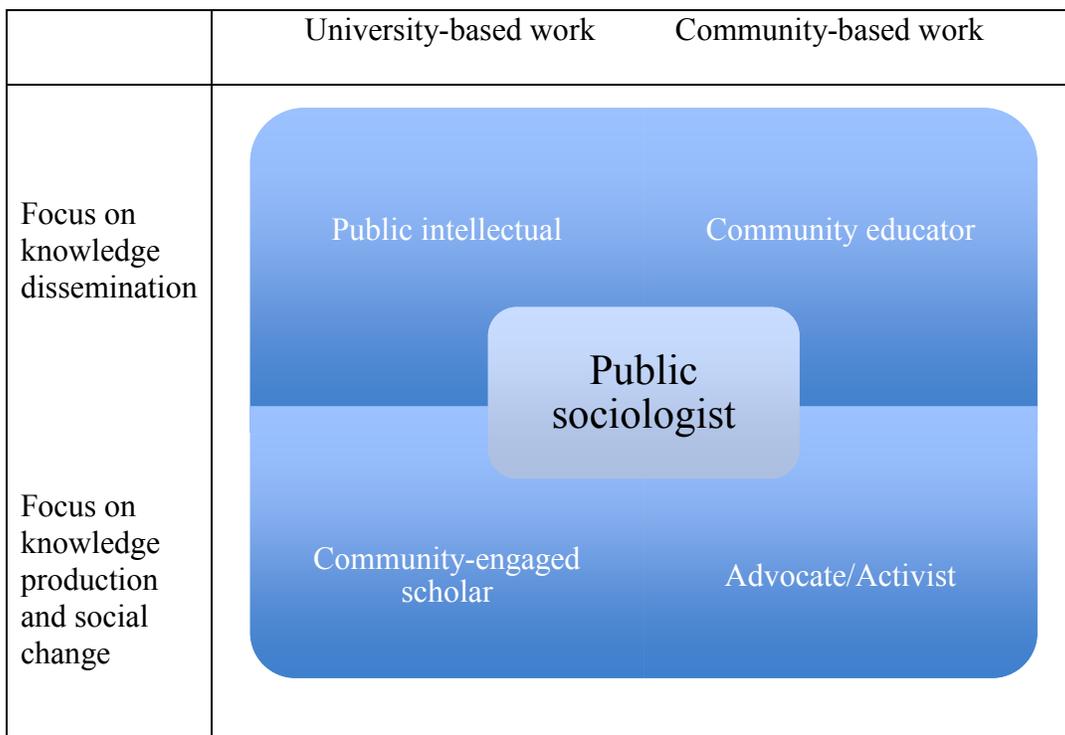


Figure 2 presents a starting framework for this understanding. Here, I draw together a two by two model of public sociology as I wish to approach it: with a fluid university-community boundary where academics can more readily negotiate their university and community-based identities. Here, public sociologists can be based both in

the university and the community, and can move throughout their various (blurred) roles and identities. Although the university-based categories of public intellectual and community-engaged scholar still generally resemble traditional and organic public sociology, the fluid categories of public intellectual and community-engaged scholar focus more on what types of expertise are being shared and developed, and also incorporate the useful body of work that comes with community-engaged scholarship.

This model is intended to recognize the overlap and blurred boundaries that come with the territory of public sociology, while providing a framework to understand that different aspects of public sociology will emphasize different roles, and individuals will navigate this work in a variety of ways. For example, I have discussed how both knowledge dissemination and social change (e.g. identifying new research topics, making policy recommendations) can be found simultaneously in public sociology projects. However, what is important about conceptually identifying different sectors of public sociology is that it allows us to reflexively approach how we focus our strengths and efforts as researchers to navigate these roles strategically and to develop supports and best practices within each realm. For example, I would argue that academics interested in doing public sociology would benefit from social media training. However, this training could be additionally beneficial by emphasizing various components of public sociology and allow for nuance based on varying priorities/roles outlined in Figure 2.

Creating space for public sociologists to be community educators and activists also recognizes that sociology is neither owned nor exclusively practiced in university settings. Of course, like all typologies, this model has certain limitations and assumptions. For example, some sociologists may interpret an activist identity as outside

their political comfort zone. However, as I will discuss in Chapter Nine, the notion of an activist can be widely used and understood, and public sociologists can gather creative insights for low-stakes practices (e.g. participating in a hashtag campaign, creating infographics from research) from the digitally mobilized communities that we study. A second potential limitation of this framework is that, for those who work from a standpoint where public sociology is only practiced by academics in their university determined roles, then this model is irrelevant, and thinking about public intellectual work and community-engaged scholarship as different forms of public sociology is likely sufficient. However, this group is not my target audience, and for academics such as myself who are struggling to navigate the notion that they “own” sociological knowledge and tools, and/or for those who see their feminist research as part of a broader social movement, this may be a helpful roadmap.

Public sociology and social media

Until recently, there has been very little written about the role of social media in public sociology. Schneider (2014:205) points out that

Facebook, the world’s most popular social networking website, was launched in 2004, the same year that Michael Burawoy gave his now (infamous) American Sociological Association (ASA) presidential address, “For Public Sociology.” A lot has changed since. Facebook has gained hundreds of millions of users since its launch. There are now over two hundred million Twitter followers that send one billion tweets per week. It is no understatement that we are in the midst of a profound seismic shift in social reality, the collective move into cyberspace, with social media serving as the principle catalyst.

Schneider proposes a form of “e-public sociology” where the use of social media connects or collapses the traditional and organic forms of public sociology (2014:217).

Here, social media “provide opportunities for sociologists to be public sociologists,

bringing sociology into conversation with student and other publics beyond the walls of the academy” (2014:218). The emergence and proliferation of social media troubles the notion of the thin, invisible, non-interactive public of traditional sociology. For example, we have the ability to see, and interact with, those who are sharing and commenting on our work in social media platforms.

Though my work in public sociology did not focus specifically on social media strategies for public sociology, it helped to shape my research focus in two central ways. The first is that by doing public sociology work around feminist media, I became more aware of the depth of activist work taking place online. VAW organizations are starting to use social media in various ways and incorporate offline strategies online. However, there is also a new contingent of feminist activists who work online in various ways, and weave in and out of VAW prevention activities as part of their larger social justice missions. Doing public sociology taught me that: (1) activist and advocacy work is far ahead of published academic work about the relationship between VAW and social media; (2) social media should be taken seriously in terms of violence prevention; and (3) social media should be taken seriously in terms of public sociology. Feminists (and others) have spent decades fighting for news media recognition of VAW and working to challenge problematic media coverage. Roles, boundaries, and expertise are messy and fluid in these networked spaces. When digital spaces are brought into the equation, we can see the many new voices working on VAW prevention in different ways.

The second way that public sociology helped to shape my research focus on social media relates to the take-up of the sexual violence, social media, and youth project. I have discussed how individual cases have had a profound effect on public attention to

sexual violence and social media and resulted in increased attention to this research. However, it was clear to me through community-engaged research that, beyond the motivation to address the perpetration of VAW using social media, there is also widespread motivation to know more about social media as a tool of VAW prevention. Apps, social media campaigns, and other digital content are tackling VAW prevention from different angles and with different results. I am interested in knowing more about the individuals and organizations driving these networked efforts: What are these stakeholders' goals and objectives pertaining to social media? What successes and challenges are they experiencing? And where do we go from here, both in terms of VAW prevention, and from feminist public sociology more broadly?

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on my experiences with public sociology. I have discussed how I categorize various activities as traditional and organic public sociology, and explained my key objectives in these areas. I have also discussed the benefits and challenges of these experiences according to key themes of roles and boundaries, expertise, and time and resources. Here, I have argued that, while the strength of public sociology is that it acknowledges these blurred roles and boundaries and allows for the development of collaborative forms of expertise and practical solutions, there is additional theoretical work to be done, as well as practical supports developed, to enable researchers to successfully navigate these roles.

In this chapter I have also considered some of the limitations of Burawoy's notions of traditional and organic public sociology and suggested a conceptual model for

thinking about how public sociologists can be public intellectuals, community-engaged scholars, community educators and/or advocates and activists. My intention in re-conceptualizing traditional and organic public sociology is not to put forward a prescriptive model for how public sociology should be practiced, or to assert that researchers must fit into one or more boxes at all times. Rather, it is to offer an alternative for a more interdisciplinary public sociology that is not defined exclusively by university ties and allows for public sociology to take place with more loosely defined social justice communities. I have discussed how, in public sociology, roles are fluid and boundaries permeable, and that the nature and extent of our engagement in each sphere will depend on where we are focusing (university or broader community) and whether we are prioritizing knowledge production or knowledge dissemination at any point in time. Finally, I have summarized how my experiences with public sociology have shaped my focus on social media for my survey and interview data collection. In the next chapter, I discuss the results of my survey of how those engaging in VAW prevention work use and experience social media.

Chapter Six: Survey Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, I present and analyze the results of my survey on the use of social media for violence against women (VAW) prevention. The chapter is organized in three sections. First, I describe participants, including demographic characteristics, their roles related to VAW prevention, and their feedback on VAW terminology. Second, I discuss participants' social media use as it relates to VAW, and consider differences in social media use based on participants' roles (e.g. researcher, activist). Third, I identify and analyze successes and challenges that participants experience with social media. Here, I put forward the notion that benefits of social media for VAW prevention can also be thought of according to an ecological model, with individual, relationship, community, and social/structural aspects. In addition to presenting a descriptive picture of VAW prevention and social media, the broader objective of these three sections is to lay a foundation for my analysis of research interviews in Chapters Seven and Eight and the discussion in Chapter Nine.

Part I: Description of Survey Data

Participant characteristics

Chapter Four explains the methods used to construct and disseminate this survey. This section presents descriptive characteristics of participants, including age, gender, and status as a member of a historically marginalized group (e.g. race, disability). These results are summarized in Table 5. As the table shows, the most frequent age category for participants is between 25 and 34 years old. Approximately three out of five participants

Table 5: Demographic characteristics of participants

Characteristic	Percentage of Respondents (N=109)		
<i>Age</i>			
18-24	6		
25-34	32		
35-44	23		
45-54	16		
55-64	17		
65+	3		
Prefer not to answer	4		
<i>Gender Identity</i>			
Woman	84		
Man	12		
Trans/Other	3		
Prefer not to answer	1		
<i>Country</i>			
Canada	83		
United States	17		
<i>Population</i>			
More than 100,000	78		
30,000 to 100,000	13		
1,000 to 30,000	8		
Less than 1,000	2		
<i>Factors of Historical Marginalization</i>			
	Yes	No	Prefer not to answer
Person of colour/member of racialized group	16	79	6
Person with a disability	8	91	1
Member of GLBTTQ group	22	75	3
Other	16	79	6

Note: All numbers represent percentages. Categories may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

(61%) are under the age of 45, and three-quarters of participants (77%) are 55 years of age or younger. The vast majority of participants in this survey are women. Specifically, 84 percent of participants identify as women, 12 percent as men, and 3 percent as trans or

other gender identity.¹⁰¹ This gender breakdown is clearly different from the demographic composition in Canada where women and girls comprise just over half of the population (Urquijo and Milan 2011), but is not surprising given the over representation of women doing VAW prevention work.¹⁰²

In this survey, about one in six participants (16%) identifies as a person of colour¹⁰³ or member of a racialized group, and one in twelve (8%) of survey respondents identify as a person with a disability.¹⁰⁴ More than one in five (22%) of survey respondents identify as a member of a GLBTTQ¹⁰⁵ group.¹⁰⁶ The majority of participants in this survey come from Canadian urban areas. Specifically, more than four out of five (83%) of participants are from Canada, and more than three-quarters of all participants (78%) report that they are from cities over 100,000 people.

¹⁰¹ Trans was a separate category from “other” gender identity, and one individual identified as trans. For the “other” gender identity category, one respondent identified as genderfluid femme, one genderqueer. Additionally, one respondent indicated “prefer not to answer”.

¹⁰² This is my observation of this field, as I have not been able to find any studies with statistics on the gender breakdown to date.

¹⁰³ People of colour is a term “used to refer to nonwhite people, used instead of the term “minority,” which implies inferiority and disenfranchisement. The term emphasizes common experiences of racial discrimination or racism.” (Colours of Resistance Archive n.d.)

¹⁰⁴ It is not my intention to compare my survey sample to the general population, as I am specifically interested in those doing VAW prevention work in some capacity. However, as a point of reference, almost one in five (19%) of Canadians identify as a member of a visible minority group (Statistics Canada 2014) and people with disabilities make up close to 14 percent of the population according to Statistics Canada (Arim 2012).

¹⁰⁵ GLBTTQ stands for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Two-Spirited, and Queer.

¹⁰⁶ Although Statistics Canada survey data collection on sexual orientation is only a recent development, this rate is significantly higher than general population surveys showing that 1-2 percent of Canadians identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Statistics Canada 2015). It is perhaps not surprising that GLBTTQ individuals are disproportionately represented among those engaged in anti-violence work, given that this community experiences disproportionately higher rates of gendered and sexualized violence (Walters, Chen, and Breiding 2013), and many individuals engaged in VAW prevention work are themselves survivors of violence. Of course, there are likely other factors involved as well. For example, individuals identifying as GLBTTQ may be generally more engaged in activism and social change, may social media more frequently, and/or may be more inclined to identify themselves as GLBTTQ in a feminist-identified research survey rather than in Statistics Canada research.

As mentioned, the majority of survey participants live in Canada. My research includes participants from both Canada and the United States because of the fluidity between these media landscapes as well as the overlap in anti-VAW movements (that is, in part, facilitated by the shared media context). Because of this, it was my initial intent to gather roughly equal data from both Canada and the United States. However, at the outset I was concerned with gathering sufficient Canadian responses, as I anticipated that the larger population and vast reach of social networks in the U.S. would lead to disproportionately higher numbers of survey responses. However, the fact that the responses are disproportionately from Canada (83%) indicates that perhaps the smaller population (and, arguably, more close-knit networks) were beneficial in terms of obtaining survey responses.

As I have discussed, I use the umbrella term violence against women (VAW) in my research to refer to sexual violence and intimate partner violence against women and trans/non-gender binary individuals. The target sample of stakeholders engaged in work related to VAW is intentionally broad in order to be inclusive of the diversity of work being done in this area. As discussed in Chapters Two and Four, this is in part because my research aims to explore publics loosely connected networks clustered around similar objectives rather than defined by geographic and/or institutionalized settings, to more. Thus, the variable “participant role” sets out participants’ primary identity in relation to their VAW prevention work. The breakdown of these roles is summarized in Tables 6 and 7. Table 6 presents the various roles identified by participants (involving multiple roles), whereas Table 7 presents these roles re-grouped according to how participants define their primary role. As anticipated, survey participants are wearing a variety of hats

Table 6: Participant work roles (multiple)

Work related to VAW	Percentage of Respondents (N=109)
Activist/Advocate	57
Blogger	16
Community Educator	43
Writer/Editor/Communications Professional	17
Journalist/Reporter	9
Front Line Service Provider	32
Non-Governmental Employee	23
Non-Governmental Volunteer	10
Policy/Government	11
Professor/Teacher	13
Student	14
Researcher	28
Other	18

Note: All numbers represent percentages. Participants may select multiple roles therefore percentages will not equal 100.

Table 7: Participant work role (primary)

Grouping	Percentage of Respondents (N=105)
Activist/Advocate/Community Educator	31
Journalist/Reporter/Writer/Editor/ Communications Professional/Blogger	16
Front Line Service Provider	18
Non-Governmental Employee	9
Policy/Government	3
Researcher/Professor/Teacher/Student	18
Other ¹⁰⁷	5

Note: All numbers represent percentages. Participants re-grouped according to primary role identified.

in their work related to VAW prevention. As Table 6 shows, more than half (57%) of respondents identify as an activist or advocate in their work relating to VAW. This percentage is lower (about one-third of total respondents) when participants are re-

¹⁰⁷ “Other” primary roles that participants identify include managing and consulting work, public health nurse, and volunteer coordination.

grouped according to primary role (Table 7).¹⁰⁸ The distribution of participants among journalism/communications (16%), front line service provider (18%), and researchers (18%) is roughly even, with non-governmental organization workers slightly lower (9%). Policy/government roles are not heavily represented in this survey, making up just over one in ten (11%) of respondents when multiple roles are selected, and only 3 percent of primary roles. My interpretation of the data here is two-fold. First, some participants may see their work as containing a “policy-relevant” component (e.g. NGO employees, researchers) but where policy/government is not the primary identity. Second, policy and government officials may not be using social media heavily while wearing this hat, but instead, doing social media work that is more strongly tied to their “activist/advocate” identity and so they prioritize it as such.

Defining violence against women

Prior to turning to a discussion of participant social media use patterns, the remainder of this first section will discuss how participants define VAW and the implications of these definitions for my research. As discussed in Chapter Two, one of my research objectives is to describe a community (or “public”) that does not have an

¹⁰⁸ A few other patterns are notable in relation to the various roles. For example, although about one in six (16%) participants identify as a blogger when selecting multiple roles, only two percent enter blogging as a primary role. There is also significant overlap between community educators and activist/advocate identity, with about one-third (32%) of respondents identifying with both roles. Although one in four (25%) identify as a writer, editor, communications professional, journalist or reporter initially (i.e. when selecting multiple roles), this drops to one in six (16%) when re-grouped according to primary role. Similarly, about one-third of respondents (32%) identify as a front line service provider when selecting multiple roles, but this number drops to about one in six (17%) when grouped by primary role. As with community educators, however, we see an overlap between front line service providers and activist/advocate roles: close to two-thirds (63%) of front line service providers also identify as activists/advocates. Although one-third of respondents identify as a non-governmental employee or volunteer (34%), only 8 percent of participants listed this as their primary role.

official descriptor (e.g. Canadians, university-students, LGBT-identified persons), but, instead, is defined by a common objective (i.e. preventing violence against women) and method (social media use). Thus, given the broadness of participants' roles and engagement surrounding prevention of VAW (e.g. activist, researcher, front line worker), it is important to understand how participants define VAW.

As noted, I am focusing on sexual violence and intimate partner violence as specific forms of VAW. As part of the survey, I presented participants with definitions of sexual violence and intimate partner violence and asked them to indicate their level of agreement. First, *sexual violence* is defined as “any actual or attempted sexual act using force or coercion, including unwanted sexual comments or advances, in any setting” (adapted from Jewkes et al. 2002:149). About two-thirds (67%) of participants “completely” agree with this definition, one quarter (26%) “mostly” agree with the definition, and 7 percent “somewhat” agree with definition (there are no participants who indicated that they agreed “not at all”).

Participants were asked to expand on their responses to these definitions so that my research terminology can evolve to best reflect the perspective and expertise of participants. For the definition of sexual violence, approximately one-third of respondents offer some further commentary or constructive criticism of this definition of violence. To analyze these responses, I read through each response and made a summary comment for each entry. I then grouped these by theme to identify the central ideas of the feedback. A small number of comments were simply agreement statements; for example, one participant noted that the definition of sexual violence provided “is spot on as it can mean workplace, home, place of worship, etc.”. However, I identify four central themes of

critique from the remaining responses. First, several participants feel that a *more clear statement about power, control, and consent* is needed. For example, one participant notes, “consent helps sexual violence be more described as anything unless a ‘yes’ is involved by both participants.” This understanding of how sexual violence manifests overlaps with the second theme, where participants felt that *definitions of sexual violence should more clearly articulate non-physical forms of violence* (e.g. sexual harassment).

For example, one participant argued that

Sexual violence can include non-physical interactions. So, for example, when a person’s photography is used without consent, as in revenge porn, or is used to create pornography or rape memes, etc., I would consider those acts of sexual(ized) violence that engender similar feelings of trauma for many people.

As with viewing power, control, and consent as important factors in defining sexual violence, this second theme focuses on the harm experienced by the victim as an important factor in coming up with an appropriate definition.

At the same time, there was also a comparable cluster of responses (5-6 cases) that suggest it is important to unpack the distinctions and/or relationship between unwanted sexual comments, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Specifically, participants felt that *unwanted sexual comments should not be categorized as sexual violence in isolation*. For example, one participant noted:

While I agree that street harassment can be a form of sexual violence (and a form I have written about, spoken out about, and protested at public events), I would not classify ALL unwanted sexual comments as violence. For example: while I am in social environments and men I don’t know come on to me, I may be completely uninterested and would prefer them to not have said anything, but I do not consider all of those comments as violence; they rise to the level of violence if they include threats, or if they are repeated and aggressive even after I have asked them to go away or stop talking to me.

Thus, these responses indicate that the threat felt by the recipient/target of the comments,

as well as the pattern of behaviour by the individual delivering the potential harassment, are important factors in separating unwanted sexual comments from sexual violence. The second and third themes identified may appear to be in conflict with each other. That is, some participants felt that the definition was too broad; others, that it was not broad enough. However, in their own ways, both notions point to the first theme: that is, that power, control, and consent must be taken into account when defining sexual violence. Additionally, these critiques raise the point that definitions of sexual violence should go beyond focusing on individual acts of violence to look at patterns of behaviour.

This last point bridges to a final theme in participants comments: that *definitions of sexual violence need to go beyond individual acts of violence to encompass structural violence* (e.g. sexist media representations). For example, one participant explains, “sexual violence can be more abstract and widespread. We shouldn’t view it as one man being aggressive against one woman. It’s about patriarchy and media standards too.” Additionally, participants noted that part of this understanding of sexual violence as something larger than individual acts of violence is that a broader intersectional framework should be used to recognize intersecting patterns of oppression related to sexual violence. These definitions of sexual violence fit well with an ecological model of violence prevention, which views violence as something involving individual, community, social, and structural factors (Heise 1998; Johnson and Dawson 2011).

We also see the above themes in the feedback surrounding the definition of intimate partner violence provided. In the survey, I adapted the World Health Organization’s definition (Jewkes et al. 2002:89), to define *intimate partner violence* as “occurring between current or former intimate partners ... (It) can involve acts of physical

aggression, psychological abuse, forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion, and various controlling behaviours”. The rates of agreement with this definition are consistent with those for the definition of sexual violence: about two-thirds (68%) of participants “completely” agree with this definition, one quarter (26%) “mostly” agree with the definition, and 6 percent “somewhat” agree with definition (as with the responses to the definition of sexual violence, there were no participants who indicated that they agreed “not at all”).

Approximately one-quarter of respondents offer further commentary or constructive criticism on the definition. These comments are centrally clustered around two central themes: 1) the definition should *more clearly center power and control*; and 2) the definition should *provide more detail about other forms of non-physical abuse such as financial abuse and spiritual abuse*. For example, one participant states:

I would expand scope of relationships and behaviors. The best definition that I see used for IPV is - a pattern of abusive behaviors used to gain or maintain power and control over another in a current or former intimate or dating relationship. Those behaviors include: physical, sexual, isolation, intimidation, emotional, economic, etc.

In addition to feedback that the definition needs to be more inclusive and specific, there are also some participants who argue that more *specific identification of the gendered nature of violence is needed*. For example, one participant notes that:

I agree with the definition of Intimate Partner Violence, however I have issue with this term being used to describe Violence Against Women. VAW is a gendered crime and needs to be labeled and addressed as such.

From the perspective of this participant, the label intimate partner violence may not clearly recognize the gendered nature of this violence. However, within the context of my research framework, where the umbrella focus on VAW is clearly laid out, this is perhaps

not at issue. Yet in a more general context, VAW researchers such as Johnson (2007:73) argue, “a problem that has plagued prevention efforts is the inability to achieve consensus about what behaviours constitute violence.” While I am not striving to create a consensus definition for all participants, I do wish to incorporate this feedback surrounding defining VAW moving forward, and will be further discussing the evolution of these definitions in Chapter Nine. These responses also informed my approach to interviews, and my continued approach to public sociology. When doing public sociology, there is a potential danger of imposing the sociologist’s views and definitions of the social world onto publics who may or may not accept these terms. While ultimately some imposition of views and definitions is unavoidable, identifying patterns and ontological gaps at the outset will ultimately make for a more meaningful and praxis-based research framework.

This section has discussed how my research operationalizes VAW through specific definitions of sexual violence and intimate partner violence. From participants’ feedback on these definitions, we see the importance of creating space to understand VAW as a spectrum of behaviours centered on power and control. Additionally, exploring ecologies of violence (i.e. violence as something that can be systemic in nature), and intersectional feminist approaches are emergent areas of importance. In the next part of this chapter, I move on to consider participant social media use and discuss patterns associated with roles related to VAW prevention.

Part II: Social Media Use By the Numbers

Definitions

One of the core objectives of my survey is to provide a description of participants' social media use for their work related to VAW. My survey defines *social media* as “platforms that allow users to create, share, discuss, and modify content using mobile and web-based technologies.” *Work* is defined as “the time, energy, activity, and resources that stakeholders provide (paid or unpaid) for the purposes of communicating about violence against women and/or supporting prevention efforts to end violence against women”. The purpose of distinguishing “communicating about VAW” from “supporting VAW prevention efforts” is to take into account journalists, writers, and communications professionals who write about and report on VAW but may not view their work as directly supporting prevention efforts for a number of reasons (including, for example, journalistic ideals around objectivity and attempting to eliminate bias).

Participants are also instructed that, if they work on a number of issues, they should answer the questions specifically in reference to their work related to VAW as much as possible. Still, it must be acknowledged that it is likely difficult for some participants to reflect on their work in this manner. However, in cases where it is difficult to “separate out” the roles (for example, activists who write about VAW as well as reproductive rights or sexism in the media more broadly), it is reasonable to expect that these individuals' social media use patterns are relatively consistent across their various areas of work.

In this sample, a large part of the work being done around social media and VAW prevention is unpaid work. Almost one in five (18%) are paid for all of their VAW

related social media work, and one in eleven (9%) estimate they are paid for more than three-quarters of this work. In the mid-range, about one in nine (11%) are paid for between 25 and 75 percent of their work. About one in four (23%) estimate they are paid for less than 25 percent of their work in this area, and one-third (33%) are not paid for any work in this area.¹⁰⁹ Although there were very few qualitative comments (N=7) to flesh out these numbers, those participants that did comment indicate that they are doing social media work in their personal time (outside of work hours or formal research settings), as unpaid activism related to their research, and/or as part of an unpaid internship. These findings point to the convergence of volunteer labour, advocacy and activism, and VAW prevention, as well as to the importance of qualitative research to flesh out findings.

Social media use: Platforms

Table 8 presents the breakdown of social media use by consumption (C) and production (P). *Consumption* of social media sites is operationalized by asking participants what types of social media they “consult, read, or follow”, and *production*, by asking participants what types of social media they use to “share or distribute” material. I employ this distinction in part to provide participants with as specific instructions as possible, but also because I am interested in observing patterns of difference between the two general objectives. Given that one of the defining characteristics of social media is a two-way communication relationship relying on user-generated content, I am interested to observe to what extent stakeholders are taking up

¹⁰⁹ The remaining 6 percent indicated that it was not applicable or too difficult to determine what percentage of their VAW related social media work they are paid for.

Table 8: Social media use

Platform	Daily		A few times a week		A few times a month		Rarely		Never		N/A	
	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P
Academia.edu	2	2	7	1	15	7	24	18	48	68	4	4
Blog (Individual)	6	1	16	12	36	18	23	15	16	49	4	5
Blog (Organization)	6	4	26	13	27	16	21	13	15	50	5	5
Facebook	53	29	25	28	9	13	7	15	6	15	1	1
Flickr	--	1	--	--	3	1	15	13	58	80	8	5
Games/quizzes (web-based)	1	--	1	--	6	--	21	8	65	86	6	6
Instagram	7	4	6	6	4	--	20	11	56	72	7	6
LinkedIn	2	4	6	1	15	7	33	27	40	56	5	5
Mapping (crowd-sourced)	4	3	1	--	2	3	10	9	75	80	8	6
Mobile apps	4	5	6	1	6	4	12	8	69	77	5	5
Pinterest	1	--	4	3	7	6	20	10	64	74	5	8
Reddit	1	--	1	--	4	1	20	10	68	81	6	8
Tumblr	8	6	8	6	13	9	15	11	51	60	5	8
Twitter	40	30	13	20	10	10	11	10	23	25	3	6
Vimeo	1	1	7	3	10	8	21	13	56	69	5	8
Wiki site	4	1	13	--	31	5	27	9	22	78	4	7
YouTube	7	5	23	11	30	16	26	16	13	50	1	3
Other Internet: Listservs	20	7	19	7	22	16	14	27	24	38	1	5
Other Internet: News sites	37	9	33	10	27	24	3	28	--	26	--	4
Other Internet: Other websites	25	7	32	11	28	25	4	25	8	26	4	6

C = Consume content (consult, read, or follow)

P = Produce content (share or distribute)

Note: All numbers represent percentages.

this opportunity with social media.

As Table 8 demonstrates, the most evident pattern in social media use from this sample is that Facebook and Twitter are by far the most used platforms. Additionally, in general, participants use social media sites to consume content more frequently than to produce content, though this difference varies slightly among platforms. For Twitter, the difference between rates of consuming content and producing content is less than for Facebook (i.e. we see a 3% difference on Twitter versus 21% on Facebook when

combining the rates for “daily” and “a few times a week”). This difference suggests that Facebook could be a place where more passive information sharing is taking place, and Twitter a more interactive space for VAW prevention work.

In this sample, over three-quarters (78%) of participants report using Facebook daily (53%) or a few times a week (25%) to consume content, and close to two out of three participants (57%) produce content through Facebook daily (25%) or a few times a week (28%). Twitter is used slightly less often than Facebook; just over half (53%) of participants report consuming Twitter content daily (40%) or a few times a week (13%), and half (50%) produce content daily (30%) or a few times a week (20%). After Facebook and Twitter, there is a significant drop in rates of social media use. YouTube is not used widely in a daily capacity. However, almost one in four (23%) of participants consume YouTube content a few times a week (though only one in ten report producing content here). Sites such as Tumblr¹¹⁰ and Instagram¹¹¹ are not heavily used (16 percent and 13 percent respectively, when considering both daily use and a few times a week). However, when they are used, the rates of content consumption and content production are relatively similar.

In general, it is perhaps not surprising that rates of content consumption are higher than content production, given the time and resources investment inherent in much content production. I will discuss some of the specific objectives and their links to use of specific platforms shortly; for the moment, however, it is worth noting that platforms where content production may require more investment (e.g. creating a YouTube video,

¹¹⁰ Tumblr is a micro blogging platform and social networking site that allows users to post multimedia and other content to a short form blog.

¹¹¹ Instagram is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking services that enables users to take and share pictures and short videos on a variety of social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr.

writing/editing a wiki entry) appear to show greater disparity between content consumption and content production rates. For example, 18 percent of participants report consuming content from a wiki site daily or a few times a week whereas only 1 percent produces content on wiki sites. Given the importance of framing, narrative, and “telling the story” in VAW prevention (discussed in Chapter Seven), platforms such as Wikipedia may be a potential target area for prevention efforts.

The fluidity between platforms and their embedded nature makes more specific analysis of use patterns difficult, as participants may be sharing YouTube videos through Facebook or Twitter, or blog materials through Tumblr, for example. As such, for my research purposes, I am less concerned with theorizing or taking apart the specific rates of use of each platform, and more interested in observing the general patterns in order to: (1) broadly map this field of VAW prevention and social media, and (2) provide a descriptive picture as a foundation for the analysis that follows in this chapter and others. Framed this way, Facebook and Twitter emerge as the most frequently used social media for VAW work, with a smaller group of stakeholders engaged on YouTube, Tumblr and Instagram.

Table 9 compares my participants’ consumption¹¹² of social media (“VAW work”) to data on social media use in 2014 by the general population in the United States from the Pew Research Centre (Duggan et al. 2015), where available. In general, my participants are using social media more frequently than the average American adult online (i.e. those who use the Internet) (27% more frequently on average). This is perhaps not surprising, given that my research specifically targeted stakeholders who were using

¹¹² Pew Research does not breakdown social media use by consumption and production. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on consumption patterns here because those numbers are more in line with the definition of social media use (“logged on”) used in Pew Research.

Table 9: Survey data compared with Pew Research Centre social media use data

Platform	Total % of adults online who use each site (N = 1,597)		Daily		Weekly		Less often	
	Pew Research	VAW work	Pew Research	VAW work	Pew Research	VAW work	Pew Research	VAW work
Facebook	71	94	70	56	17	27	12	17
YouTube	63	86	Data not avail.	8	Data not avail.	27	Data not avail.	65
LinkedIn	28	56	13	4	25	11	61	85
Pinterest	28	32	17	3	29	13	61	85
Instagram	26	61	49	11	24	9	26	78
Twitter	23	74	36	54	24	18	40	28

Source: Pew Research Centre (2015)¹¹³.

Note: All numbers reflect percentages. “Daily”, “Weekly”, and “Less often” categories reflect percentage of users of each social media site according to frequency of use. VAW research percentages have been adjusted to reflect proportion of total users of each social media site.

social media in some capacity.¹¹⁴ When we look closer at the frequency of use however, the numbers tell a slightly different story. Here, broader publics are using specific social media more frequently than my survey participants. For example, of those who use Facebook, 70 percent of Americans use Facebook daily versus 56 percent of my participants.¹¹⁵ This suggests that it is important to explore (1) if participants are using social media to the extent they want to be, and (2) if not, why not? What obstacles or challenges are they experiencing in this regard? The exception to this pattern is Twitter, with those VAW prevention workers who use Twitter frequently doing so daily (54%)

¹¹³ YouTube data comes from Anderson (2015).

¹¹⁴ However, there is variation within this category. The largest gap is within Twitter use (74 percent of my research participants report that they use Twitter versus 23 percent of Americans who are online). The smallest gap is within Pinterest use (4 percent difference).

¹¹⁵ The largest gap is within Instagram use, with 49 percent of Americans reporting daily use compared to 11 percent of VAW workers.

compared to Americans more broadly (36%).¹¹⁶ As I will discuss further in Chapters Seven and Eight, Twitter is an important place for intervening in news coverage about VAW, as well as targeting attitudes, beliefs, and social norms more broadly.

Returning to the survey data more generally, two final points are important. First, it is clear from the “other” category that additional web resources such as Listservs, news sites, and other websites are still widely used by stakeholders in their work. This appears to be particularly true for content consumption, as we see that two out of five (39%) of participants consume content from Listservs daily or a few times a week and 70 percent read online news sites daily or a few times a week. Second, it is important to remember that, within social media, even the more passive content consumption (consulting, reading, or following) can still affect the broader trajectory of content consumption (i.e. who sees what). For example, views on YouTube, likes on Facebook, and follows on Twitter are all features that reflect relatively passive consumption habits, yet have a synergetic effect: videos with more views, posts with more likes, and users with more followers are all more likely to be seen by others. Additionally, in monetized environments such as YouTube, consumption in the form of page subscriptions translates directly into dollars and cents.

Social media use: Objectives

Table 10 presents the various objectives rated by participants, and shows the breakdown of these numbers according to primary role. Here, I am presenting each objective’s average rated score (according to primary participant role) in order to

¹¹⁶ This pattern appears to hold in Canada as well, with most data showing Twitter use somewhere around 20 percent of Canadian Internet users. See, for example, So (2014).

Table 10: Objectives in using social media by role

Objective	Total sample (/10)	Advocate/ Activist/ Community Educator	Journalist/ Writer ¹¹⁷	Front Line Service Provider	NGO	Policy/ Gov't	Researcher/ Professor/ Teacher/ Student/	Other
Stay up to date/ Connect with others in my field	7.32	8.35	7.67	6.33	6.56	5.33	7.33	5.00
Share/provide general public education/information	6.86	8.64	7.38	5.15	4.75	4.50	6.33	6.33
Share research, news stories, or project activities that I have worked on (individual or collaborative)	5.74	7.59	6.25	2.92	5.25	6.67	5.33	4.33
Share my story/personal experiences	2.30	3.04	2.64	0.75	1.50	0.00	2.67	3.25
Provide support to specific groups (e.g. survivors, families)	3.10	3.81	4.00	3.00	2.11	2.00	2.00	3.00
Mobilize community action (e.g. organize events, petitions)	5.49	7.70	6.40	3.62	5.63	1.00	4.33	3.75
Share audio/visual content that I have worked on (e.g. music, videos, podcasts, films)	2.16	3.53	5.20	0.08	0.22	0.00	2.00	0.33
Policy analysis (e.g. provide commentary and critique on current government policy)	3.68	4.94	3.75	1.90	3.44	0.00	3.67	4.40
Media/cultural analysis (e.g. provide commentary and critique on media/pop culture/current events)	4.76	6.90	4.91	1.55	3.44	0.00	5.50	5.50

Note: Numbers reflect average rating on a 10-point scale (0 = Never; 10 = Daily).

¹¹⁷ This group includes all from the primary role category: Journalist/Reporter/Writer/Editor/Communications Professional/Blogger

provide an understanding of some of the variation in objectives and social media use. However, these findings should be interpreted with an understanding that there are large differences in the various group sizes (see Tables 6 and 7). For example, only 3 percent of survey participants are primarily in a policy/government role. Thus, while this table is useful to present broad descriptions and identify general patterns of social media objectives, it should be interpreted with particular caution pertaining to comparisons of the sub-groups and their objectives.

Overall, participants say that *staying up to date/connecting with others in their field* is their most important objective in their social media use surrounding VAW. This average (7.32/10) is highest among the advocate/activist/community educator group (8.35) and lowest among policy/government (5.33). *Sharing or providing general public education and information* is second, with an average ranking of 6.86 out of 10. The only other two objectives with average scores higher than five are for using social media to *share research, news stories, or project activities* (5.74) and to *mobilize community action* (e.g. organize events, petitions) (5.49).

Among participants, there appears to be less focus on providing *media and cultural analysis* (e.g. provide commentary and critique on media/pop culture/current events) (4.76/10), although this number is above the overall average for activists, advocates, and community educators (6.90), as well as the researcher/professor/teacher/student group (5.5), and journalists/writers (4.91). *Policy critique and analysis* (e.g. provide commentary and critique on current government policy) is also not a wide-ranging objective of social media use (3.68). However, it is important to mention that there is somewhat of a polarization here, where half of respondents (51%) rank this

objective 2/10 or less, yet 41 percent rank it as six or higher. One of the reasons for this polarization may be that, while some stakeholders are actively engaged in policy analysis and critique, many organizations (including those receiving charitable funding) may be very reluctant to publicly criticize government policy and risk losing their funding.

Supporting specific groups, such as survivors and families, is not a widely noted objective of social media use (3.10), but is ranked above average by the activists, advocates, and community educators group (3.81) as well as journalists and writers (4.00). *Sharing one's personal story* is also not a dominant objective (2.3/10), with half (49%) of respondents reporting that this is “never” one of their objectives. Finally, *sharing one's audio/visual content* (music, videos, podcasts, films) appears to be fairly specific to the journalists and writers group (which also includes bloggers and communications professionals), as their group average of 5.20 is twice the overall average of 2.16.

Participants were also asked about which social media platforms are most helpful for them in relation to specific objectives. Table 11 presents these results for the top four objectives for social media use (only sites that 20 percent or more of participants ranked as helpful for one or more objectives are included). As noted for the overall sample, Facebook and Twitter are most frequently used for these pursuits, with the highest reported use associated with using Facebook to mobilize community action. YouTube appears to be used more widely to stay connected and up to date (consumption) than for other objectives more related to content production.

Table 11: Helpfulness of specific sites for key objectives

What platform is most helpful to you with this objective?	Objective			
	Stay up to date/ connected	Share/ provide general public education/ information	Share research, news stories, or projects	Mobilize community action
Academia.edu	22	27	11	7
Blog (Ind.)	46	27	25	29
Blog (Org.)	54	42	50	42
Facebook	87	87	83	90
Instagram	20	18	3	--
LinkedIn	33	20	11	7
Tumblr	28	20	19	13
Twitter	70	69	72	75
YouTube	54	33	22	13

Note: All numbers reflect percentages.

In general, although there is a small group of individuals using a more wide range of tools (e.g. Tumblr, mapping programs, and VAW prevention mobile apps), the majority of participants are working within Facebook and Twitter. This is consistent with Facebook as the most widely used social media platform in North America (Duggan et al. 2015), and Twitter’s popularity for activism and breaking news in recent years. However, it is also important to think about what factors may be limiting uptake of other platforms. Participant comments surrounding the various objectives can provide some context in this regard. We see that that time, awareness, and perceived audience are all influential in shaping choice of social media platform. For example, one participant notes that there is “not enough time to actively access the wide range of social media tools so many are unknown and have never been used.”

Participants may also not be aware of the range of social media options, particularly given that some may be less relevant or widely known in a particular role. For example, one participant stated, “to be honest, I only just found out about

Academia.edu through this survey. Now that I know about it, I'll quite likely utilize it as much as possible." Sharing information about what tools various stakeholders are using in their work is an important facet of knowledge mobilization. Certain objectives may also not fit well with participants' primary roles. For example, sharing one's experiences/own story (one of the surveyed objectives) is something that is highly dependent on context, and, depending on one's role and objectives, may be seen more or less appropriate on social media. One participant explains that "I don't share personal history in social media platforms, but will share on a personal level with clientele on an 'as appropriate' level with consideration of the person's capacity to receive encouragement from it."

Another aspect to consider in relation to social media use is participants' perception of the audience of particular sites. For example, as one participant explains, "Facebook has the best collection of local subscribers compared to Twitter, which is more international." In this context, they are talking about how the audience of Facebook is more appropriate for their objective of using social media for community mobilization. Moreover, although there appear to be many stakeholders using YouTube for semi-regular media consumption, relatively few are using it for media production. One participant reflected that:

I tend to stay away from YouTube because of the number of trolls/amount of harassment that comes with posting videos. There is an active chapter of MRAs [Men's Rights Activists] in my city who concentrate on harassing prominent and/or active local feminist and feminist groups or events.

YouTube, despite being the fourth most popular website in Canada (Alexa.com n.d.),¹¹⁸ appears to be particularly difficult territory for constructive discourse surrounding VAW

¹¹⁸ Google.com, Google.ca, and Facebook are the top three.

(particularly content that is explicitly feminist). As further evidence, a recent report from the advocacy group *Take Back the Tech!* (2014) gave YouTube a “C”, a “D”, and four “F’s” as part of its Report Card on Social Media and Violence Against Women.¹¹⁹ In this report, researchers from *Take Back the Tech!* found that sites failed to create transparent, simplified, and easily accessible reporting mechanisms and redress processes for victims of technology-related violence. Additionally, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube all received F’s (“absolute failure to take any visible action”) for “Responsiveness to needs of non-U.S./European women” and “Public commitment to human rights standards”.¹²⁰

It is clear that traditional web resources are still used for these central objectives of social media use. For example, many participants note that email, listservs, their own organizations website, and other web pages are important sources of consuming and sharing information. As I will discuss in Chapter Nine, the boundaries between social media, the Internet, and digital technology more broadly are increasingly permeable and ceasing to be relevant in certain ways. For the moment, however, exploring the qualitative data from the final portion of the survey provides valuable understanding of participant experiences with/in social media at this time.

Part III: Participant Reflections on Social Media

In the previous section, I explained that the top four objectives ranked by participants for social media include: staying up to date/connecting with others in the

¹¹⁹ Categories include: “simplified and easily accessible reporting mechanisms” (C); “transparency and reporting and redress” (D); “responsiveness to needs of non-US/European women; (F); engagement with stakeholder groups (F); proactive steps to eradicate violence against women (F); and “public commitment to human rights standards” (F).

¹²⁰ However, although Twitter and YouTube received F’s overall, Facebook received a slightly higher overall grade (D+) because of its higher grades in “Engagement with stakeholder groups” (B) and “Proactive steps to eradicate violence against women” (C).

field; providing general public education and information; sharing one's research, news stories or project activities; and mobilizing community action (events, petitions). In addition to being asked about the listed objectives, participants are also asked through open-ended questions about other ways that they use social media in their work related to VAW. "Raising awareness" about VAW appears frequently in these comments as a general objective (e.g. "raise awareness of issues"). A number of additional action-based themes are also brought up, including: collaborate (among organizations and/or between social media accounts), engage with "everyday discourses" as well as other groups and causes to show support; highlight and analyze systemic injustices (e.g. violence against Indigenous women, campus handling of sexual assaults); advertising and recruitment (jobs and volunteers); and generating discussion or challenge discourse supporting VAW. These sentiments are well-summarized by one participant, who describes their goals as:

To debunk rape myths (i.e., victim-blaming, false accusations, etc.) and deconstruct rape culture, to analyze and point out systemic problems and injustices that have led to the marginalization of Indigenous women, immigrant populations, and other sidelined groups, to highlight and discuss historic oppressions (like colonization) that directly contribute to continued violence against specific groups through discrimination that normalizes violence against women, to build community with and support fellow activists and oppressed groups, to organize coalitions and grassroots efforts and responses, as well as to signal boost the efforts of other activists and organizations.

The concept of "signal boosting" appears frequently in survey comments. In this context, signal boosting refers to promoting the efforts or activities of other individuals or organizations.¹²¹

¹²¹ Termwiki.com defines a signal booster as: "A device that receives an incoming broadcast signal, amplifies it, and retransmits it on the same frequency. Such devices are used to improve communications in locations within the normal coverage area of a broadcast system where the signal is blocked or shielded due to natural terrain or man-made obstacles."

In addition to these objectives, some technical features of social media that participants are using include: holding Twitter chats (discussing specific topics using a centralized Twitter hashtag), Storifying Twitter feeds (where users collect comments from a chat and publish in chronological order for asynchronous consumption), and hosting panelists/discussions through Google Hangouts (where a presenter is “on air” with others watching/asking questions virtually and in live time). While these initiatives demonstrate that some stakeholders are engaged more diverse use of technical platforms, the majority of comments indicate that awareness raising, supporting other organizations, and “pointing out” problematic material (e.g. victim-blaming in mass media content) are still the core activities for stakeholders. This more ad hoc use is perhaps not surprising, given that a majority of this social media work is unpaid work, as discussed earlier. In contrast, those doing a greater proportion of paid social media work may be more embedded in and engaged with technical elements of platforms and working “within” social media, rather than using it primarily as a tool to supplement their offline work.

In the remainder of this chapter, I draw from qualitative survey data to provide an overview of participant impressions of the benefits and challenges of social media for VAW prevention work. My intention here is to provide a brief summary of the key ideas, illustrated by select participant comments, and then to return to some of these ideas when I present interview findings in Chapters Seven and Eight and when I synthesize my research findings with public sociology and feminist work more broadly in Chapter Nine.

Strengths

I analyzed qualitative data (text responses) of participants' likes and dislikes (and what they find effective/ineffective) about social media in the context of VAW prevention the same way that I analyzed responses to definitions of VAW. First, responses were downloaded into a spreadsheet and coded with key words and themes. Based on these codes, I grouped similar key words and themes together. From here, I identified frequently overarching concepts or themes. For what participants like and/or find effective about social media for VAW prevention, I identified seven themes: *dissemination, efficiency, community, audience engagement, amplification, accessibility, and accountability*. To unpack these themes in more detail, I am using an ecological framework of violence prevention (Table 12 presents these ideas). This allows me to highlight the way that participants' perceived benefits of social media are understood according to individual, community, and societal factors. In this framework, I have subsumed the relationship level into the individual and community levels, given the inherently relational nature of individual interactions online as well as the public and communal nature of so social media.

Dissemination of information and ideas is the most frequent strength of social media identified. Participants felt that this benefit occurs in a variety of ways. For example, it occurs at an individual level when individuals (e.g. survivors) can access information and resources to support their individual safety. It is also a way for service providers to support their clients. For example, as one participant explains:

I like the up-to-date information and statistics available as a reference tool for frontline workers. It helps in identifying any trends and allows us to be proactive in planning the kinds of supports we can offer clients. The knowledge gleaned from social media training sites is also very beneficial for staff in equipping us

(staff) with information on how best to support a client and/or try different strategies of support depending on the needs of each client. It keeps us ‘in the know’.

Table 12: Social media benefits expressed as an ecological model of VAW prevention

Benefit	Individual	Community	Societal
Dissemination	Individual/survivor access to information and resources.	Knowledge mobilization among organizations.	Translating research into policy work, sharing new policies.
Efficiency	Individuals send and receive up to date statistics and information.	Organization through hashtags and targeted messaging; bypass bureaucratic mechanisms; gain immediate feedback.	Speed of online networks/communities for social critique; social/cultural norms changed through targeted, poignant messaging.
Community	Individuals connect for support, information, and inspiration.	Online networks created between organizations working in local communities.	Digital communities can mobilize for policy change, structural critique.
Audience engagement	Get new folks on board and have multi-voiced conversations.	Turn audiences into community members.	Mobilize for change.
Amplification	Signal boosting of individual work and stories.	Signal boosting of organizations.	Carve out public space to discussions of VAW; louder messaging about VAW and changing social norms.
Accessibility	Mobility; ease of use; cost.	Encourages formation of communities that transcend geographical boundaries.	Increased accessibility of knowledge translation (research and policy).
Accountability	Challenge sexist/violent postings circulated/made by individuals.	Mobilize community response to hold institutions accountable for content.	Engage social media platforms/media organizations to change social media structures to improve safety and media representation.

Dissemination can also occur at a community level, when organizations are able to follow each other online and share information directly. For example, one participant states, “Social media allows communication that just didn’t happen in the past. We can share information, learn what others are doing and get messages out into the public really fast.” The connection of dissemination to social and structural levels of violence prevention, however, is a bit less clear from the responses. Although some respondents note that “Policy work is enabled when feminist researchers and activists are able to share strategies and resources on forums like Twitter” (for example), there is less said about how social media may be directly useful for policy creation and structural change.

This feedback also brings in ideas of *efficiency*, a theme frequently brought up in conjunction with dissemination. Individuals are able to tap into the efficiency of social media by staying up to date and being aware of emerging trends, and some participants also note that social media is efficient in that it can allow individuals or groups to bypass or limit bureaucratic processes:

It’s instantaneous; social media is at once personal and yet public. Messages and information can be disseminated immediately and widely, without having to wait for committee approval or consensus. Individuals can get in touch quickly and share resources easily. Critiques can be discussed openly - being able to identify problems or point out discrimination publicly means that neither individuals or organizations can hide behind bureaucracy (and if they do, it’s obvious and telling).

Although participants did not say a great deal about the benefits of social media for efficiency of social or structural change, there are a few comments that speak to the importance of brevity (of text) and format (i.e. visual imagery) on social media.

Specifically, some feel that the trend towards visual (images) with less text is more

emotionally impactful and thus more effective. Building on this idea, I discuss emotional and multi-sensory engagement further in later chapters.

The idea of *community* is woven throughout participant feedback in terms of connections, support, and collaboration. It is evident that participants are using social media to build new communities: that is, to connect with individuals, groups and organizations that are more readily available to them (or only available to them) through social media. For example, one participant explains that:

It allows for folks who have nothing in common other than violence against women to be able to link up. My regular in real life circles may include many survivors, but they don't necessarily include survivors who are looking to organize or group-heal or share their story or even put their name to being a survivor at this point in time. Social media allows for you to get in contact with people doing things now. It also allows for signal boosting of rallies and petitions and other initiatives.

Another participant says that social media is beneficial for

Networking with other groups working in the same topic area, but not necessarily geographic area. It makes it so much easier to communicate and creates a sense of community. Sometimes, this sparks projects with other groups. With Twitter, it is reaching a wider audience.

Notions of building new communities and *engaging wider audiences* go together in a reciprocal relationship. That is, while many participants speak about disseminating information to wide audiences, others specifically, and strategically, are capitalizing on social media to foster two-way conversations. For example, one participant writes:

Social media allows me to connect with women around the world. I run a collaborative blog where women submit their own stories of sexual violence they've experienced, and using social media allows for a much more global reach. In addition, sharing information through social media allows for some really productive online discussions and helps bring many of these issues to the forefront. Whereas in the past people may have thought that violence against women and girls was a private affair or something that did not happen often, social media helps bring women's stories to the general public, and many campaigns have begun online to end violence against women and girls.

This notion of storytelling, and of using social media to refute entrenched misunderstandings about the private nature of sexual violence and intimate partner violence, is an important theme of my interview findings, which I present in Chapter Seven.

Among participant responses, we see that one of the ways that community is fostered and new audiences are engaged is through *amplification*. As mentioned earlier, many participants refer to signal boosting the efforts of others (individuals or organizations). While some use this terminology specifically, others speak more generally about “spreading the word” (about viewpoints, projects, and resources related to VAW prevention) and to “promoting the existence” of others (campaigns, organizations, and so forth). More specifically, some individuals explain that signal boosting is particularly important for marginalized communities and perspectives. One participant notes, “I find [social media] an effective platform for showcasing campaigns or organizations that are not picked up by the mainstream media.” Another participant explains, “I work on issues related to human rights of sex workers. Mainstream media covers these issues poorly, for the most part. Social media allows me to share accurate and relevant information w/key target audiences.”

The benefits of amplification pertain not only to being “louder”, or more visible, within a space, but also are important in terms of the creation of the space to begin with; that is, actually being able to create or “carve out” public space to talk about VAW. One participant notes that social media is important because it “allows us to occupy a public space to talk about these issues.” Carving out such as space is also possible due to the *accessibility* of social media. This accessibility has many facets: low financial cost (to

individuals and organizations); flexibility (in terms of physical mobility and geographical boundaries); and certain benefits from potential anonymity (e.g. survivors accessing resources). As one participant explains:

It's a very simple and accessible way to share information without violating any privacy issues survivors might have. People who are not mobile (i.e., have mobility issues, are disabled and unable to physically participate in events) can participate in online discussions or events like tweet-ups or Google hangout chats, etc.

Another participant explains that social media increases information accessibility:

Accessibility of information is another huge bonus; many times, research information or statistics are hard to decipher or even locate for the average person. When people or organizations have taken the time to dig through and parse the numbers, the information is readily available to the public and comparable to information released by the media or official organizations.

Accessibility of information here refers to availability as well as readability. This necessity of amplifying accessible, jargon-free research material will be discussed further in Chapter Nine in relation to translation and public sociology.

The final theme I identify in relation to positive participant experience within social media has to do with *accountability*. Specifically, the two-way communication relationship, combined with broad dissemination of material, community engagement, and mobilization is important, not only for starting conversations, but for linking these conversations to social change by holding individuals, groups, and institutions accountable for their view, content, and policies. For example, one participant writes:

It's definitely effective for the conversations it starts. It's a reminder that, yes, we still have a long way to go in terms of debunking systemically ingrained myths around VAW but it also provides a platform for people to do that very thing - challenge myths. I feel that it's also been effective in terms of sharing news stories, particularly ones involving post secondary institutions and the normalizing (at times) re: VAW (particularly sexual assault). I feel it has provided a space for shaming, for lack of a better word, toward those institutions and students who are either perpetuating or normalizing the issue.

Participants further describe social media as a “mobilizing tool for demanding accountability from policy makers, corporations, [and] academic institutions”, and as a place to “start discussions and set standards”. Specifically, one participant describes a case where they were part of a campaign “against a very offensive editorial about domestic violence in an English newspaper. Our pressure forced them to issue an apology, and raised awareness for bad journalism about the issue.”

As this section demonstrates, many participants feel strongly about the benefits and potential of social media for their work. However, a number of significant drawbacks and challenges are also identified. In this final section of this chapter, I discuss these various limitations.

Challenges

I identify four overarching themes in participant responses to the question “what do you dislike and/or find ineffective about social media for your work related to violence against women?” These are: *abuse and harassment, a lack of control surrounding content, lack of control over audience, and resource challenges.*

Abuse and harassment are significant obstacles for stakeholders doing work in social media. However, these experiences are not uniform. Some participants talk about being the target of rape threats or online hate-based campaigns as a result of their work, others talk about their fears of receiving such abuse. Still others speak more generally about “trolls”, “incivility”, “vitriol”, and so forth. One participant summarizes her negative experiences as such:

Endless, unceasing negativity. Constant rape threats and harassment from anonymous sources. Call-out culture becoming more prevalent in ways that are sometimes effective but more often just demoralizing for its own sake.

Having a higher social media profile is seen by some participants to make one a target of trolls, specifically, men's rights activists (MRAs). According to one participant, the downside to social media is "the number of armchair experts (aka trolls) who deem it their mission to harass activists and advocates. Having a significant online presence just means that trolls can find you easily as well." Another participant also felt that "MRA trolling and harassment is a constant challenge, especially with the new MRA focus on rape denial."

The vast majority (85%) of participants in this sample identify as feminist.¹²² As I discuss further in later chapters, much abuse and harassment appears to be directed at those who explicitly identify as feminist online (rather than people or organizations working publicly on VAW prevention in general). However, beyond rape threats and MRA trolling/harassment, participants also note that a general backlash, incivility, or "call-out culture" are negative experiences for them in social media. As one participant explains, it is difficult to know how to prevent this:

There is often a backlash...and the often anonymous nature of varied social media allows for the perpetration of violence using social media that is not easily handled or monitored nor is it clear whom should be doing so.

While some of the abuse and harassment are clearly violent threats that cause participants emotional distress and to fear for their safety, at the other end of this spectrum are participants who are primarily just annoyed about the lack of productive discourse caused by "people behaving badly". For example, one participant argues that:

¹²² The remaining 15 percent of respondents either do not identify as feminist (5%); sometimes identify as feminist (4%), are unsure (1%) or prefer not to respond (4%).

Because it is so accessible, it makes it very easy for people who are not interested in or who are opposed to VAW work to derail and hijack conversations. It can be difficult to have a productive conversation because conversational nuance and cues that would be implicit in face to face conversations is missing, makes it very easy for a person to be misunderstood which can lead to a lot of arguments and non-productive discussion.

Participants link bad behaviour to the absence of face-to-face social context, anonymity, and the accessibility inherent in much social media. That is, the open, accessible nature of social media and the brevity of format of many platforms, positive features identified earlier, also can have pathological tendencies that hinder productive discussion.

In addition to the absence of context, the *lack of control over content* is clearly a challenge. This occurs in both consumption and production capacities. That is, participants express frustration both with the accuracy of information that may circulate (that they consume), but also with circumnavigating audience engagement (i.e. what happens with the material that they produce). Regarding the former, some participants feel that discussion can be less productive, inaccurate information may circulate widely, and accurate information may be hard to pin down at times. As one service provider explains:

Information on social media can change and or sites be updated and or changed so information can be fleeting, here one day and not there the next, or the information has changed. It may also have an influencing effect on already traumatized and vulnerable minds of clients so sharing this information with them without precautions may have a negative impact on the client, overwhelming them with information that may or may not pertain specifically to them.

As this quote demonstrates, more may not be better when it comes to individual knowledge dissemination/information sharing about VAW prevention. Rather, having a strategy for what information is needed when, and where it can be found, may be more productive.

In addition to consuming social media, the other side of the lack of control coin is that some participants are struggling to the best way to produce material/express ideas. For example, one participant describes trying to strike a balance between “lecturing” and “engaging” in her social media work:

One of the biggest challenges I have faced on a personal level is how to challenge mainstream perspectives (e.g., sexual assault prevention targeted at women) in an engaging way that avoids lecturing or immersing uninterested people in elaborate reasoning processes. Sometimes what works best is a really great, and really short argument that asks people to rethink and/or question longstanding perspectives. So, for me, the boldness and brevity of so many forms of social media (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr, etc.) lends itself well to (the provision of) juicy, bite-sized bits of critical thinking!

Here, the brevity and “bite-sized” nature of much social media engagement is challenging but ultimately (in their view) allows for effective engagement.

While this style of communication may be impactful in many ways, the messages still need to get out to the right people. In this regard, a *lack of control of audience* is also an issue for participants. Here, determining the audience is an important aspect of control, both in terms of being able to separate out target groups (whom do we want access to?), and in knowing whom they are actually reaching (who can we actually access?). For example, one participant explains that there are downsides to the nature of what they are sharing (the content) as well as the design of the corporate platform they are sharing it through (the method of transmission):

Facebook is more difficult both personally and for the organization. Personally because I feel pressure to censor my friends from a constant barrage of issues, though I do keep them informed. For the organization because we are a non-profit...we don't have money to signal boost our posts through Facebook's ad system. Facebook has put in their coding structure that even if someone 'likes' your page, if they stop clicking on your stuff that person no longer is given updates.

Thus, “context collapse”¹²³, or merging of different audiences of much social media, as well as the profit-driven framework of much social media architecture, presents challenges for VAW prevention activities and positive stakeholder experiences.

Beyond abuse and harassment and a lack of control of content and audience, participants also express frustration with the *resource investment* required for social media immersion, particularly in a context where success is difficult to define. As one participant states, “making social media work effectively requires a tremendous investment of time.” Others comment that they need to build this planning into their schedules and need to develop an “understanding of which platform to use for which outcome.” The combination of required resources (time, knowledge, strategy) and a lack of control over audience participants lead to difficulty in determining success. One key challenge here is in controlling target audience (knowing who they reach) and tracking audience engagement (knowing who participates, and how much).

In this regard, some participants express concern with the commitment of resources needed to ensure that they aren’t simply “preaching to the choir” about VAW, and wonder how to effectively engage beyond these networks. For example, one participant explains that

On Facebook, we are limited to sharing content with those who ‘Like’ us, unless other people share it, so I feel like we are talking to the same crowd who already understands the issue of VAW. So, Twitter is good to reach a more diverse crowd; however we don’t use that as much because it’s newer for us, and the constant feeds is overwhelming. Also, it seems like a lot of work posting things all the time, especially when this is not a full time commitment for me.

Another participant notes that, in certain ways, the settings on certain sites actually

¹²³ “Context collapse” appears to have been inadvertently coined by social media researcher danah boyd (see boyd 2013).

hinders their progress in building new networks, saying:

Facebook is throttling exposure,¹²⁴ so only a small portion of page subscribers actually see what gets posted. It means the outreach is far less than the actual number of page likes. Twitter often doesn't play towards the local demographic of the organization I work for. One could see it as exciting unrelated people, who don't have a capacity to affect change.

For those who do have the capacity to affect change, some participants note that they are “competing for attention” in social media, where there is an often “overwhelming” amount of content and campaigns. For example, one participant remarks that “there can be some Facebook fatigue and fighting for attention can be competitive.” In this environment, some worry that only the most sensational content gets attention, and that much nuance of the complexity of VAW is lost. In this capacity, there is concern that the time and resources needed for adequate social media investment will not actually translate into deeper engagement and social transformation.

It is important to emphasize that the majority of participants see both positive and negative aspects to social media use in the context of VAW prevention (of course, this sample represents those who are using social media in some capacity in their work; those who have no interest in using or are unable to use social media at this time are not broadly represented here). Despite many participants feeling overwhelmed at the scope and content of social media platforms, there is widespread recognition that there are payoffs, particularly surrounding its potential for changing social attitudes. One participant summarizes her conflicting views as such:

Sometimes I feel like social media, like other (non-electronic) forms of social engagement, consists of cliques and pockets, where one ends up preaching to the

¹²⁴ This refers to Facebook only showing a user's posts to a portion of their followers. Facebook calls this “declining organic reach”, where “organic reach refers to how many people you can reach for free on Facebook by posting to your Page” (Boland 2014).

proverbial choir. However, I think I'm still convinced that minds and attitudes are more easily shifted or broadened using social media than other, more traditional forms of social engagement.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented and analyzed the results of my survey on the use of social media for VAW prevention. I have discussed the demographic characteristics of participants, explained the makeup of this survey sample in terms of stakeholders' roles, and discussed feedback and gaps between my research starting point definitions of sexual violence and intimate partner violence. Next, I describe participant social media use as it relates to VAW, drawing from quantitative data. I find that, while there is some variation according to role and objective, Facebook and Twitter are by far the most frequently used platforms and that there may be untapped potential among other sites for a variety of reasons, including awareness, time/resource limitations, and perceived audience response.

In the last part of this chapter, I have identified and discussed what participants like and dislike about social media, and began to explore an ecological model of social media based VAW prevention. Overall, survey data provide a starting point to identify dissemination, efficiency, community, audience engagement, amplification, accessibility, and accountability as key concepts at the intersections of social media and VAW prevention. Abuse and harassment, lack of control over content and audience, and resource investment and difficulty in determining success are overarching themes from challenges identified in survey data. The next chapter (Chapter Seven) continues the discussion and analysis of how stakeholders' use and experience social media by presenting the first of two chapters of interview results. Here, in-depth individual interviews allow me to overcome certain limitations of survey format (time, lack of

detail/clarification, survey fatigue) and to delve more in-depth about the current experiences and future potential of social media for VAW prevention.

Chapter Seven: Interview Findings I (Transmissions and Conversational Activism)

Introduction

This chapter is the first of two chapters that presents and analyzes findings from my qualitative interviews. These two chapters will explain how participants' activities generally cluster around four broad goals: (1) *transmissions*: sharing information with existing audiences and expanding the audience ("the reach") of their offline VAW prevention activities and/or developing new online communities; (2) *conversational activism*: shaping narratives around VAW; (3) *feminism*: shaping their own feminist identity as well as online feminism more broadly; and (4) *preventing online VAW*: responding to and preventing VAW that occurs in online spaces (e.g. rape "joke" Facebook pages, online sexual harassment). In this first of the two chapters examining the interview data, I explore the first two of these goals.¹²⁵

In the previous chapter (Chapter Six), I presented three clusters of descriptive findings from a survey of 109 stakeholders: (1) a description of survey participants, their work, and their feedback on definitions of VAW; (2) an account of participants' social media use and its variation based on roles (e.g. researcher, activist); and (3) a preliminary understanding of the successes and challenges that participants experience with social media use for VAW prevention. The successes, which I presented as an ecological model, included: dissemination, efficiency, community, audience engagement, amplification, accessibility, and accountability. The challenges experienced included: abuse and harassment, a lack of control surrounding content, lack of control over audience, and resource challenges. In this chapter, I push to move beyond a pros and cons model of

¹²⁵ I made the decision to divide interview findings into two chapters based on chapter length (i.e. to maintain consistency with the approximate length of other chapters in this dissertation).

understanding VAW prevention in social media to unpack the nuance and complexity of these intersections: to understand what is new or unique about VAW prevention when seen through a social media lens, and what is new or unique about social media when seen through a VAW lens. How does working at the intersections of VAW and social media shape what we know about these social phenomena?

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I discuss *transmissions*, or how participants share information, raise awareness, and do outreach in social media. In section two, I explore *conversational activism* through a discussion of how conversation emerged as an umbrella theme of VAW prevention and social media that encompasses notions of narrative, storytelling, and voice, as well as listening and intersectionality. I argue that the notion of conversational activism is useful for understanding efforts to change social narratives by using social media. I explain how bystander intervention occurs through conversational activism. Before discussing these substantive themes, however, I first describe interview participants and their general roles/work related to VAW.

Description of participants

As I explain in Chapter Four, as part of my larger research project, I conducted 19 interviews with a cross section of stakeholders engaged in some aspect of VAW prevention.¹²⁶ All interviewees identify as women.¹²⁷ Although ideally at least one man doing VAW prevention would have been included as part of my interview sample, a

¹²⁶ 18 interviews were held with 19 different participants (one interview involved two participants simultaneously).

¹²⁷ As I explain in Chapter Four, I extended interview invitations to two men, one stemming from the survey, the other based on my knowledge of their work in social media surrounding VAW prevention.

women-based participant group is representative of the fact that a majority of those doing VAW prevention work identify as women. Participants are spread fairly evenly between the age categories: age breakdown was as follows: 16% (N=3) were between the ages of 18-24; (N=8) 42% were 25-34; 16% (N=3) were 35-44; and 32% (N=6) were 45-54 years of age. Approximately 1 in 4 (N=5) participants identify as a person of colour; 1 in 6 (N=3) as a person with a disability; and 1 in 6 (N=3) as a member of a GLBTTQ group.¹²⁸ The majority of participants live in urban areas: 11 out of 19 participants (58%) live in cities over 100,000 people; 5 (26%) live in communities with 30,000 to 100,000 people, and 3 (16%) live in cities of less than 30,000.

Overall, participants have a variety of roles related to VAW. As with survey participants, they are doing VAW work in a combination of paid and voluntary capacities. Although most participants are affiliated with at least one or more organizations or campaigns (employed or volunteer), some participants are predominantly independent (e.g. freelance writer/bloggers), while others are more embedded in organizational structures (e.g. executive director of a VAW organization). Of the 19 people interviewed, their roles include: directors or program managers within anti-violence organizations (N=4); communications directors/managers for non-profits (N=2); activists and public educators (N=6); journalists/writers (N= 5), and researchers/ academics (N=2). It is important to emphasize that most participants identify within multiple roles, and that I made these role categorizations based on what participants told me about their work surrounding VAW. For example, two different participants identified their work as journalists and researchers, but I have classified one as a researcher/academic and one as

¹²⁸ These numbers are approximations stemming from survey data (my interview recruitment tool) and what participants revealed in interviews.

a journalist/writer based on how they appear to spend the majority of their time and on what their current professional bios would read.

Information about participants, their roles, and their work comes through my first interview question, which asks participants to tell me a bit about themselves and their work, and to describe their typical workday if such a thing exists for them. Most agree that they do not really have typical days, but instead describe various possibilities of work or goals that might drive each individual day. For example, one communications program manager explains that:

There isn't really much of a typical day. But generally it entails a bunch of things. I do some social media work during the day, I do some positioning work, working on our projects like rebranding, and projects that try to use technology to get people to care about, and want to prevent violence. I also support our various programs in their positioning in the world, trying to communicate and trying to help them, anytime they're trying to do things like webinars and public facing trainings, that kind of thing (F7).¹²⁹

While participants' relationship to VAW prevention and social media varies, it can be generally classified in one of two ways: (1) they may be advocates or researchers who focus on VAW and use social media sometimes; or (2) they may be doing broader feminist or gender justice work in social media, and focusing on VAW sometimes. Regardless of categorical boundaries surrounding their work on VAW, all participants can be seen to be advocates. For example, one participant, trained as a lawyer and working in communications, explains: "I sort of bifurcate myself... [communications] is my day job, but I also do a lot of advocacy still around gender and sexuality issues pro bono." Many participants have training in many different areas, and have worked in a number of capacities in VAW prevention (e.g. court support, training and public

¹²⁹ Rather than assigning my participants pseudonyms, I have coded each interview as either an exploratory (E) interview or a follow-up (F) and assigned it a number representing the order in which they were conducted.

education, researchers, students, communications).

As Chapters Two and Four explain, previous literature on public sociology tends to treat partnerships and who constitutes “communities” as obvious and pre-existing, rather than exploring the possibility of communities that may be fluid and dynamic, and mobilized around issues as opposed to institutions. Another way to conceptualize this is through the notion of “ad hoc issue publics”, where participants are brought together in social media by a shared interest or concern (Bruns and Moe 2014). As such, I want to move beyond the notion of publics defined by physical or demographic boundaries to explore publics that cluster around social problems such as VAW. Thus, I purposefully did not have an exact target group or community for this research. This does present some confusion at times because participants have widely varying relationships in social media. One participant captures this well, saying:

One of the things I was thinking when I filled out your survey was that I may not be the exact target- there’s certain people that they’re really living their lives as an advocate within social media, and that’s not me. I’m using it as a tool in addition to what I’m doing in person and [so that involves] training, capacity building, or advocacy (F1).

A final point about participants’ work titles and social media engagement is that roles and boundaries are blurred, both in terms of personal and professional boundaries, and in terms of VAW prevention and feminist advocacy/activist work more generally. For example, one participant explains that their use of social media and VAW work is more limited in some roles than others:

[As a journalist/host] the only time that we deal with social media is in contacting the guests and doing research. I’m also a grad student...and my research pertains not so much with violence against women, but [gender and media more broadly]¹³⁰ (F4).

¹³⁰ I have omitted the specific research topic of the participant to protect anonymity.

In both her roles as a journalist and as a researcher/graduate student, this participant's actual work in VAW prevention is, at first glance, fairly limited. However, because she works in an explicitly feminist media environment and because of her own personal engagements with feminism and social media, she ends up being quite invested in online feminist activism and advocacy, which inevitably encompasses VAW.

Part I: Transmissions

Sharing information

When participants talk about sharing information in social media, they are primarily talking about promoting their work or events and sharing news stories with existing audiences, and expanding their audiences. These audiences are made up of both the general public and other VAW organizations. For example, one participant explains:

We do use social media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, I think are the top three that we tend to use. The top is probably Twitter. And what we try to do is help our followers and encourage people to follow us, to get them information about trending stories and trending topics, on violence against women news. And we also use that as a channel to reach out about things like job postings, programming events coming up. So it's kind of a way of us reaching out to other organizations, and the public who will follow us, and I think it's probably what I spend most time on, and probably most effective (F7).

Being a source of up to date information and resources is a pretty standard goal for participants involved in VAW organizations, and represents an extension of their offline work and/or website. Here, social media is a way to get information out to wider audiences, as well as to spread information quickly among their own networks. For example, one participant said they would be using YouTube to do volunteer training. For participants who have limited capacity (e.g. resources) with which to engage in social media, information sharing makes up the bulk of what they do. Although they are using

social media (Web 2.0), this information sharing is based on more of a transmission model (Web 1.0), where information is standardized and shared widely. While gaining additional followers (wider audiences) may be a goal, their purpose is to be a resource more broadly, rather than start in-depth conversations within social media.

A second part of sharing information includes promoting events. However, within the event theme, social media are used not just to promote events, but sometimes to provide an additional dimension to them by enabling people to post in live time (e.g. “live Tweeting”) the event. For example, one participant explains that:

It’s actually really neat to do for events. So whether you’re holding a day symposium, it’s actually kind of an accessible thing, because people are going to post the top things they hear. Which I think are the grabbers...and so you can find out the conversation of how that group is considering this topic (E1).

Another participant describes how Twitter in particular is used to add an additional dimension to events:

We do go out to different events and we would tweet along. More so tweets that would coincide with educational statements or facts that we’re learning as we go to these events. So if I were to be going to an event for instance, it would be a panel discussion, we’d be tweeting along, it would never be personal thoughts...but more so facts and statements that would make the public more aware of the issues around and surrounding sexual violence against women (F11).

This represents a new way of sharing information unique to social media. While the information is tied to a particular “real world” event with specific participants, the facts and statements shared are geared to broader audiences. Additionally, they also deepen participants’ engagement in the real-time event by providing a sort of feedback loop where organizers can see participant engagement and/or feedback in real time. From a public sociology standpoint, this provides a sort of secondary layer of public sociology, where, for example, a panel discussion of VAW and media involving a researcher may be

taking place in a physical public space, but participants themselves (publics) are also participating as further information disseminators by sharing their key messages and takeaway points. This also allows individuals and organizations that cannot attend the event to participate in this specific way.

When participants are sharing information, they have specific strategic goals of wanting to be a resource and information source for VAW, and to gain followers, thus expanding their audiences. However, another broader goal of sharing information is to “raise awareness”. This has a variety of meanings (e.g. disseminating statistics about the prevalence of VAW), but generally appears to mean getting people (publics) to see VAW as a social problem, that is, to take it seriously. In some cases, participants are trying to raise awareness by evoking an emotional response to VAW. For example, one writer and advocate explains that,

I want VAW to be something people are horrified by, but it’s so commonplace it doesn’t even register. People are numb to it. Not everyone, but I get that feeling that as a culture we’re numb. Or culturally we are outraged at the way other countries handle VAW...for instance when the world got upset about the way India responds to rape without taking a look at it at home. It’s OK to be offended at the way other people in other countries treat women but we don’t take a look at ourselves. Like not looking at the high rates of violence against First Nations women as part of a socioeconomic issue, which of course it is (F10). .

Other participants take to social media to raise awareness in a way that specifically targets anti-feminist messaging and/or harmful myths and stereotypes about VAW. For example, one blogger/advocate explains her use of social media around VAW as such:

The first thing is just raising awareness. And particularly trying to cut through some of the MRA [Men’s Rights Activist] stuff that goes around about the “what about the men” kind of stuff. So trying to say, this isn’t it, we’re not trying to take away that it sucks about violence committed against anybody. The raising awareness about yes, this is still an issue, yes this is everybody’s issue, yes gender is still a factor. So I think that’s one really key thing (F8).

In this quote we see awareness raising becoming more targeted, active, and interventionist. As I discuss in the next section, this is how conversational activism becomes bystander intervention. We also see this targeted information sharing facilitate social networks, where movement away from the unidirectional model of information sharing enters into the territory of the many directional conversation that is characteristic of social media. For example, one participant explains that she is involved with:

Connecting other activists, or potential activists, with each other. So for example, one of my friends did a series of guest blogs [on VAW] for [organization], and we cross-posted all of those. And I've also had some phone calls with different, well I've done some work with [organization], and helped connect them to other people that might be able to help them. And some of that is online and off-line, so I guess using my social networks and my old-fashioned networks to try to figure out "hey, these people are looking for, say a designer, I know someone is supportive of your work that might be able to help with that." Just help I guess bring together. To always have feelers out (F8).

Exploring partnership, reciprocity, and collaboration around information sharing is where the social aspects of social media are apparent. In this way, participants are networking as they work to create new communities (publics) mobilizing around VAW, while simultaneously raising awareness and building their own audiences.

For participants who are interested in moving away from an information transmission style of social media use, there is a more dual-purpose approach to their social media work, where they are seeking to engage their audiences and learn about their perspectives on VAW. For example, one participant's commentary captures two prongs of their approach:

We probably spend...a couple hours a week in posting both on Facebook on Twitter. We use it partly to advance any of the work we're doing, i.e. if we're doing a campaign or we're having a workshop, then we'll communicate it, we'll use social media in that sense. But we also use social media to make statements, if you will, or to pose questions to the general public in terms of any community

issues that might come up. And by community, I mean local, provincial, as well as nationally, it depends on the issue (P1,¹³¹ F13).

In addition to highlighting event promoting and conversation starting as activities, this quote also demonstrates that, for many VAW organizations (particularly those providing front line services), social media may not be a core part of their work, at least in terms of current time investment.

Extending outreach in the face of limited resources

An important point about offline VAW prevention work that extends into social media is that social media allow participants to extend their outreach significantly in the face of limited resources. For some, it even helps their campaign or organization get off the ground in the first place, possibly in the face of zero or little funding. For example, as one activist/researcher explains:

We wouldn't exist if it wasn't for Facebook. We started out as a Facebook group, and the majority of the work we do on a daily basis is through Facebook, and through social media (E2).

Another participant explains that, although she does a majority of her VAW prevention work offline, most people know her work through her online presence. She also describes launching a project that exists fully within social media:

It is the cheapest form of outreach possible. I mean the platforms that we use are free, they're widely accessible, they're widely used. So especially when we first launched- we can put a poster of [our campaign] on Facebook, and people would circulate it. So then we are bringing people to the table that we wouldn't necessarily have, and me pounding pavement would have taken a hell of a lot longer to get those people on board...I mean, [we] exist because social media exists...And so we are building an entire movement based on people sharing their stories through social media (F2).

In this sense, social media is a new dimension for VAW prevention initiatives, and

¹³¹ P1 refers to Participant 1, as one of the interviews (F13) had two participants (P1 & P2).

campaigns can be born into social media spaces, rather than simply extended from offline initiatives.

For those who are already established as part of a group or organization doing VAW prevention work, basic social media engagement (transmitting information) does not require a great deal of resources. Yet most participants whose work is VAW organization based (i.e. NGO's) indicate they would like to be using social media more and/or have plans to develop in this area. One participant explains simply, "I wish we were a little bit more active with our social media, and that's what we're striving to do at the moment." (F11). One participant, whose online activity is very limited but who has extensive experience in VAW advocacy, training, and mass media participation, argues that VAW organization use of social media is very limited due to a combination of lack of resources and fear of technology:

I would say that women working as advocates in organizations and violence against women generally are not using social media. And in fact are far, far behind in that regard.... well, not everybody. But I think that pretty much everyone would agree that that's what's going on. Part of that is that there's so much work to do, and they don't have the time. Part of it is lack of resources, financial, to do it, and also anyone to do the upkeep that's required of a blog and such. And part of it is technophobia. A big part of it is technophobia (F12).

Survey findings also suggest that resources are significant obstacles to organizations' (and individuals') social media use around VAW prevention. Although this may be the case for many non-profits, this participant goes on to explain how, for front line organizations in particular who are working in a bricks and mortar environment, the pressure to provide individual services first may understandably take precedence:

A lot of it is about resources. Economic, financial first, and then workers. All of these agencies have waiting lists. So you're going to go to the waiting list before you're going to Twitter...And then as a result, you're not advantaged, or you're not able to develop a better understanding of how social media could be used to

make your work easier or better for the women involved...It's like an unending loop (F12).

Even so, participants felt that a small amount of resources could go a long way in social media work. For example, one participant was involved in creating an app¹³² that focuses on providing in-the moment information and resources to survivors and bystanders when sexual violence is occurring. As she explains, her organization identifies success based on the development and take-up of their project, in the context of a small budget:

I think probably our best example of success would be our app. We made this app on a really low budget, and...it's something that is quite simple... We released that primarily online, we didn't have much of a budget in terms of promotions, so we didn't get any traditional promotion. But through the online activity, and through things like an online press release, and doing just simple social media stuff, and simple partnership through social media with other organizations that are like-minded, a lot of people responded quite well to the app. A lot of people downloaded the app, much more than we expected. We got thousands of downloads, and that's pretty good for a cheap, non-profit type app. And then we got a lot of pickup from international media, so folks in the U.S., in Canada, in the UK, and as far as Japan had articles on this in their media outlets, because they really were inspired by the idea of having an app like that (F7).

In mainstream media, VAW prevention in social media involving apps is frequently discussed. This is perhaps due to media attention to events such as the 2011 U.S. White House's "Apps Against Abuse" contest, which "called on software innovators to harness the power of mobile technology to help prevent dating violence and abuse by keeping young adults connected to trusted friends and providing easy access to important resources for help including local police and abuse hotlines" (The White House n.d.). Yet in my research, beyond this individual interview, there was no discussion from other participants about VAW prevention apps. I suspect this was in part because my participant recruitment did not specifically target the technology sector (i.e. software

¹³² An app is "an application, typically a small, specialized program downloaded onto mobile devices." (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

designers, game developers), and so very few participants actually had experience with creating VAW prevention apps. Yet I would argue that participants' lack of discussion surrounding apps also is related to the historically individualized nature of prevention efforts within apps (e.g. "alarms" that an individual can set off if she believes she is about to be assaulted; see Challenge Post n.d.), and the disjuncture of these technologies with the efforts of activists and advocates (e.g. moving away from individual risk reduction strategies, changing social norms). Although several apps created by advocates and activists attempt to draw in bystanders and the community at large (see, for example, Circle of Six, Not Your Baby, and RISE), these rely on audiences who are already committed to VAW prevention to some extent, demonstrated by the fact that they have downloaded and are using the app. In other words, apps require potential bystanders to work to "move towards" VAW prevention, whereas conversational activism, as I discuss in the next section, focuses on bringing ideas and actions into everyday, and already occurring, interactions. This is not to discount apps as prevention tools (particularly those that focus on community efforts and bystander intervention), but rather, to explain why many participants may be drawn to conversational activism as a means of "getting people in the door" for VAW prevention.

Overall, by sharing information and raising awareness, participants are trying to make links and connections and to bring forward feminist perspectives to encourage people to understand the deeper picture and complexity of VAW as something that is deeply ingrained in society. This is similar to the goals of historical feminist work on media representation of VAW discussed in Chapter Three, but here, those doing VAW prevention are actually building their own publics and audiences, rather than having to

rely on those of the mass media. They are also able to accomplish a great deal with limited resources. In the next section, I explore how the notion of conversational activism helps us to understand the more social, interactive, and reflexive elements of VAW prevention in social media.

Part II: Conversational Activism

As with the survey findings, sharing information (news stories, research, events) appears to be an important objective when talking broadly about social media. In the broad cluster of work that I have called conversational activism, participants are trying to “use culture to change culture”, in one participant’s words. Four themes that emerged in this area are: (1) conversations; (2) narrative and “getting in” to mainstream media; (3) storytelling, emotions, and experiential knowledge; and (4) listening and intersectionality.

Conversation

Conversation is a recurring and dominant theme throughout the interviews. In total, the term is used 94 times in 18 of 19 interviews, and I coded 37 different thematic references relating to conversation. In one interview, a participant explains how they see their organization’s initial foray into social media as part of a conversation, and are trying to figure out how to start the conversation in social media about a topic that has historically been a private issue rather than a public conversation. She explains that:

We are finding that things that are resonating with people [as seen through] the number of likes that we have, are a lot to do with pictures or articles or when we ask questions to them, but at the same time, because we are only a small project a lot of this is learning what people would want from us, because violence against women, we’re talking about topics that are pretty much always conversation stoppers, right? (E1)

This quote is from my earliest exploratory interview, from November 2012. In a 2014 interview, a participant who has worked in VAW prevention for a number of years remarks that conversations around VAW are happening more frequently in media in the past year:

I will always think of that big moment when [a local newspaper] had a cover page about rape culture and had the word rape culture. And it wasn't like "does it exist?" It was "what do we do about it?" ... You know, [the story] lacked nuance and they quoted MRAs inside and all kind of other things, but it was the mainstream. The word rape culture in [my city] has hit the mainstream. Good, bad, or otherwise, when I say it now, people still get very defensive, and I still think it's a really extreme word for a lot of people, but for me that was like, wow... So I think social media has for better or for worse allowed us to significantly speed up where we've come. I mean, speaking only on the issue of sexual violence, but I think we have made progress (F2).

When it comes to social media, another participant explains that social media can help to push or force stories and conversations into a more central public view:

I think [about] the ways in which we can have those conversations. So I think that, you know, rape culture and social media brings two-sides of the story at the forefront in public. And that's where some really unintelligent conversations happen, and some really intelligent conversations happen. I think of Anita Sarkeesian,¹³³ and her Ted Video... [that] started off this conversation... I think another example is the #WhyIStayed Twitter campaign. It starts to bring several conversations to light (P2, F13).

Thus, there is both a spontaneous and a planned element to conversations. For VAW organizations, starting conversations is an important part of trying to find out who they are reaching, what their needs are, and to promote awareness of VAW. In a more spontaneous manner however, conversations can center around news stories and current

¹³³ Anita Sarkeesian is a feminist media critic and media literacy video creator who has been the target of large-scale online harassment campaigns and violent threats, including death threats that forced her family to go into hiding in 2014. In October 2014, Sarkeesian also cancelled a public talk at Utah State University after security concerns, when the university stated it would not ban concealed firearms from the event, despite receiving an email from an individual threatening to carry out a "Montreal Massacre style attack" (Associated Press 2014).

events that pertain to VAW and/or trending hashtags on Twitter (which are often also frequently related to news stories and current events). Yet this mobilization, while timed around breaking events and news, is not actually spontaneous. As my research shows, advocates and activists are waiting for these opportunities for public intervention, being well aware of their value in terms of re-framing a VAW news story.

Stories that trend in social media gain the attention of those who may not normally pay attention to terms such as violence against women, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence. While the new voices/new audiences are positive in terms of expanding audiences and public education, they also present significant challenges including anonymity (participants may not know who they are engaging), time-limited opportunity (public attention may quickly move on from news stories), and preconceived notions about VAW and/or feminists. Conversational activism is one way to think about the process of participating in social media discussions of current events and trending topics around VAW in a way that provides sociological context and advocates for particular messages/narratives/knowledge to be amplified. This is similar to Best's (1989) notion of claims-making, but recognizes the multi-voiced, multi-directional aspects of social media communication relative to the mainstream mass media news context. In this way, the claims-making itself becomes a form of activism.

The overarching goal of conversations around VAW appears to be to change dominant narratives about VAW. For example, in one interview, a communications professional explains that their social justice work involves “bringing communications strategy, big-picture narrative framing, to the work that is in the field.” When asked if

they saw changing the narrative as a key part of the role of social media in VAW

prevention, they explain that:

I do in two ways. One, is I think social media, because it moves so fast... It's both potentially powerful and potentially dangerous because it can really, you can perpetrate a lot of myths very quickly... But I think that social media is particularly important because of the speed and the momentum, but also the reach. And to me one of the challenges is taking these very heavy [topics] – because issues around gender-based violence are ultimately issues around what do we think of women's sexuality. Because it's [about] what deserves protection, what does not. And changing those really fundamental narratives around sexuality of women is difficult, because a lot of why women have been subjugated over time has always been fear of female sexuality. And I think that that's really hard for a lot of people to grasp: that something that's about violence against women, you know, violence around sexuality, is actually rooted in fear of sexual power. That's complex stuff, and it's really hard to tweet about it (F1).

The speed of message distribution in social media is both a reason why prevention work is powerful in this arena as well as an obstacle for capitalizing on this potential. Staying on top of, and engaged in, social media conversation on a particular topic can be a full time job. Yet the importance of this work frequently seems to be taken more seriously and/or seen as much more central by commercial and for-profit enterprises than for the social justice and non-profit sector.

The distinction between how organizations and individuals use social media is perhaps most evident through conversational activism around current events and news stories. When current news stories break, there is an immediate and intense conversation, an opportunity for public attention and education. Participants working in an organizational role recognize this opportunity, but they have limited capacity to undertake the rapid response/engagement that is required to participate in that conversation. Being timely and being able to freely engage in ongoing conversations are

both challenges in this regard. One NGO director explains that there is a choice to be made in order to have their message heard:

People don't realize that that's the commitment they need to make to be able to respond and be timely, [otherwise] you lose the message. So I think the struggle for [our organization] is that I'm the only full time paid employee...we don't have the resources to be as active as we can, so at times we have to choose. So it's kind of some competing things, so you just react as fast as you can (E1).

Having employees specifically dedicated to social media is likely to be an increasingly important area for VAW organizations. Moreover, or perhaps alternatively, we may see a split in responsibility where more and more organizations exist solely within social media while others focus their attention on face-to-face workshops, training, services, and support. This raises a number of questions in terms of evidence-base of success (what works to prevent VAW?) and resources (where should funding priorities lie?).

It also raises questions in terms of who, and where to focus conversational activism. This participant goes on to explain that, within social media, online comments sections place a burden of responsibility on their organization, and are one of the potentially negative outcomes of having wider audiences engaged in conversations about VAW. As this participant explains, responding to trolling and/or negative comments is a particular challenge when it comes to joining conversations:

It's hard to negotiate, because you want to have a voice, but having a voice requires a person to have that voice. It's not like we couldn't be a part of that discussion, it's that we would have to have somebody designated to be a part of that discussion, because part of that is accountability and part of that is being able to monitor comments...you would have to engage in that conversation, and that takes a lot of time, again and again. And so, there are these small windows that if you had a team of people doing it, you are going make a great change I think. Because people are seeing that, and people are reading those comments...but the fact of the matter is that really the only choice sometimes that we're given because of low staff and the high amount of time that takes, is not to answer [trolls and negative comments] (E1).

Another participant explains that they feel pressure to join the conversation but have their organization to consider:

We might be criticized is if we don't post something that might be happening. So, you know, we want to have a discussion here, do we post something with respect to what just happened, or do we just leave it alone? And you know, I think in the last year, there have been so many, there has just been so much in terms of the media and sexual violence, that what we might have posted a year ago without much thought, we're really thinking now, do we post this, do we not post this, what could be the implications of this posting, given that the platform itself could be litigious (F13).

While the opportunity for public education and conversational activism is expanded through social media, without the addition of resources and social media expertise it may not only be a lost opportunity, but an added pressure or drain on already resource-strapped organizations. Although many individuals are taking on social media work as personal (and unpaid) activism around VAW prevention, they do so oftentimes at great cost both in terms of time and energy. The costs of taking on social media work and how to dedicate resources is a key area of attention if VAW organizations are to do social media work effectively.

One question that may arise related to conversational activism is how it differs from “slacktivism” or “clicktivism”, pejorative terms used to describe the “disconnect between awareness and action through the use of social media” (Glenn 2015:81).

Following Malcolm Gladwell's 2010 controversial *New Yorker* piece “Small Change: Why the Revolution Won't Be Tweeted”, the debate about whether social media activism will lead to real social change has loomed large. While it is always useful to critically explore the motives and efficacy of advocacy and activist work (wherever it is taking place), I see conversational activism within social media as more than slacktivism in four significant ways. First is a question of degree of effort. The notion of slacktivism

emphasizes that participants can easily feel good about themselves by the simple click of a button or signing of a petition. As the blog *Digital Trends* explains, “slacktivism combines the pursuit of feel-good charity and the pursuit of not actually sacrificing anything except a single click” (Knibbs 2013:para. 1). Yet conversational activism involves effort, just as participating in a face-to-face conversation involves more than simply clapping one’s hands or nodding one’s head. My participants are rarely talking about their work in terms of only likes, shares, and retweets, but are spending a great deal of time and effort in crafting and sharing messages and information. Second, the purported “feel good” nature of slacktivism, and the notion that those doing slacktivism are not actually sacrificing anything, do not fit with participants’ experiences of backlash and harassment that many receive as a result of their work (I discuss this harassment further in Chapter Eight).

A third feature that distinguishes conversational activism from slacktivism is that the specific social media site matters: While there is no hard and fast rule about whether to use Facebook, Twitter (or other platforms) to do this work, these decisions are actively made by participants’ based on audiences that they want to reach and how each site fits with those objectives. For the most part, effective conversational activism appears to be taking place on Twitter, as I discuss further in Chapter Eight. Finally, conversational activism also recognizes that conversations build relationships: that is, individuals can become more organized into groups or publics from conversational activism. For example, one interviewee told me that she is part of a network of online feminists that has come together to develop strategies to address the problem of online sexual violence and harassment. These networks do not need to rely on bricks and mortar environments or

geographical boundaries, but can find and meet up with each other through social media. Gladwell (2010:para.9) believes that “we seem to have forgotten what activism is”, but perhaps activism has simply evolved to include a spectrum of activities and actions, including but not limited to social media. Like the online and offline worlds, perhaps activist/non-activist identities are increasingly blurred.

Narrative and “getting into” mainstream media

To understand the importance of narrative work in social media around VAW, we can consider participants’ (many) frustrations with mainstream media. As I have discussed in Chapter Three, there has historically been much feminist activist and academic critique of mass media representations of VAW. Several of these critiques involve the failure of mass media to convey context, nuance, and complexity around VAW in their reporting. My interview participants also have these concerns, and several express frustrations over lack of control of the message. One participant, who has extensive experience as a news source in mainstream media, describes her experience as follows:

I’m kind of the dog and pony, the right poster girl. And they ask me for comments constantly. And I’ll respond of course, that’s my job. But I’m not in charge of what’s going on, I’m responding, reacting. And you must speak in sound bites. And you must be effective. And you really need to understand that what you’re saying, and the ways that you’re saying it, can change the tone of the story, because someone else is translating that for you. Or they’re translating it to a certain party or public, who then hear it in yet different ways (F12).

The importance of getting into mainstream media is to inform, educate, and change the narrative about VAW. Yet because of news structure and organization (see Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1991), this can be challenging. Additionally, as several participants

explain, journalists often have limited understanding of VAW. For example, this same participant explains:

Journalists don't understand the nature of the crime. And they'll tell you that right away. There is no curriculum in journalism around sexual assault, the crime of sexual assault. But it's the first, second, third, and fourth case that the journalist who has just graduated is sent out on. So they are using their own biases, their own language, and their own misunderstandings of the crime, and repeating and solidifying myths and stereotypes (F12).

Another participant explains that journalists are generally not well versed in issues of oppression and violence, but are looking to them to fill the gaps in their pre-constructed narrative:

They already know what story they are going to tell, and they just want [us] to fill in the spaces for their stories... There's a lot of coming to grips with the idea that the work needs to be done by ourselves or at a grassroots level if we want to get the message out in the way that we want without having to be filtered (E2).

This same participant goes on to explain that their organization has moved away from mainstream media engagement to focus on alternative strategies:

Now we're using social media and independent folks, and engaged members of the community to do the media work for us. And I think it's more positive, because although it doesn't reach the mass audience, we are getting to craft a message, which never happens. It's filtered through our lenses as opposed to what's typical (E2).

As I discussed in Chapter Three, recently we have seen broader awareness of feminist interventions to change mainstream media content through the creation of online alternative and feminist media projects, as well as handbooks and websites for journalists reporting on VAW.¹³⁴ This is different from a Web 1.0 model, where mainstream news media hold much more power over the dominant narratives around VAW, and advocacy work must focus on shifting this narrative within mass media structures. We see, then,

¹³⁴ As I note, it is important to acknowledge that, although feminist media is more widespread recently, alternatives to mainstream press coverage existed historically through media such as zines.

that having more control over the message is beneficial for participants as it is more in line with trying to change the overall narrative. Of course, there is still a reactionary element to this work, since participants are still engaging with breaking and developing news stories. This requires a pre-constructed narrative that can be adapted quickly and widely. Yet, as I will explain shortly, despite this reactionary element, this work can actually be considered bystander intervention.

There are also other benefits of social media when it comes to narrative. For example, one way that social media appears to be successful in shifting VAW coverage is that the narrative itself can become the news story. For example, the hashtag #BeenRapedNeverReported, which has received tens of millions of tweets to date¹³⁵, contains the message that whether or not a survivor reports a sexual assault to police, and/or how long it takes them to do so, should not determine whether or not we believe them, and that there are many reasons why survivors do not report sexual assaults (initially or ever). Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that social support for a particular narrative becomes the story. This happens when social media (frequently Twitter) reaches a sort of tipping point where hashtags such as #WhyIStayed or #IBelieveLucy begin to trend in response to social responses to VAW. In these cases, these hashtags challenged victim-blaming myths around intimate partner violence and sexual violence, in response to two high profile events in 2014: (1) National Football League player Ray Rice's video recorded physical assault on his fiancée Janay Palmer (now Janay Rice), and (2) Lucy DeCoutere coming forward as one of the first survivors alleging sexual violence from

¹³⁵ #BeenRapedNeverReported was co-created by Toronto Star reporter Antonia Zerbisias and Montreal Gazette justice reporter Sue Montgomery, who decided to publicly share their own experiences of assault on Twitter on October 30, 2014. To date, there have been tens of millions of tweets, retweets and replies and national and international media outlets have reported on it (see Teotonio 2014).

former Canadian Broadcasting Company radio host Jian Ghomeshi. In this scenario, instead of the mainstream media reporting on individual cases of violence, they are reporting on the social response to violence.

News reporting of online conversations is significant because it provides new opportunities for VAW experts to become involved in news production. For example, one advocate, when discussing some of her successes with social media, explains how participation in online conversations has enabled her to become part of a news story:

Just sort of tangibly, I've been contacted by more journalists because of tweets than anything. I get contacted all the time, like "I saw your tweet about this, do you want to write an op-ed about it? Or can we call you about this..." So it enables me to get my message out because it seems like journalists are just kind of on Twitter, trying to get a pulse of the story, or maybe it's a slow day, or they're looking for comments so they're like "I'm going to find somebody who said something that's interesting." Whereas traditionally, you had to have the contacts, and be on the roster, or be at an event and publicly identified as the organizer, and all those things (F2).

This participant goes on to explain that social media facilitates this connection by allowing news reporters to approach them directly, not only avoiding bureaucracy, but also at times even avoiding real-time communication:

...What I [have] found, and the reason why journalists will call people like me, not just me, is because of social media and because of the organizations I work with, is because I can give them the sassy quote that they want, because there's no sixteen levels of bureaucracy for me to get approval on what I need to say. So I was on holiday, and I got a Google alert saying [a newspaper in another province] ... tweeted that I had tweeted about [music videos and misogyny]... and I was like what the shit? But it's because they can do that- it's a public enough forum- that lazy journalists, or good journalists, can just try and find things. But at the same time, so what? I don't care how you found it; you've allowed that perspective to go in (F2).

This quote reflects a number of benefits for individual advocates working in social media: Being able to side-step bureaucratic mechanisms that need to approve organizational and institutional messages; having ones' words and arguments archived by

hashtag in a social media platform such as Twitter for journalists to access; and having journalists turn to social media to gauge the “pulse” of social conversation about particular issues, rather than sticking to a predetermined list of contacts and/or experts.

Yet despite these benefits, becoming a mainstream media news source seems to be an unintended consequence of social media use rather than a goal in itself. While we see mainstream media coverage still playing a role in narratives surrounding VAW, journalists and their reporting are not necessarily a key focus of intervention. Rather, the focus is on shifting social norms around VAW more broadly. This is significant, as it has been identified as a historically challenging area of prevention (including identifying success in changing social norms) (Johnson and Dawson 2011). As one participant remarks, “I think the opportunities available in dialogue are significant for changing social norms. And social media for me is the natural place to change social norms” (F9). This public dialogue includes analysis that comes from multi-voiced, multi-perspective conversations that demand intersectional analysis. For example, one participant explains how people use social media to put pressure for a VAW lens to be included as part of mainstream news analysis:

When a hashtag is covered in the mainstream media, when #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen¹³⁶ is a story, when #YesAllWomen- with that analysis of what happened in California,¹³⁷ that analysis would not have existed

¹³⁶ An AlJazeera (2013) blog entry explains that the hashtag #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen “was originally coined by blogger Mikki Kendall during a Twitter debate about Hugo Schwyzer, an American academic and self-described “male feminist”. Schwyzer has been accused of harassing non-white female bloggers and recently wrote that his critics drove him offline.” The hashtag “trended worldwide as Twitter users criticised what they call the exclusion of nonwhite women from mainstream feminism.”

¹³⁷ #YesAllWomen was started as a response to the case of Elliot Rodgers who killed six people in Santa Barbara, California before taking his own life. Prior to the killings, Rodgers had posted a (now removed) YouTube video with a manifesto “promising revenge on all the women who had rejected him” (Feeney 2014:para 1). As Feeney (2014:para. 4) explains, “Rodgers comments inspired an online conversation...around the #YesAllWomen hashtag to criticize the way society teaches men to feel entitled to women at the expense of their health, safety, and in Rodger’s case, lives.”

without social media. I firmly believe that people on social media forcing them to talk about misogyny is what made that part of the conversation (F2).

For VAW prevention then, while mainstream media are part of dialogue around VAW in social media, they do not dominate it. Conversations are visible, sharable, saveable, and searchable. Through this, social media conveys a collective message about what narratives are important to (and missing from) mainstream discourse, and the advocates' and activists' committed and consistent efforts to insist that these narratives be considered appears to be making progress.

Storytelling, emotions, and experiential knowledge

Stories, narrative, information, myths, and message all contribute to conversations about VAW. Conversational activism targeting social narratives is closely related to storytelling. However, instead of simply trying to change how we talk about VAW (a focus on outcome), storytelling focuses on sharing and connecting individual stories (a focus on process). It does so for two reasons: (1) to get people to care about VAW, and (2) to demonstrate its complexity. Academic experts may do narrative work (e.g. narrative analysis), but those with experiential knowledge are the most effective storytellers. For example, one writer/advocate explains:

I'm a huge believer in storytelling and the power of free media. So from that perspective, I think that the Internet is transformative in the fight against gender-based violence. Because, for the first time ever, women can step out of the isolation that they've always been subject to, and share their stories...I think [this] can really engage people more empathetically to understand the scope of what we're talking about (F3).

Another participant argues that personal reflections and emotional responses towards current events are also a driving force in social media sharing:

People have been really good about engaging with and sharing stuff on missing and murdered Aboriginal women. I think that is partly because it's such an ongoing, serious, serious issue. And even though activists, First Nations, international groups keep saying stuff about it, nothing's happening about it. So I think people are still frustrated, and no one has a sense of closure, so people have shared a lot of stories. [For example,] mine and other stories by other people that I share on my page get re-shared a lot on Facebook. Oh and then, personal reflections that are connected to news events or the Montreal Massacre, December 6th reflections, that kind of stuff tends to get shared a lot (F8).

Emotions appear to influence participant social media use in a few different ways.

First, whether one is an educator, academic, writer, researcher, activist, survivor, or (more often than not) some combination of the above, it is frustrating to see lack of context, misunderstanding or misrepresentation of research and/or advocacy work, misogyny and reproduction of rape myths and other ingrained (false) beliefs about VAW (e.g. women frequently lie about sexual assault; violence is gender-neutral; women stay because they like the abuse). For participants, frustration about inaccuracies, stereotypes, and lack of context in mainstream media, as well as social media conversations, appears to drive some participation online. For example, one activist notes:

A lot of the campaigns around violence are still so shitty, they're still really focused on women's behaviour. And even with [our organization] I think a lot of the, I don't want to say older, but I'm going to, are still- they really internalize those messages of "women, you need to stay safe" [and so forth]. And when I see that, I mean it makes me very angry, and so I try to correct it and say, you know this is really problematic. But there's still not widespread agreement on what even needs to be done to stop violence against women, let alone how we need the media to better respond. And I am thankful for being able to talk back to what's out there, because I'm not the kind of person who logs on to [a news site] and puts comments, that's not me. But yeah, I will respond to something I see from the media that's posted, or something within [my community] that I feel is a problem (E2).

In this case, social media allows for a "talk-back" mechanism to voice dissent and highlight narratives or statements deemed problematic by an individuals or organizations.

In other cases, emotions will shape social media use in a way that is less focused on

intervening in misconceptions and more focused on seeking support or engaging in what many activists and advocates describe as self-care.¹³⁸ For example, one participant describes how she takes to social media to make sense of violence and to feel better:

I find if you start to get to know who's going to have good things to say on something - so something big happens, and you know by this person's Twitter page or by this person's Facebook page, they are going to have something to say that I'm going to appreciate, and help me make sense of that, or that I can get a feeling of support if it's something bad. Sometimes you can get kind of sucked into it, and it isn't really helpful. Like after the [Elliot Rogers] shootings in California, I was just in a Twitter rabbit hole, because I just felt so devastated. I was trying to just, you know, I would just read one more thing and then [I thought], I'll be able to make sense of it. And that doesn't really get you anywhere, but I mean, the only other option I guess would be like, how do you get 500 people together for a hug? So it's the most effective thing available. Sometimes it might not really make things easier, but it helps to know that you're not the only one that's having that kind of reaction (F4).

In one way or another, my research participants each have a commitment to VAW prevention. While individual stories and the level (and nature) of emotional investment in this process vary, this commitment is at times very personal. For example, during the interviews, five of the 19 interviewees brought up their own experiences as survivors of sexual violence and/or intimate partner violence (this does not include experiences of online harassment and abuse). This was generally brought up in two ways: (1) in relation to the work they do, for example, as a part of their identity that they draw from or employ in certain circumstances or situations, or (2) as one of the reasons that social media is helpful for their work (i.e. social media is helpful to seek support and validation of their experiences). For example, one participant explains that social media plays an important role for her by:

¹³⁸ The Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre (n.d.:1) defines self care as "about identifying your own needs and taking steps to meet them. It is taking the time to do some of the activities that nurture you. Self care is about taking proper care of yourself and treating yourself as kindly as you treat others."

Knowing that you're not alone- so actually being able to access that language, that it's not about you, that you haven't done something wrong. And...that other people are also experiencing similar suffering, I think can be, can be - You know, it doesn't take away from the fact that something horrible happened...it does however, provide you with a support group and a way of making sense of the events that are much more empowering (E4).

Finding support from others is not unique to social media, but is more easily facilitated. It can also be done passively (reading only), anonymously and/or without connection to existing social networks (who may be less understanding or supportive, or whom those doing this work may not want to burden), and globally (without geographical boundaries). Additionally, technical features such as hashtags as well as sites such as Storify (where users curate content from various social media sites into one feed or "story" pertaining to an event) allow for these stories to be brief, organized, searchable, and grow in a snowball effect, as others tell their own stories.

The significance of storytelling and experiential knowledge for public education around VAW is not only about the fact that these stories are told, but is also about whose voices we hear. As one participant explains,

I think for all minority groups, social media is great because it gives them a way to have a voice, rather than through traditional media. And I know that what I just said is repeated endlessly by everyone, but I think it allows people, minorities, to actually have a way to show that they are more than just a victim or survivor, because it allows them to have a voice for these issues but it also allows them a voice to be human...there's a recent hashtag going around called #AbuserTactics, and I found that really interesting because it gave women an opportunity to voice the abuse that they've gone through themselves, but also get these [abusive] tactics more well-known (F4).

Social media is important in a mass media environment where racialized groups and other marginalized communities are frequently stereotyped. Moreover, it enables amplification of historically marginalized groups within social movements, such as the voices of women of colour in feminism. At an individual level, participants are able to

find support and community online by participating or listening to various conversations, on their own time, and in their own way. For survivors, this may be to share their stories and find comfort or community in others. However, by having storytelling as part of the process of public education about VAW, survivors are also able to support and provide education for others while also receiving information and community support.

Listening and intersectionality

Being able to see and hear collections of individual stories in social media allows for easier identification of broader social patterns that are more inclusive of diverse voices and intersecting identities. However, this still means that users must be listening. In discussing conversations online, two participants (both working in feminist media organizations) speak about the importance of intersectionality, education, and listening to conversations online:

I think Twitter has been really great for educating people about privilege, and in different groups. Like white feminists- but also, #YesAllWomen helped educate men and people who don't identify as feminists, but there's certainly, I would say, educating white feminists about race, and about disability... So people have been I think really generous- because they shouldn't have to tell us [i.e. white people, able-bodied groups] all this stuff- really generous, and have played a really important role in raising awareness... So I think Twitter, for me, and I know for other people, has been really helpful. I know some people feel like it's- I think some people feel like it closes off conversation, because then, you know, if you want to have a more nuanced conversation about something, it's not necessarily the best place to have that. And if you say maybe I have this one minor issue with this hashtag, then people can jump all over you. But overall, I think that it's really good for starting conversations, and so people can say, "this is how I've experienced this thing". And for other people to say, "hey me too". And for people who haven't, to listen and learn from that (F8).

Another participant explains how social media conversation about feminism and VAW allows her to learn beyond her local (geographic) context, as well as on their own time:

Probably the biggest benefits that I've gotten with using social media with activism specifically are hearing the voices that I wouldn't normally hear. Because in [my city] it's pretty white Canadian, and I wouldn't usually be given the opportunity to hear other perspectives speak. And also, I don't know if I would be in the right mindset if I just saw someone speaking on the sidewalk about something, I wouldn't listen (F4).

In Chapter Four I explain that the notion of intersectionality is a central aspect (and contribution) of feminist work. Many of my interview participants expressed that intersectionality is not only part of the conversation of VAW prevention, but also central to its success. This intersectionality shows up in two ways. First, it gets brought up in the sense of Crenshaw's (1989) work around understanding intersecting axes of oppression by using multiple lenses of race, gender, class, and other factors of identity to look at VAW. For example, one participant explains that social media allows for stories to be told in different ways, while also incorporating more voices:

Participant: I would like to use social media in a much larger way, inclusive of film, to investigate those crimes, but not in a fear-based nightmare way that makes women turn away or men run screaming because "they're not that guy."...

Me: Tell a different story.

Interviewee: Tell the real story. Tell the truth, that's inclusive of issues of race, of sexuality, all the different realities that are part of people's lives, that we tend to-we never intersect them. They're all separate. We separate all of that (F12).

As this quote expresses, the "real" story of VAW is the intersectional, multi-dimensional story.

Beyond including multiple voices, a second way that intersectionality shows up in these VAW prevention discussions is through the need to connect various issues related to gender inequality and marginalization within discussions about VAW. In the quote below, one advocate explains how the micro-blogging platform Tumblr allows for

different themes and threads to come together to help connect sexual assault to broader cultural factors:

Intersectionality [is] when we talk about the work environment, we talk about assaults and sexual violence that happen at university or colleges, the location, or the fact that women are not paid as much, or the lack of education in schools, masculinity and how young men are taught to be a certain way or taught to be more violent, or use women as tools or objects... I feel that Tumblr is a perfect resource in order to show people the different factors that go into when a woman is sexually violated, it's not just rape, it's a whole rape culture that trails behind that (F11).

Other issues that participants identify as important to intersectional VAW conversations include colonization, human trafficking, and violence against sex workers, among others. An emphasis on intersectionality is not specific to VAW prevention, but is discussed in terms of feminism and the feminist movement more broadly, something that I discuss further in Chapter Eight. In the final part of this chapter, I discuss how research findings suggest conversational activism in social media can be thought of as bystander intervention in the context of VAW prevention.

Conversational activism as bystander intervention

Despite this recognition of the value of stories and storytelling as part of conversational activism and VAW prevention, several participants also emphasize a need to link narratives and storytelling to broader social/structural change. These changes include not only behavioural changes and policy actions, but also consideration or reflections of broader VAW movement goals. For example, one participant argues that:

Thinking about the stories we tell in order to advance the policies we want is a really crucial piece of prevention. And I don't think, I don't think people think about that enough, that you have to be very careful the stories you're telling, and you have to be really careful- not careful, but thoughtful about the narratives we are putting out there, and think about how they might be throwing other people

under the bus, throwing other movements under the bus. So for example, a lot of the discussion around gender-based violence is often about demonizing men, and really about demonizing masculinity, and masculine sexuality. And the question is, is that something we really think is helpful for the 50 year timeline of promoting the rights, sexual rights basically. So I think that something that this movement is not quite as fully grasping as it could and should (F1).

A number of participants talk about the need to start early in education for VAW prevention and note that social media are a particularly valuable platform for engaging youth in this regard. Specifically, several participants see Tumblr and Instagram as sites where they feel that a wider youth demographic can be meaningfully engaged, and note that they hope to get more involved in these platforms down the road.

Chapter Eight discusses differences between platforms in terms of design and audience. Before turning to this discussion however, it is important to explain how conversational activism fits into an ecological understanding of VAW. In earlier chapters, I introduce and draw from an ecological model of violence, which understands VAW according to individual, community, and social/structural factors (Heise 1998; Johnson and Dawson 2011; McMahon and Banyard 2012). Prevention, therefore, can be seen to occur at each of these levels in society. At first glance, it seems that participants are focusing more on the community and social/structural levels of violence prevention within the realm of social media. However, my findings suggest that this social media work actually involves all levels of violence prevention, but that aspects of the individual level (e.g. attitudes and beliefs) converge with community and social/structural levels (e.g. social norms) within social media.

In saying that participants seem to focus more on the community and social/structural levels, I mean that for the most part, participants do not talk about using social media to try to reduce individuals' risk of violence, nor do they generally

conceptualize VAW prevention in social media in terms of targeting individuals for one-on-one support. For example, one participant acknowledges that:

You're definitely right in recognizing that much of our counselling and outreach type stuff directly to women is done in person... we have different approaches, and most of it is done in person when it comes to the direct contact to the women in crisis. More of our online stuff is directed at the public per se, when it comes to prevention from that angle as far as how to not be an abuser, that angle tends to be a big focus online (F5).

In one case, a participant talked about wanting to use online platforms (e.g. Skype) to provide virtual counselling to women experiencing violence:

[We would like to] offer some kind of online actual counselling...if you even just Google "feminist online counselling", you will find different various resources that offer counselling through Skype, or through chatrooms or journaling and response systems. That's something that we would like to put in place here, but have not been able to yet. But this time, when it comes to the actual reaching out to clients - they can email us, we have a cell phone that they can text, because again, maybe that's the safer way for them to reach out to us, it's the more affordable way of them to reach out to us (F5).

In general, participants do not appear to be using social media to work towards prevention in terms of educating individuals about how they can prevent becoming victims of violence. This is perhaps not surprising given that social media is fundamentally not about one on one communication (such as telephone), or even one to many (such as television or radio), but about many to many (many different voices broadcasting to many different people). Yet given the general popularity of apps in recent years, and specifically the development of many anti-violence apps in North America (see for example, the White House's Apps Against Abuse campaign), it is still somewhat surprising.

However, the emphasis on social rather than individual VAW prevention may also relate to two larger shifts in VAW prevention more broadly. The first shift involves

staying away from “responsibilization” narratives (see Karaian 2014) that focus on victims’ behaviour (“don’t get raped/don’t get abused”) towards accountability narratives that focus on perpetrators’ behaviour (“don’t rape/don’t abuse”). This can be seen in some participants’ comments when they talk about their goals related to prevention. For example, one participant involved in a program focusing primarily on child sexual abuse describes their approach in the following manner:

We actually don’t call our program a child sexual abuse prevention program. And the reason for that is because then [people] think that the responsibility for preventing the abuse lies on the child, where we really believe that 100% of the responsibility lies on the adult. So we try to stay away from that word (F6).

Shifting victim-blaming narratives is a core objective of VAW prevention. As one participant explains:

We’ve finally made that transition from talking to young women about - it was a form of victim-blaming when we kept telling girls “don’t dress this way” or “don’t walk alone at night” or “carry this with you”. Yeah, we’re trying to do harm reduction here, but at the same time it’s so important- we’ve finally moved away from that (F11).

In line with reducing individual responsabilization for VAW is increasing community accountability. It is evident from interviews that participants are trying to educate and inform broader publics about two key messages: (1) VAW should be taken seriously; and (2) It is everybody’s responsibility to prevent VAW. In this way, VAW prevention in social media actually involves the bystander intervention model of VAW prevention that has become popular in recent years. Bystander intervention:

Trains participants to identify situations that could lead to sexual violence and to intervene in safe, nonviolent, and prosocial ways before, during, and after an incident with friends, acquaintances, or strangers (Potter et al. 2009:108).

Bystander intervention demonstrates promising potential for reducing sexual violence in physical world settings (Banyard, Moynihan, and Plante 2007) as well as within

traditional media (e.g. poster campaigns) (Potter et al. 2009). Bystander intervention involves active bystander behaviours that can be reactive or proactive (Cook-Craig 2012:5). *Reactive bystander behaviours* are where a person intervenes in a situation that can lead to sexual violence, and *proactive bystander behaviours* are when a person takes an action that promotes social norms that do not accept violence (Cook-Craig 2012:5). As interview findings demonstrate, my participants are not only promoting and/or teaching active bystander intervention as something that should take place offline (reactive and proactive bystander behaviours), but are themselves engaging in bystander intervention by targeting attitudes and behaviours that contribute to VAW. For example, as one participant explains:

The primary focus of our outreach online is just the awareness, the education component. It's actually usually- well only, in fact- myself or the public education coordinator who are able to post on the Facebook page, the Twitter page, the Instagram page, who have that public education component as far as educating people about rape culture, and making them understand what comments they made that are actually reinforcing that, or the behaviour that they have witnessed or experienced or perhaps even committed themselves, that it's actually unacceptable. That kind of component has to take the lead online (F5).

By working to make people understand what comments they made that are enabling or supporting VAW (often talked about as supporting rape culture¹³⁹), participants are trying to change both individual behaviours and social norms simultaneously.

However, because bystander intervention is generally thought off as something that happens in the “real world”, most participants do not actually define their online work *as* bystander intervention. Instead, they speak about public education more broadly, about working to change attitudes, beliefs, and social norms, or of teaching others to do

¹³⁹ Rape culture refers to an environment where sexual abuse and harassment is expected, tolerated, and/or encouraged, and where women and girls are held responsible for their safety and/or blamed for their victimization (see Buchwalk, Fletcher, and Roth 2005; Horek 2014).

bystander intervention. At times, participants seem to struggle to identify specifically what prevention means for them more broadly (i.e. online and offline). For example, when asked how they would define prevention in their work, one participant explains that:

That's a tough question. [Our organization] has a public educator. And so, the public educator is, in most part, responsible for the prevention side of the organization. And so the themes that she brings to youth and to community, and to the [local] university and college are around consent, online sexual harassment and violence, or cyberbullying - we're still trying to argue it means- you know, what exactly is going on on the Internet. But also, you know what is sexual violence, healthy relationships, all those certain things. So prevention, what is prevention, that's a really tough question. Prevention is so much. Prevention is the mechanisms, the collaborative mechanisms to reduce and end sexual violence. That's what it looks like to me personally (P2, F13).

Here, prevention is seen as the mechanisms that connect the relationship, community, and societal realms, as well as the mechanism that translates information or ideas (e.g. what is sexual violence?) into practice (identifying and stopping sexual violence).

Conclusion

This chapter is the first of two chapters discussing key findings from my qualitative interviews. In this first section, I provide an overview of participants' broad roles and objectives surrounding VAW prevention and social media use, before going on to look at the intersections of these two themes more closely. In the first section, I have described interview participants and their general roles/work related to VAW. I then discussed *transmissions*, or how participants are sharing information with existing audiences and expanding their audience ("the reach") of their offline VAW prevention activities, often in the face of limited resources. When participants are sharing information, they have specific strategic goals of wanting to be a resource and

information source for VAW, and to gain followers, thus expanding their audiences.

However, another broader goal of sharing information is to “raise awareness”. This has a variety of meanings, but generally appears to mean getting people (publics) to see VAW as a social problem, that is, to take it seriously. I have explained that this cluster of activities is, for the most part, not unique to social media, but is more a replication of Web 1.0 type communication that relies on information transmission and broadcast-style model. However, we do see slight variations here, such as individuals and organizations disseminating information in a new dimension and real time by tweeting at events.

In the second part of this chapter, I have discussed how VAW prevention in social media is deeply connected to the idea of conversations that strive to impregnate narratives surrounding VAW with nuance and complexity. I use the term conversational activism to describe this process, and explained that conversational activism is linked to current events and to sharing individual stories and personal experience in a way that connects emotionally as well as intellectually. Moreover, it enables participants to potentially gain mainstream media attention through collaboration, for example through hashtag conversations being covered by journalists. Finally, I have argued that conversational activism is primary prevention in the form of proactive bystander intervention because it targets attitudes and behaviours that contribute to VAW. This chapter has primarily focused on goals and processes of VAW prevention in social media. In the next chapter, I will consider identity and design. Specifically, I will present interview findings surrounding participants’ feminist identities in relation to social media, and explore how social media site variation (structure, use, and audience) shapes VAW prevention.

Chapter Eight: Interview Findings II (Identity and Design)

Introduction

This chapter is the second of two chapters that presents and analyzes findings from my qualitative interviews. In Chapter Seven, I explained how participants' activities generally cluster around four broad themes, and discussed the first two of these: (1) *transmissions*: sharing information with existing audiences and expanding their audience ("the reach") of their offline VAW prevention activities and/or develop new online communities; (2) *conversational activism*: shaping narratives around VAW. In this chapter, I focus on the third and fourth of these goals: (3) *feminism*: shaping their own feminist/social justice identity as well as online feminism more broadly; and (4) *preventing online VAW*: responding to and preventing VAW that occurs in online spaces (e.g. rape "joke" Facebook pages, online sexual harassment). I do so by delving into specific differences between social media sites and exploring how feminist identities, social media design, and VAW prevention are mutually shaping practices.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I discuss intersections of individual identity and design by discussing how participants perceive various social media sites and how they negotiate their individual identity within these sites. I also discuss audience identities in terms of how participants' perceptions of social media audience shape VAW prevention work. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss my research findings surrounding feminism and community. Specifically, I discuss the importance of community both in terms of resources and supports, and also in terms of collaborative ways of knowing that are related to larger feminist movements. In the final

section, I discuss research findings surrounding safety, online VAW, and anti-feminist backlash.

Part I: Interactions of Identity and Design

Site matters

Not all sites are equal. For some stakeholders, different social media sites involve distinctively different elements of their work and/or feminist identities. When participants talk about how different social media sites compare, there appear to be two primary considerations: (1) audience/user demographic and (2) site design. Out of 19 interview participants, 17 indicated they use Facebook in some capacity. As one participant explains, “Facebook is God on the social network.” The dominance of Facebook in the last ten years as a social networking site is evident generally in society.¹⁴⁰ However, my interviews suggest that individual identity, relationships, audiences, and community are all factors that influence what social media sites participants use (and for what purposes). Of the 19 interviewees, 15 are involved on Twitter. Although participants did talk about other platforms such as Instagram, Tumblr, and YouTube in certain instances, Facebook and Twitter are by far the two most discussed platforms. An exploration of some of the key differences and similarities participants identify within these platforms provides insights into how participants’ identities are shaped by social media, and vice versa. Within this discussion of identity and site design, I make three observations about specific sites: (1) Facebook is perceived as more personal than Twitter, which has

¹⁴⁰ According to Pew Research Centre’s most recent survey (Duggan et al. 2015), 71 percent of adult Internet users are on Facebook (58 percent of the entire adult population). While this proportion is unchanged overall from 2013, use among seniors (65 and over) has increased. On Facebook, the median number of Facebook friends is 155, and the median number of how many of those Facebook friends respondent “consider ‘actual’ friends” was 50 (Duggan et al. 2015).

positive and negative possibilities; (2) Tumblr is viewed as more fun; and (3) Twitter may actually be more effective for conversational activism, although potentially more limited to audiences already interested in VAW prevention.

Participant/individual identity

Participants have a variety of roles to negotiate, and their VAW and broader feminist work can make this complicated in social media. For some participants, their personal social media self aligns closely with their professional roles. For example, one front line worker/NGO advocate went through her personal Facebook page with me, reading the headlines of various articles she shared around VAW. For this participant, her personal Facebook page is a close representation of her workplace (organizational) page:

To be honest with you, my personal Facebook page probably looks more like the work page than a personal page...except that maybe there's more swear words on my page. That's probably about the main difference. When you see something frustrating and you want to post it to the work page, you have to be very professional about the way that you word that, whereas on my page it's probably just like WTF?? in big capitals, with question marks, like "what is going on here?" And that's probably the main difference to be honest with you- it's very similar. Probably I post a lot more on my personal page too, just because of that whole aspect of not wanting to flood the newsfeed, that people become un-interested, or are not paying attention on the professional page (F5).

Participants are quite aware of the blurred boundaries within social media, and the collapsing or overlap of various social contexts that can occur here (see boyd, 2013 for a discussion of "context collapse"). For some, like the participant above, their personal and professional social media identities flow easily into each other. Other participants appear to have a stronger desire to separate these aspects of their lives, and will create their own boundaries. For example, they may limit their VAW-related sharing on their personal Facebook page.

Other participants are specifically concerned with negotiating their feminist and broader political identities online. In this regard, they take into consideration their existing personal relationships when they decide which social media platforms to engage with:

I feel like on my Facebook, at the end of the day, I'm either talking to the converted who already agree with me, or I'm annoying my friends from back home who just don't want to hear about my political things. I feel like on Twitter I can actually reach people who are following certain hashtags, etc. and who are really engaged in the issues, either activists, activists, or communicators in some way (F1).

For those whose paid work is solely in VAW prevention (e.g. VAW organization rather than a writer/journalist), it seems to be easier to separate personal and professional identities if they wish to do so. However, for some, negotiating these boundaries can be a bit trickier. For example, in the passage below, one participant who is a journalist, activist, student, and researcher reflects on how their own interests, as well as the reactions within their social networks, influence their social media use:

On Facebook, because I have some friends who do not agree with me with feminism, which is frustrating, I try to balance things out. So rather than just pure activism-related topics or news topics that I'm posting, I try to mix things up with some [other news/media content/analysis], even though those things might have feminist slant. I don't want to bombard my Facebook friends with politics, basically. Because I know not all of them appreciate that. On Twitter, a few months ago I was pretty into the hashtag activism scene, promoting these hashtags discussions on intersections of feminism with racism, and then I found out from one of my friends who follows me on Twitter that she found it very frustrating and she almost was about to unfollow me because it was just too much (F4).

As this participant goes on to explain, this can make it tricky to negotiate their feminist identity online:

It's kind of tough to figure out that line of where, of what I'm using these platforms for. Because as much as, as a person I have many different facets to me, I have that activist side, that [researcher] side, and I don't know, whatever side-trying to have my social media reflecting back can be really difficult. Because it

seems like in order to at least get into that hashtag activism scene, in order for me to feel like I can fully commit to that, I have to stop posting pictures of cats, and talking about [my research interests], and that can be kind of frustrating. And rather than creating multiple accounts for me to manage all these facets, which seems far too post-modern I guess, just too much, I just try to encompass all of it (F4).

In practice, Facebook use seems to be perceived as more personal than Twitter. This fits with other research that finds that women bloggers turn to Facebook for engagement, and to Twitter for information (Chen 2015). This may be in part due to the 140-character limit of Twitter, which means that participants must make multiple posts if they want to provide more detail (or link to another source such as a news story or blog). Additionally, while organizations on Facebook can have their own profile, and therefore individuals who manage these pages do not have to negotiate personal connections with friends and family, individual activists and advocates are more personally embedded. For example, currently in American society, 93 percent of Facebook users say they are Facebook friends with family members other than parents or children, 87 percent say they are connected to friends from the past such as high school or college classmates, and almost three out of five (58%) are connected to work colleagues (Duggan et al. 2015). Academic research and social discussions often approach interaction as occurring in an online/offline or virtually/in real life a binary. As the above passage demonstrates, these lines are blurrier than this dichotomy may represent.

There are a number of reasons why Facebook may feel more personal for participants. One possibility is that older forms of media in general are perceived as being inherently more personal. Letter writing is generally seen as more personal than email, phone calls more intimate (or invasive) than text messages. Since Facebook is a site that frequently blurs the personal and professional, the virtual and “in real life”, it may feel

more personal than platforms such as Twitter. We see this personalization through certain site qualities: we have “friends” on Facebook, but “followers” on Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram. This feeling of the personal may also be exacerbated by the fact that Facebook, historically, has had a far greater push against user anonymity. This lack of anonymity means that Facebook use, for better or for worse, is more personal. While it may make VAW stories more personal and therefore more “real”, it can also impact those who might need to remain anonymous due to privacy and safety concerns. As one participant explains,

Facebook is really big on removing anonymity, and from the perspective of a feminist and/or women in the global south, and in very repressive regimes and very traditional conservative environments, anonymity is really important. And the lack of anonymity puts them at risk (F3).

Finally, Facebook may have a more personalized, individualized feel because that is specifically how it began. Although many organizations now have a Facebook page, Facebook originated as an online yearbook for Ivy League university students, and the majority of its pages today remain individual profiles. There are topical or issue-based pages on Facebook, but they tend to be rooted within pre-existing groups or communities. Additionally, as I discuss in the next section, certain Facebook data practices and design features may make engaging in broader narratives and conversational activism more difficult on Facebook.

Audience identity

In VAW prevention in social media, there are three key points pertaining to audience identity and design. The first is that *in seeking out audiences, participants’ perceptions of audience characteristics influence how they use different sites, and what*

they hope to do in the future. For example, certain conversations may be seen as easier to have on some sites than others. One participant explains how their perception of Facebook users shapes what they share on this platform:

People in Facebook love happy news. And they won't share ugly bad news, and frankly a lot of the stuff that I write and share is what I would categorize as ugly bad news that people would rather ignore. So my sense of Facebook is that it has the greatest potential to sway the minds of people who are either wilfully blind, or otherwise happily cocooned in their privilege, to put it in a different way. So I try and balance what I share in Facebook with that in mind (F3).

Alternatively some participants want to put attention into youth-focused strategies. As one advocate explains:

Personally I'm interested in Instagram, because it seems like that's where youth are right now. And it seems like from what I'm hearing there's sexual violence and rape culture really perpetrated there (I2, F13).

Instagram has in fact grown significantly among young people in recent years. About 26 percent of online adults use Instagram, up from 17 percent in late 2013 (Duggan et al. 2015). While most demographic groups saw an increase in the proportion of users, the most notable growth was among young adults ages 18-29: 53 percent of this age group now use Instagram, compared with 37 percent in 2013 (Duggan et al. 2015).

While only a handful of participants (four) actually use Tumblr (a micro-blogging site), those who do are excited about it. It is characterized as having more freedom in terms of expression/creativity (more extensive content sharing is enabled through the blog format) and having a younger audience. As one participant explains:

Tumblr is huge. I definitely want to [use it] as part of the outreach component. Tumblr would be huge in terms of finding, creating avenues to connect with youth, and being able to write more extensively, blog more extensively on issues surrounding human trafficking, sexual violence, and what sexual violence entails (F11).

Another participant who, in the section above, was struggling to navigate her feminism and hashtag activism on Facebook and Twitter, explains:

So because of my friends telling me that about Twitter, I kind of toned it down on Twitter, but on Tumblr I'm definitely- I mean, I blog about feminist issues and stuff. And I probably do that more on Tumblr than anywhere else. I'll cross-post stuff onto Facebook, and kind of get more of a discussion going, because I feel Facebook's kind of a better platform for discussion. Whereas I use Tumblr to keep in contact with what's going on in different communities- I still post pictures of cats and stuff, but I feel like it's a bit more- I feel like Tumblr is a bit more lenient with that (F4).

As different social media platforms emerge and gain popularity, they also may feel more bound by conventions or restrictions that do not yet apply to other (newer) sites or spaces. That is, they may be more detached from our mainstream or primary identities (as the original Web 1.0 Internet was seen to be). This novelty may allow people to experiment or “play” in ways that they cannot within existing online social networks. For example, one writer/activist explains,

My personal favourite is Tumblr because I really like using obscenity and I can do it there easily...I really, really like my interactions here because I think that the people on Tumblr tend to be younger and more honest, and so I get a lot of insight from what seems to be resonating in Tumblr. I find that it's just a more interesting space, intellectually and from a curiosity perspective for me. It's just kind of more fun really (F3).

According to Pew Research Centre data, only 6 percent of adults online in the United States are using Tumblr (13% of 18-29 year olds, the youngest cohort) (Duggan et al. 2015). However, one marketing study found that 61 percent of 13 to 18 year olds and 57 percent of 19 to 25 year olds are on Tumblr “several hours a week or more” (Smith 2013). As Smith (2013:para. 1) explains:

Tumblr doesn't have as many monthly users as some of the other social networks. But those it does have are extremely valuable to brands. Tumblr users are young, and they are incredibly engaged.

Given that girls and young women in the 13 to 25 year old demographic are at significantly higher risk of violent victimization than other demographics (Johnson and Dawson 2011), investment in Tumblr may be an overlooked area of current VAW prevention efforts and an important strategy for social media resource allocation.

A second key point about audiences and design is that *how social media sites organize their information shapes audiences and, therefore, VAW prevention efforts*. Participants are divided in terms of whether Facebook or Twitter is better for discussion. Some felt that the 140-character limit on Twitter was limiting, and the ability to make more lengthy posts on Facebook facilitated discussion. Others felt that Facebook's audience was more limited, since it relies primarily on reaching those who already know of the individual or organizations' page. However, participants are generally in consensus that organized, targeted efforts to have conversations are much more readily facilitated by Twitter. Thus, although Facebook is generally seen to be more personal of a social media platform, it appears that Twitter is more effectively set up for conversational activism. These findings fit with other research that has found Twitter fulfills a need to connect with others (Chen 2011) and that features such as retweets are an important conversational aspect of Twitter (boyd, Golder, and Lotan 2010). In my study, participants felt Twitter's usefulness for their work was primarily because hashtags¹⁴¹ are widely used on Twitter to organize discussion around issues. For example, one participant explains:

Hashtags are much easier to use on Twitter than Facebook, so searching #VAW is a better way to go about gathering information. Whereas on Facebook you might have to stumble upon it by someone else liking the page or sharing the page, or just knowing who to look for, knowing to look up [a specific organization] or

¹⁴¹According to Twitter (n.d.), "the # symbol, called a hashtag, is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. It was created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorize messages."

something like that. When it comes to Instagram obviously that's really good for photos, again, the hashtag system works there, so if you can get people on board with the hashtag, it's quite likely to succeed that way (F5).

As this participant notes, hashtags are now used across several social media platforms (for example, on Instagram as the quote above mentioned). However, having originated on Twitter, hashtags are most frequently associated with this platform and more easily used here.

“Hashtag activism”, a term used by two advocates who work in feminist media, refers to starting or joining issue-specific conversations (in this case, about VAW) that are organized around specific hashtags (the # symbol). Figure 3 provides example of how this takes place.

Figure 3: Excerpt from Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OIATH) 2015 press release/public statement on VAW

Join The Conversations On Violence Against Women!
#VAWHurtsUsAll #WrappedInCourage #MenLetsTalk #ENDVAW #WhoWillYouHelp
#Ibelieveher #RapeCulture #DrawTheLine #BeenRapedNeverReported

One participant explains how she sees hashtag activism as a supplemental, rather than a replacement, modality of VAW prevention:

I know people disdain hashtag activism, but I hardly know anyone who only does hashtag activism. Most of the people I know do hashtag activism in addition to other activism, so I don't think people are doing it by and large and then saying, ok I don't have to pay attention to this anymore. I think that it can be really effective in terms of raising consciousness about an issue really quickly and demonstrating that a critical mass of people experience this [VAW]. So #YesAllWomen is a good example. It [hashtag activism] is also really effective at generating traditional media attention, which really needs to happen (F8).

Trending topics on Twitter now regularly gain the attention of mainstream media, particularly when they can be connected to a current news story. Twitter is also the site of choice for in-the-moment information and actions. As another participant explains,

Twitter is where I go for news and cultural critique. If I want to know what's happening right this second I use Twitter. It's faster and easier, it's very intuitive (F10).

Scholars note Twitter's value as a platform for in the moment breaking news and citizen journalism (Murthy 2011) and emphasize that the primary significance of news is Twitter is when something happened as opposed to what happened (Crawford 2011). In contrast, Facebook is associated with more in-depth storytelling (Jong 2015). Twitter may be most time effective for seeking and consuming the most up to date information, but this also means that the information shared may have a short shelf life if it is not picked up by mainstream media or otherwise boosted in profile (for example, by receiving a large number of retweets or favourites). As it is a status-update site with millions of active users, the pace of new content on Twitter means that it can be hard to keep up. As one advocate explains, the rapid update process of Twitter may discourage more lengthy personal reflection:

Facebook, to me, allows people to sort of sit back and contemplate the content. So you might receive something like a poster, or some information, some narrative, and it allows you to think about it, to process it, to make a decision about sending off somewhere or printing off, or signing up, or those sorts of things that involves and evokes a response, and probably a more engaged response. Whereas Twitter, because it's so quick, I would say less process-oriented and more quick reminders, and evokes that immediacy (F13).

As well as lacking a useful hashtag system for organization and archiving, Facebook's system of boosting or hiding posts ("throttling" from Chapter Seven) based on their own algorithms means that all posts are not created equal on this platform. For example, one

blogger/advocate explains that she is more discriminate about what she shares on Facebook than Twitter:

Because Facebook is so grasping at the metrics, if you share stuff that people aren't going to click on, then people aren't going to see your things. So to pick what I'm going to share on [my page], I want to make sure that it's something I think people are really going to like, because otherwise they're not going to see anything I post. So I'm kind of playing their game, I guess (F8).

In more neutral environments, information or analysis that is posted and goes unnoticed may be a missed opportunity, but does not actually mean a step backwards. Yet on Facebook, these design policies around what to show users may throttle future engagement. Furthermore, many individuals and organizations may not even be aware that this is how Facebook functions. A potential implication of this is that people may not wish to share “feel bad” stories, or may gravitate towards more sensationalized content that is more likely to garner clicks (often referred to as “click-bait”). In this way, Facebook may be more similar to mainstream media publications than would be obvious at first glance. The potential slippery slope here is that, instead of the “if it bleeds, it leads” philosophy of news media, Facebook VAW-related content may gravitate towards “make people feel good” sensationalized stories similar to what disabilities activist Stella Young describes as “inspiration porn”.¹⁴² Although storytelling and experiential knowledge are core parts of public, emotional engagement online, it is worth considering the question of at what point stories of tragedy and empowerment could become exploitive and/or may prioritize individual inspiration over systemic change (see Young 2014).

¹⁴² As Young (2014) explains, inspiration porn includes images pictures of disabled people shared online with captions such as “your excuse is invalid” and “don't quit, try”. Young argued that they objectify disabled people for the benefit of “inspiring” non-disabled people (Tracy 2014).

Returning to this notion that how social media sites organize their information shapes audiences and therefore VAW prevention efforts, we see that whether someone is a “person” or a “business” online is also significant. On Facebook, individuals have profiles, and brands or organizations have pages.¹⁴³ As one participant explains, Facebook’s algorithm, and specifically its differential treatment of pages, makes it difficult to promote their own (unpaid) work:

With pages, if someone doesn’t interact with the first three things once they like a page- so someone likes my page, and I post three things, and they never click on them, like them, or share them, then they’re just never going to see anything I post, unless they go back to my page, and sort of tell Facebook in that way that they like it.

As this participant goes on to explain,

It’s really challenging, because basically what it’s designed to do is to make you pay. And I do pay for boosting my own posts, not a lot because I feel like it’s ridiculous. But if I have a post that I think is really important, I’ll pay like five bucks so that more of my fans [people who have liked my page] will see it. So people who are already fans of my page, I have to pay for them to see it. And I think it does hurt activists and advocates and bloggers and nonprofits that have a fan page, but they don’t have an ad budget...[I wish] I could magic it so that Facebook would consider social importance in their algorithms, instead of just how timely this is, or how much money someone paid for an ad (F8).

This quote shows how the design of Facebook may be a hindrance for resource-strapped organizations and/or individuals (which, many participants noted, includes a large part of the VAW sector). Another participant echoes this sentiment about how Facebook may not be an effective use of time:

We do have a Facebook page that is used to try to communicate with people who are following us, and trying to get particular information about relevant programming, whether it be our own programming or other stuff in [the province]

¹⁴³ According to Facebook (n.d.): “Personal profiles are for non-commercial use and represent individual people. You can follow profiles to see public updates from people you’re interested in but aren’t friends with. Pages look similar to personal profiles, but they offer unique tools for businesses, brands and organizations. Pages are managed by people who have personal profiles. You can like a Page to see updates in News Feed.”

that might be relevant to violence against women and youth. Facebook is something that we don't use all that often anymore, and we really reduced it because its efficacy for a free Facebook page is just really low. So that's not really one that we're too focused on, but we're just in maintenance mode (F7).

Although it may allow for more personal reflection on one's own time, Facebook's design and practices thus seem to present some obstacles to innovative messaging and reaching wider and new audiences. While these may not be obstacles unique to VAW stakeholders, there may be specific consequences or unique elements. For example, VAW is not historically a topic that people want to talk about socially, and VAW prevention agencies have far less of a social media/social marketing budget than commercial brands or companies. Thus, existing (business-centric) social media knowledge about social marketing, brand development, and audiences, while useful in many capacities, needs to be adapted for a resource-strapped VAW sector.

A final point about audiences and VAW prevention work is that *many participants wonder if their work in social media ends up simply "preaching to the choir"*. For example, one advocate explains that,

It's a bit of preaching to the choir. So our followers are people who believe in the mission, and so, the social media platforms that we use, are they the ones that are actually going to communicate with the people we actually want to influence? (F13, 12)

Audiences in social media are two-fold: participants are seeking out audiences for their work, and they are also part of an audience of others' work. While building relationships and two-way communication is possible because of social media, there are differences in the nature and extent of this communication. While participants want to engage new audiences, they also want to talk to others doing VAW prevention work. For example,

this participant explains how Twitter is more useful than Facebook for their specific objective of connecting with other activists:

I find Twitter is much more useful for having conversations...really engaging people directly one on one, but usually other activists, as opposed to necessarily service users or donors. I find that Twitter is better for having conversations with like-minded people, so other women's shelters, other advocates, people in related fields like sex-trade worker empowerment or anything like that (F5).

This quote illustrates how Twitter is recognized as being a valuable resource for targeted, one on one communication as well as broader hashtag discussions.

Within considerations of audiences, there can also be unintended consequences of "reaching new audiences". For example, one of my interviewees explains how one of her social media efforts (to highlight the sensationalized and problematic nature of some coverage about trafficking at major sporting events) had unintended consequences:

I thought it was important...so I tweeted a piece that was a very great analysis around how this is just a nonsense issue, this is a non-issue, it's all made up. And some men's rights activists re-tweeted it and favorited it, and I was sort of like eww- how do I get this person to not touch or see my page again?... I don't want to be seen as being endorsed by these crazy men's rights guys (F1).

There is a tension between a need to engage men in VAW prevention and acknowledge men's experiences of sexual violence, and the risk of coming full circle to embrace some of the arguments (narratives) from anti-feminist MRA groups. An additional reason why participants want to preach to the choir is because it is safer. The exchange below illustrates this:

Me: What kinds of responses, reactions, or feedback do you get from talking about rape culture online?

Interviewee: A lot of the time I am preaching to the choir. So I feel supported. But once in a while something like #FemaleWars comes up and I will personally get death and rape threats (F10).

I will return to a more in-depth discussion of backlash, MRA groups, online harassment, and VAW prevention in the final section of this chapter. I highlight these quotes here, however, to underscore the notion that audiences are not homogenous online, and the interactive and participatory nature of these audiences means that the identification of the “right” audiences, and ability to access them, is of great importance to VAW prevention work.

While for some participants the practice of “preaching to the choir” is an obstacle to overcome, for others it is actually a positive aspect of their work, and a way for them to contribute to and advance feminist work more broadly. As one participant explains:

For me, what I’ve kind of come to realize is that my audience, my target audience that I am looking to move, is other progressives and other feminists who are generally in agreement, but who really don’t understand or get these issues. And I think that’s a crucial target audience. I’m not trying to necessarily persuade, I don’t care about people who totally don’t agree with me, I’m not going to try to get into a fight with them. But I feel there is a really rich target audience of people who, the more that they see, the more that they’re educated, they’re more normalized around these issues – they can be moved. And they’re powerful allies and spokespeople as well (F1).

Because VAW prevention in social media is a webbed, multi-directional process of knowledge mobilization, advocates and activists inside the choir can educate themselves, as well as “outsiders”, about VAW. In this way, VAW prevention work in social media is part of working towards a more reflexive, power-aware, and inclusive feminism.

Part II: Feminism, Community, and Cooperative ways of Knowing

Feminism is interwoven throughout VAW prevention: It is an identity, driving force, a theoretical framework, a roadmap for research and activism, and a community.

For my research participants, feminist identity is both a cause and an effect: people come

to VAW prevention research, writing, advocacy, and activism through feminism, and their work in this field reaffirms and reshapes feminist understanding. Most participants are working within a broad feminist umbrella framework. By this, I mean that they believe gender inequality is real, that it is related to VAW, and something should be done about it. I would call this starting point feminism, since this is common ground that my participants start from collectively. This is exemplified by one participant, who explains:

I've been entrenched in feminism is that for so long it's like it's kind of weird to think about what it means. To me it's just so straightforward, it is just about equality and equal opportunity between the sexes, about gender equality. So basically I don't have some revolutionary definition (E3).

As feminism is increasingly operating online (Dux and Simic 2008; Martin and Valenti 2013), understanding community around VAW prevention and social media is an entry point to understanding broader feminist movements. In this regard, my qualitative interviews suggest that, for participants, community in social media includes: (1) information and resources available from feminist networks online; (2) expressions of support and solidarity; and (3) reflexive work towards more intersectional and multiple feminism(s). These three components make up what I call cooperative ways of knowing.

Community as information and support

Participants talk about community in various ways. In general, they underscore the importance of community to VAW prevention, and are interested in using social media in ways that can strengthen and improve their own communities. For example, one advocate and researcher explains:

For me, public health has always been about community. Does your community make it easier for you to be the best person you can be, or does the system you live in consistently assault your health and well-being? ... And intimate partner violence, you know when I look at that in particular on violence against women,

you know, a good portion of that is socialized. Aboriginal women are living in systems that consistently assault their health. There's no sanctuary, there is no safety. And- I don't want to go on about it. But suffice it to say that I'm interested in creating sanctuary (F10).

Additionally, participants also focus on how they can mobilize local community issues into social media. For example, one participant explains:

So in this community, a more northern community, one of the more shocking statistics from our end was that up to 90 percent of Aboriginal women in northern communities have experienced either physical or sexual assault, so the number 90 is kind of huge, and really drove us forward in that way. So we used Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, our professional pages, and the [specific campaign] page as well. What we also did as part of the May sexual assault awareness campaign, a weekly tweetchat - so basically an hour at lunch where we were constantly tweeting different statistics, and using the [specific] hashtag, and just trying to get people to interact with us as well in that way (F5).

This work in social media involves sharing knowledge about VAW from one local setting in an attempt to engage other VAW stakeholders in social media. From a standpoint feminist perspective that prioritizes local sites as important to understanding broader power relations (Harding 1992; Smith 2005), mobilizing knowledge about intersecting experiences of marginalization (e.g. the disproportionately high rates of violence against Aboriginal women in Canada) is important to developing intersectional understanding within communities.

In addition to these manifestations of community, participants emphasize online community as central to their work. For example, one writer/advocate captures the centrality of feminist community to her VAW prevention work in social media:

I could not do the work I'm doing without the work of the feminist community that I have found online. At all. And that works on lots of levels. I couldn't do the research and writing that I'm doing without them because I, every single day, use that community that I have found and built around me to get sources, to ask questions, to get research, to get data. It's invaluable to me.

She goes on to say that:

I think even more important though is the fact that a lot of the work that we do is extremely sad, actually. If you're writing about gang rape, or your writing about child abuse, or you're writing about any form of violence, but especially very graphic violence. You know, people send me things like actual videos of rapes in progress that are being posted to social media, and it can be overwhelming psychologically. So I really count on my feminist network to be able to talk to other people who understand that and who are going through the same things, because it's important I think not to feel isolated in that work. I don't really want to burden my family with this... You know, I'm constantly, I'm feminism 100 percent of the time. This is really not some thing that I do on the side, it's not a job I go to from 9 to 5. It's a worldview, it's the way I live (F3).

Much academic work speaks about online relationships through the terminology of networks (e.g. Rainie and Wellman 2012). This raises the question, what are the differences between community and networks? Based on my research, I would argue that community involves (1) A personal investment (rather than simply professional connection) in a common issue (such as VAW); and (2) the capacity (ability and environment) to demonstrate that connection (such as social media). As we see from the quote above, community is visible through information and resource networks, but also support networks. What is unique about this community in social media is that it can be different people at different times, these communities can be global, and they are visible to broader audiences. For feminists who may not have access to this in day-to-day lives at their work, schools, or within their families, this is very valuable.

In feminist work, terms like vicarious trauma¹⁴⁴ and self-care are regularly used and understood. Because part of VAW prevention is preventing burnout and alienation of

¹⁴⁴ According to the health organization Best Start.org, "Vicarious trauma, sometimes referred to as compassion fatigue is the impact on the self that can occur when you care about other people who are suffering, in distress or have been hurt and you feel responsible to help them. If this compassion causes you to be effected by negative changes in your psychological, emotional, physical or spiritual well-being you may be suffering from vicarious trauma." Vicarious trauma is different from burnout in several ways, including being less predictable and more immediate rather than cumulative.

those doing this work, online community is an important factor. While this is frequently feminist community, it does not always have to be. For example, one participant explains:

I have had to take long breaks from social media, because I get super bogged down mentally with all these horrible stories. And of course, I'm pretty lucky and privileged that I can escape that kind of vitriol just by stepping off-line, there's a lot of people who can't. And I've had to reshape how I use social media in order to make sure that I'm taking care of myself with that. Funny enough, I found this really nice community online that's all about self-care, and with this community it motivates me to take better care of myself, including taking breaks from the Internet to kind of recharge my batteries. Because for a while, to take a break [from my own work]...I would just go on to Tumblr and Twitter, and then I would still be doing a lot of mental work there. And so, I had to learn that I need to just unplug in order to fully recharge my batteries (F4).

In this example, online community plays a role in managing vicarious trauma and burnout, significant issues in VAW prevention and feminist online activism broadly. This may be particularly the case for survivors of violence doing social media work around VAW. For example, one participant who is a survivor of violence was telling me about a social media project where she posted VAW news stories every day, but “eventually had to stop the project and delete it because I have PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] and it was very triggering” (F10). At the same time, feminist community online is very important to this participant, because: “I have a lot more support as a feminist online than I have ever had in my real life”.

Social media enables small gestures of support for those doing VAW prevention work. While these are often not time consuming (as simple as a “like”, retweet, or brief comment), they are noticed and appreciated. For example, in the passage below, a participant describes a situation where posting articles on LinkedIn allowed them to “create connections for support”:

LinkedIn has been huge in terms of creating connections for support for the work that we do. Definitely. I'm very active on LinkedIn in terms of constantly posting

articles I get through my email at work about human trafficking, about sexual violence... what I'll do is I'll copy/paste a specific two or three lines from that article and have that as my subject heading when I do post it. So it really grabs someone's attention, and it really gets them to read it... And then, I found that a lot of people- I'll have conversations on LinkedIn with people commenting on what I've posted. [Reads some examples]... So it's entire messages like that you get through LinkedIn. Of people who are in the field - but not so much in the field, but people who are trying to look to get that support because they understand, or are educated, and will support you in this manner (F11).

We see here that community is built not only through the information and resources available from networks online, but from small gestures of support and expressions of solidarity.

Another aspect of VAW prevention and community online is that VAW prevention activities are shaped by, and also shape, broader feminist communities and feminist identities. This means that boundaries are contested, systems of power challenged, and resistance and dissent occur. Exploring VAW prevention in social media thus highlights struggles of definition and issues of power within feminist work more broadly.

Cooperative ways of knowing, reflexivity, and power

“Cooperative ways of knowing” is a reciprocal framework where knowledge is reflexively created. This involves (1) producing and translating knowledge in ways that demonstrate an awareness of the environment in which it will be used; and (2) involves attempts to amplify (“signal-boost”) the work of others, particularly those on the margins. These are in line with feminist methodologies more broadly. Cooperative ways of knowing encompasses, but is not limited to, conversational activism (a term I introduced in Chapter Seven to describe some VAW prevention work in social media). Although

discourse has been a significant focus of feminist media research on news stories (e.g. Berns 2001; van Zoonen 1992; Jiwani and Young 2006) and discursive activism has been used to explain public sociology such as feminist blogging (e.g. Shaw 2012), there is an important distinction between conversational activism and discursive activism in the context of my research findings. In part, the term conversational activism is more closely linked to my participants' own words: In my interviews, "discourse" is used 9 times during interviews, whereas "conversation" is used 104 times.

Additionally, conversational activism is multi-directional and moves away from more singular intervention practices that aim to "correct" or "fix" discourse. Instead, it aims to join a conversation. As this participant explains, this process involves reciprocity:

I would say that Twitter is really good for that sort of pat my back, I'll pat yours kind of thing. And then when you post an article, if the person in the article is on Twitter, then you can give them a shout out- like, "great article by [name]". And then they're like oh thanks, and they're sort of engaged in what you're doing. So I would say that's been great, because we've been to build relationships with people who are outside of [our city]- who we are, and see the kind of work we're doing (F2).

Because there is reciprocity within conversational activism, this can lead to increased ability for lower profile individuals/smaller organizations to access more powerful players in VAW prevention. In this way, conversational activism is more in line with standpoint feminist sociologies that start with the individual and their interactions (Smith 2005). In social media, conversational activism starts at the point of individual texts (what is being said) in the form of posts, comments, and sharing of news stories. It also takes relationships into account (who people are saying it to, who is responding).

In this way, social media does not just narrow the gap between mainstream news organizations and publics, but enables more traditionally remote and/or lower profile

individuals access to high profile discursive arenas. One advocate living in a smaller northern community explains that she was able to connect with well-known online feminists and international web-based feminist organizations because of social media.

Additionally,

I think what's more relevant is having Toronto and Ottawa and those type of communities pay attention to us, and not just when we're at the Ontario Rape Crisis Centre meetings, or the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition house meetings...[they] tend to be very focused on certain areas in the province that get a lot of attention, who's sort of revolutionizing the movement in general, I suppose. Like Interval House being the first, for example, or YWCA being the biggest. And I think they get a lot of attention, and without having social media to sort of push us along, we would not be quite as far ahead as we are (F5).

Social media, therefore, enables stakeholders some level of access to new and potentially powerful spheres within VAW prevention work. Because discourse is where power and knowledge join together (Chasteen 2001),¹⁴⁵ those with less power to exercise have less ability to participate in discursive activism. For those who may not historically have access to public spheres where much discourse is produced (media, policy, and governmental organizations), conversational activism allows for the everyday, often taken for granted interactions to become active and meaningful through how they intersect with the relations of ruling (Smith 2005). For public sociologists interested in developing relationships with communities and organizations, an important point here is to understand that social movements are not flat, non-hierarchical entities, but have embedded in them different power structures and profiles. Social media may be an important tool for helping to narrow or transcend these gaps.

¹⁴⁵ Chasteen (2001:103), in her study of women's definitions and interpretations of rape, draws on Foucauldian notions of discourse to explain that discourse is where power and knowledge are joined together, and that "knowledge about any social problem is socially constructed through struggles between groups over who has the power to establish their argument as truth".

Cooperative ways of knowing relates also to VAW prevention and feminism more broadly because it emphasizes inclusion and visibility of historically marginalized voices. One example that was brought up by five of my participants has to do with the fact that social media enables a more visible conversation around sex worker rights and violence against sex workers. For example, as one participant explains:

One of the things that I think is so important, and I think we've seen a lot of moves around, is a more sophisticated critique around the criminal justice system, around policing. I think a lot of that has come out of social media because people who have other day jobs, sex workers for example, who their day job is being a sex worker but they're also a sex worker rights advocate, and they're funding that advocacy through their sex work. They now have an outlet...their voice is as important, as equal, as legitimate as organizations that are very, very well-funded and are really created to destroy the rights of sex workers. That's incredibly powerful... (F1)

Of course, discussing this as “cooperative” ways of knowing might seem to be strange, as debates over sex work can be quite divisive. As one of my participants explains,

There has been, you know I'm sure you're aware, these divisions in the feminist movement around sex work and whether that inherently is violence against women (F1).

The point here is that, from a point of VAW prevention, cooperative ways of knowing are essential to developing strategies that can prevent violence against all women, including and especially communities at high risk of violence such as Aboriginal women and sex workers. Cooperative ways of knowing can be tough and discouraging. Some participants talk about this as “calling out” (pointing out/confronting oppression), and in its pathological form (which some survey participants described as “call out culture”), can become what some of my interview participants and other online feminists describe as ranging from “incivility” to “toxic” (also see Goldberg 2014). Here, recognizing “calling out” as part of cooperative ways of knowing refers to a reflexive process of continuously

recognizing privilege and inequality as they manifest in everyday interactions and actions. Of course, calling out is not homogenous phenomena, and there is certainly a conversation to be had about the ways in which different forms of calling out can be harmful to individuals and movements. However, my point here pertaining to cooperative ways of knowing is that this process prioritizes intersectionality within social movements and VAW prevention initiatives over the comfort of traditionally privileged individuals and groups.

As an individual, being called out can be discouraging. For example, one of my participants recalled seeing a colleague post material on their organizations' Facebook page, and then having someone point out some problems with the content of the posting:

And that might have also put [her] off from posting on the page. Because I mean, feminism, it's not homogenous, and that can be a little disheartening when you're trying to promote something, and it kind of gets shot down because it doesn't match someone else's version of feminism. But...I think it's fair for the commenters to say things like that...[and] that offers an opportunity to get into a discussion on the Facebook page, to kind of discuss and hash out these idiosyncrasies within feminist movement (F4).

This emphasizes that feminism is not a singular entity and that reflexive critique is a defining feature of the movement. Most often, "calling out" has to do with identifying failures of intersectionality: the failure of so-called "white feminism" to see race, class, and other axes of oppression. As one participant explains, online engagement needs to critically explore the power dynamics inherent in calls for "civility" online:

I do agree with the critique that sometimes it's not so civil. But I also feel like discourse on social media isn't so civil on every issue, and again to call attention [by saying] "oh why is it not civil"- well really, why is none of it? There's no culture of civility on the Internet. This merely one more example of that. And we should try to do better, but to say that this is the only [example of incivility] or that this is particularly harmful, is I think in a way sort of attacking the fact that you do have disparate voices out there, and voices that have equal say, and count equally. You know, somebody who is not affiliated with an organization can have

thousands of followers on Twitter, a lot more followers than I. And that's great, because they're launching their voice out the discourse in a way that's powerful, and isn't being supported by somebody like me who is affiliated with an organization (F1).

The fact that cooperative ways of knowing are uncomfortable at times is exactly the point: cooperative ways of knowing focus on illuminating power, privilege, inequality, and the subjectivity of all knowledge. They are, therefore, necessary for VAW prevention work (and feminist work more broadly) to be inclusive, intersectional, and work towards challenging rather than reifying oppressive power structures. In this way, participants are pointing out that VAW prevention in social media is inherently tied up in larger feminist movements.

So far in this chapter (and in Chapter Six), I have explained that participants use social media to build community with other advocates and activists, drawing support and motivation as well as information and resources from these networked connections. I have also discussed how collaborative ways of knowing are of importance to VAW prevention communities, and connect them more broadly to online feminist work. Recent work mapping out “online feminism” (Torrens and Riley 2009; Martin and Valenti 2013) further illustrates that feminism is not a unified entity. Of course, historical analyses (in particular the work of Indigenous feminists and women of colour) tell us that feminism was never unified. As one of my participants explains, the historical idea of feminism as happening in discrete waves (first, second, third) plays into this, and ignores the historical resistance of Indigenous women:

One of the things I can't stand about feminism is the belief that there's waves... just this idea that women's resistance didn't exist until we tried to get the vote... so I find it difficult to identify with mainstream feminism because it has no understanding of colonialism, it's just not there, it's this taken for granted- it's exactly what people complained about, not being intersectional (E2).

Several of my participants note that in VAW prevention, issues of violence against sex workers and violence against trans people receive less focus and attention, but that social media helps to mitigate this. Within social media then, historically marginalized voices (e.g. Indigenous women and women of colour, trans folks, women with disabilities, sex workers) are perhaps now more amplified and organized,¹⁴⁶ as well as less reliant on institutional structures. Of course, these benefits are only a possibility for those individuals who have access to the Internet. As one participant explained, “These platforms give marginalized people a voice they would not have otherwise. Marginalized people with Internet access, I mean.” (F10). Another participant argued, “It is a human rights issue at this point where you have to be online, you have to have access to the Internet to be able to navigate the 21st century” (F2). Martin and Valenti’s (2013) report on the future of online feminism lays out “the DNA” of online feminism: rapid, consciousness-raising, accessible, community-driven, decentralized, mobilizing, intersectional, and youth-led. These factors point to a dynamic feminist terrain less concerned with a unified framework than it is with multiple feminisms clustered around broader goals of equity and social justice.

Feminism and VAW prevention in social media, while already connected in so many ways, converge in another significant way: prevention of VAW that occurs within social media. In the last part of this chapter, I discuss my research findings around safety, online VAW, and anti-feminist backlash.

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, Ray (2007) chapter five.

Part III: Safety, Online VAW, and Anti-Feminist Backlash

Seeking safety in social media

For survivors of violence, social media can provide spaces of affirmation and connection with others. For example, one participant explains how for her, the greatest benefit using social media to talk about VAW is:

Seeing your own experiences reflected and validated. A lot of VAW involves gaslighting.¹⁴⁷ You think you're alone, you're made to think you are imagining the abuse. Sometimes you don't even have a vocabulary for what you are experiencing. Social media helps frame that, connects people, puts things into context. It allows you to see a larger picture of a systemic problem when you see your experiences reflected back to you from all over the world (F10).

The design of social media sites is important to participants' ability to do VAW prevention work. For example, one service provider felt that, when considered relative to a more traditional website, Facebook can offer an accessible communications strategy for women currently experiencing abuse. As this participant explains:

It also works from the perspective that it's not quite as traceable as visiting our website. If you're on Facebook and you happen to see something, and your partner is abusive and sort of monitoring your behaviour, that might not look as odd as actually being on a shelter website, which is obviously sending a much different message. You know anything could pop up in your Facebook feed, but having a shelter website on your computer is certainly going to look like you have a certain intention, which would put a woman at risk (F5).

Given the low cost of basic digital technology and high prevalence of Wi-Fi networks in society, victims and survivors may be able to access supports more easily and inexpensively (for example, one participant explained how some clients will message the

¹⁴⁷ Gaslighting is, according to the National Domestic Violence Hotline (2014), "an extremely effective form of emotional abuse that causes a victim to question their own feelings, instincts, and sanity, which gives the abusive partner a lot of power". It is a pattern of behaviour designed to gain power and control and includes techniques such as withholding (pretending not to understand or refusing to listen to one's partner), blocking/diverting (telling someone they are imagining things and/or are getting ridiculous ideas from friends/family members who are in the wrong), and trivializing or minimizing the abuse.

shelter through Facebook when their phone minutes run out). This suggests that social media helps to enhance other levels of prevention beyond primary prevention (i.e. secondary prevention). However, it is important to note that if an abuser is aware of the nuances of Facebook and the metrics process outlined above, this benefit may not actually hold (i.e. the abuser may be aware that the woman is only seeing these posts on her news feed because she frequently clicks on that organization's posts). Moreover, Facebook has no design features built in to protect people currently experiencing violence, such as the "escape site and close browser" features, or instructions on how to delete browser history, that are available on many VAW-related websites. Thus, on social media, agencies may face the additional burden of trying to ensure individual safety while disseminating information and building a wider audience. Nonetheless, the reach of prevention efforts is enhanced, even if it must be cautiously done.

Participants' perceptions of benefits and challenges related to audiences and design features indicate that social media is a diverse landscape that shapes stakeholder's experience in a variety of ways. However, the most frequent and consistent negative experience of participants' related to VAW prevention and social media involves anti-feminist backlash and online sexual violence.

Backlash and online violence

In Chapter Three I explain that technology-facilitated violence is an emerging area of focus in the VAW prevention/mass media relationship, and in Chapter Six I highlight that backlash and abuse appears as a specific set of issues and/or barriers for some stakeholders doing VAW prevention work. In the interviews, participants also point

to online abuse and harassment as either a reality or a potential consideration related to their work. In some cases, this is because it is something that they have in depth personal experience with; for other individuals it is because they are aware of it happening to others. Online VAW, as discussed in Chapter Three, is a new area of VAW prevention that has garnered recent advocacy and emerging academic work (e.g. Citron 2009; Salter 2013; Fairbairn 2015). It has also drawn new activists/advocates into this area. For example, one participant explained that their work shifted from writing more broadly about gender and feminist issues to working on hate speech and gender-based violence online, because of their experiences (and those of friends and colleagues) receiving threatening and violent messages based on their gender and feminist views. In this section, I want to unpack three ideas relevant to backlash and online VAW that emerge from interviews: (1) there is a connection between Men's Rights Activists' [MRA] tactics and intimate partner abusive behaviours; (2) experiences and perceptions of online abuse and backlash shape behaviour; and (3) social media platforms have a role and responsibility to develop and implement violence prevention policies in their own spaces.

The open and accessible nature of much social media means that individuals and organizations that wish to speak up against VAW prevention can come together to do so. One way that this happens is by groups coming together to work to discredit the notion that violence is gendered. As this participant goes on to say:

Men's Right's Activists have the same kind of philosophy that abusive men do in my experience. They say the same kinds of things that I heard my son's father say, for instance. Or the same thing I have heard other people's partners say. It's like they all went to school together and learned the same lines and ideas (F10).

One of the obstacles that stakeholders repeatedly come up against within social media (and elsewhere) is the narrative that rates of intimate partner abuse are actually equal between men and women. As the above participant goes on to explain:

One thing MRAs say is that feminism (feminazis to use their terminology) ignores the fact that men are physically abused too... This was something that my son's father would do, if he cornered me and threatened me physically and I tried to push him away, he would say that I was physically abusing *him*, even though he was larger than me and had a weapon in his hand. So MRAs will often portray themselves as victims of domestic violence or abuse. [It's] not that this does not exist, and not to belittle anyone's experience with intimate partner violence regardless of gender, but I think the MRA movement manipulates the narrative (F10).

Another participant describes a scenario where a MRA commenter targeted them on YouTube, and they had to decide whether or not to engage with them:

But what do we tell women? We tell women, "don't engage with his emails after you've separated [even if] he still wants to engage with you." That every time he sends an abusive message you're being abused, and you're internalizing that...this is abusive behaviour...the language is abusive (E1).

In other work, in which I analyze YouTube comments on domestic violence public service announcements (Fairbairn 2013), I find this frame of "but men are abused by their partners too" to be overwhelmingly prominent within online comment and debates. This is an important area where public sociology could have a very effective role in targeted research dissemination in helping to bring nuance and complexity to the narrative around intimate partner violence. For example, one participant explains that:

I think that research is really, really important. People like me as bloggers, and other online activists, are constantly coming up with these same arguments from mostly MRAs that hold no weight, about that violence against women isn't really a thing, that women are actually earning more money than men. And I go look up the studies and I'm like "nowhere does it say that". But it just takes so much time and energy, and I feel like just leaving the comments there and not responding to them. [But] if you didn't know better and you're reading them, you might believe them. So the research is really necessary (F8).

As my participants explain, an additional problem with MRAs is that they are given a certain level of credibility in some social spaces. For example, one of my participants recounts being asked to debate Paul Ella, founder of Voices for Men, on national television:

[I told them] I'm not debating him in a one-on-one debate. Because that is completely false equivalence – the man is like a climate denier. I just said, you're welcome to have someone else do it, but I'm not going to give legitimacy to his arguments (F3).

The mass media's tendency to set up feminists and MRAs as opposing but equally legitimate is problematic. Within social media, while MRAs are clearly an issue for VAW prevention, there are more than two sides to a coin, so the fifty/fifty power split that this participant was being asked to enter into is less likely to appear in that way.

For the most part, participants are dealing with backlash using individual strategies. However, as one of my participants explains, the VAW sector needs to do more to coordinate responses to MRAs:

[In terms of] the Men's Rights Movement, I think that violence against women's centres as a whole need to collaborate on how to respond online, because it's the main communication message for Men's Rights Activists. So I think that the VAW sector needs to have a collaborative response and work together to drive them off the Internet (F13, I2).

In the meantime, it appears that some activists and advocates are forced to change behaviours, both online and offline, in response to trolling and/or MRA backlash. In part this is due to fears about physical safety, but in large part it is also about, as one participant explains, "just not having the bandwidth" to deal with harassment. For example, the passage below illustrates one advocates' response in terms of feeling threatened but also largely irritated and exhausted:

There's definitely stuff that has been threatening - I mean someone, somehow got my number and I got all these threatening phone calls last week. But I think to me it's more- it's just exhausting. It's more exhausting... I think the threatening is maybe 5 percent of it and the rest is just like really, fuck off. And just trying to get stuff done, and I have to go through my inbox, and screen caption, because I don't know if this is you just doing a one-off thing, or if you're going to start doing this all the time, and so I need to document [the abusive/threatening messages]. And it takes away [from my work]- which is the point right? The point is just to make it so difficult for me to be here that I just choose not to be there anymore (F2).

While this woman says that she is not concerned about her physical safety most of the time, she acknowledges that she has undertaken a number of precautions to feel safer:

I mean, I have an attitude now of ughh, because I've been online for over 10 years, so it's like, whatever. But I also don't talk about my family, I don't talk about my partner, there's no photos of me and my partner online. I had to pay to have my number private, I send things to a PO Box so that people can't find my home address- there's all kinds of mechanisms that I still have to do. So when I say "oh I feel safe", I then have to sort of check myself and say if someone else told me that, and then I saw the measures that they took to feel safe, I would tell them you don't actually feel that safe. So I don't actually feel that safe. But it's because I've put all these mechanisms in place where I'm pretty hard to find at home- I have a number that no one has the number to and all those things. But fuck, it'd be nice if I didn't have to do that, you know (F2).

Given the high burnout rates among service providers, advocates, and activists, it is important to take the depletive effects of dealing with harassment (and/or fears of harassment) seriously. Being forced out of social media, or even just certain social media sites, hinders prevention efforts. Additionally, conversational activism is hindered when advocates have to shut down comments sections on sites such as YouTube, which several of my participants noted they have done. Others left YouTube all together or opted to no longer create videos. Social media site designs and policies influence participants' ability to deal with such harassment. For example, in the following passage, a participant describes both her response to YouTube threats, and a scenario where a fake account was created using her image to provoke an online hate campaign:

The worst, the two worst incidents I ever had, one was after I blocked comments on YouTube, someone [found me online] and basically said, “You’re a liar, and I hope that someone kills you, I hope that it will be me”. So I had to call the police about that, which was fun... And then another time, someone on Twitter said, “someone on Facebook is using your picture, and you should really get it taken down.” And I found that someone had used my headshot as the front picture for this [harassment page]...when I found my picture, there were 600 comments, about how I should head butt a gun, how someone should rape me with a watermelon, all these rape threats, how no one would have sex with me because I’m so ugly and I’m a pig, and I’m fat...And I was very close to just quitting, because it was really awful (F8).

The second part of this passage further illustrates the relationship between social media policies and an individual’s lack of control over their online self:

Eventually I just filed a copyright complaint [with Facebook] because they take that way more seriously than a harassment complaint. So I filed a harassment complaint to start, and they said basically “nicely ask the person to take it down.” So I just sent a message saying “you didn’t have permission to use my picture, please take it down.” And the guy basically was like “lol” [laughing out loud]. And he had ten different accounts under fake names. He said that he Googled “feminist bitch” [to find my picture], and so I deserved this. But once I filed a complaint, then he used another picture of me, I filed another complaint, and then he started using pictures of other people, and then there wasn’t anything I could do, because you can’t file a complaint on behalf of someone else. So that was really crappy (F8).

In my interviews, more frequent and extreme examples of online abuse are directed at participants who are more active as individuals online, rather than those who are active primarily within a program or VAW organization. This appears consistent with the larger pattern of feminists being targeted online (see Goldberg 2015). For participants, the difference between online violence and backlash is both the nature and severity of the act. Online violence (for my purposes here) is specifically violent (rape threats, death threats) and is directed at a person. Backlash (which might morph into online violence) is a bit more general, involves anti-feminist sentiments (e.g. “violence against women is feminist propaganda”), and can be directed at organizations, campaigns, and/or individuals.

As one advocate explains, the absence of backlash for their organization may be in part due to a generally less political or controversial approach:

There hasn't been too much negative feedback, whether it be through traditional media or the public [in social media]. And I think that the way that we use social media and online stuff, we're very careful about it, being a non-profit. It's very different than if you're an activist group that doesn't have that many limitations in terms of mission and mandate and what you can say. So for us we use it in the safest way, I think...but I'm sure if we started using it in more risky ways or in ways that step out of what the typical non profit would do, we would definitely see some backlash (F7).

Perhaps because organizations do not appear to receive the same level of vitriol (e.g. misogynistic name calling, obscenity, rape threats), they appear more concerned with backlash targeting their messaging and information, rather than with individual harassment. Participants more connected to VAW organizations speak about issues of safety slightly differently, where safety of resources (funding, staff time, and energy) are seen as needing to be protected.

A final point about online harassment is that many participants feel that social media platforms have a significant role and responsibility to create and implement violence prevention policies in their own spaces. As one participant explains, it is important that social media companies take this abuse seriously because “[online abuse] curtails a lot of activism, and their (Facebook and Twitter’s) official definitions of what is abuse and what is not is pretty disheartening” (F10). One argument that frequently arises about sexism and misogyny in the context of social media centres on free speech (e.g. “feminists just want to censor the Internet”). However, as one activist explains, this notion needs to be problematized, since abuse and harassment experienced online are actually what limits free speech:

I started really paying attention to the nature of the harassment and the threats. And you know, a lot of it was just kind of intrinsically misogynistic language: “bitch” and “cunt” and “slut”. And critiques of my ideas or my work, often in those contexts just came down, as they often do, to violence, like hanging or rape or throttling... So when I started talking to other writers, what struck me as really dangerous and harmful was the number of women that I was talking to you that were scared by these threats, and were changing their behaviour online. So they were stopping the writing that they were doing on certain topics, or they were opting out of writing in certain media outlets. And I could certainly understand their levels of anxiety and unease sometimes. People get really horrible messages, right, and they have to take reasonable precautions. But I thought, okay, why isn't anyone talking about freedom of speech here? And the suppression of speech that violence enables in these contexts because of our online policies? (F3)

Social media companies have a responsibility to explore online violence as a threat to women's free speech, rather than framing the creation of policies to prevent gendered and sexist hate speech as the potential free speech threat. As this participant argues:

I want these companies to understand that women's perceptions of all of these things- safety, harm, threat, free speech- are legitimate, and that they (the companies) need to take those into consideration. So the thing that I repeatedly say is, every time I hear a representative of one of these companies explain that they're trying to balance free speech with women's safety, I'm like, timeout. Right away- right away, that just shows me that you don't understand the degree to which women's safety and women's free speech are actually on the same side of that equation. If you want to liberate speech, then you have to remove the violence that women are experiencing in life. And to juxtapose them that way is an androcentric model. It has nothing to do with the way we experience this violence, or this technology (F3).

Different social media platforms have different policies around hate speech, and this is an area currently in flux. For example, in recent years both Facebook and Twitter have been the target of large-scale, collaborative feminist media campaigns that are pressuring these companies to address online gendered and sexual violence. As a result, feminist organization Women, Action, & the Media (WAM!) announced partnerships with Facebook (2013) and with Twitter (2014) to address Facebook “joke” pages promoting violence against women (e.g. “how to rape” and “joke” domestic violence pages) as well

as the harassment of women on Twitter. Thus, VAW prevention efforts have evolved to target emerging forms of VAW in social media. As with historical efforts to mobilize against domestic violence in the home, and sexual harassment in the workplace, this is taking some time to catch on. As one participant explains:

In terms of the sort of cycle of raising awareness about an issue and getting people equipped, I think with sexual violence we're at that bystander intervention and tactical [stage], like practical "this is what we can do to stop it". Whereas with online violence, we're still trying to convince people that it's a thing (F2).

Conclusion

This chapter is the second of two chapters that presents and analyzes findings from my qualitative interviews. In this chapter, I have explored specific differences between social media sites and how feminist identities, social media design, and VAW prevention are mutually shaping practices. In the first part of this chapter, I discussed the intersections of identity and design by explaining how participants perceive various social media sites and how they negotiate their individual identity within these sites. Within this discussion of identity and site design, I make three observations about specific sites: (1) Facebook is perceived as more personal than Twitter, which has positive and negative possibilities; (2) Tumblr is viewed as more fun; and (3) Twitter may actually be more effective for conversational activism. I presented research findings about audience identities, highlighting three key points. First, participants' perceptions of audience characteristics influence how they use different sites, and what they hope to do in the future. Second, how social media sites organize their information shapes audiences and, therefore, VAW prevention efforts. In this regard, I discussed how hashtags on Twitter are a particularly important organizational structure for VAW prevention work. A

final point about audiences and VAW prevention work is that many participants wonder if their work in social media ends up simply “preaching to the choir”. In this regard, I explain how for some participants this is an obstacle to be overcome, and for others it is actually a positive aspect of their work, and a way for them to contribute to and advance feminist work more broadly.

In the second section of this chapter, I discussed research findings surrounding the important relationships between feminism and community. Specifically, I discussed the importance of community both in terms of resources and supports, and also in terms of collaborative ways of knowing that are related to larger feminist movements. I explained that, for participants, community in social media includes: (1) information and resources available from feminist networks online; (2) expressions of support and solidarity; and (3) reflexive work towards more intersectional and multiple feminism(s). These three components make up what I call cooperative ways of knowing.

In the final section, I discussed research findings surrounding safety, online VAW, and anti-feminist backlash. I explained that social media presents additional opportunities for support and safety for survivors of violence. I also outlined three findings related to backlash and online VAW: (1) there is a connection between Men’s Rights Activists’ [MRA] tactics and intimate partner abusive behaviours; (2) experiences and fear of online abuse and backlash shape behaviour and affect stakeholders’ resources to do VAW prevention work; and (3) social media platforms have a role and responsibility to develop and implement violence prevention policies in their own spaces. In the next chapter, I synthesize previous chapters and discuss key takeaways about how to approach public sociology and VAW prevention moving forward in social media.

Chapter Nine: Becoming Cyborgs

Introduction

This chapter discusses and synthesizes my research findings with scholarship on VAW prevention, feminism, social media, and public sociology. In synthesizing my research findings and presenting frameworks for understanding VAW prevention and public sociology in social media, I am building towards four theoretical conclusions. First, converging disciplines and roles in social media means that knowledge translation is a necessary point of praxis between information transmission and social and institutional transformation. In this vein, social media may be involved in all three stages of transmission, translation, and transformation, but offers the most untapped potential/unique opportunity at the knowledge translation stage because of the trans-media and trans-affective/emotional possibilities. Second, VAW prevention in social media reveals a rapidly reflexive, increasingly intersectional feminism that prioritizes experiential knowledge and (online) conversational activism. Third, this feminism is incompatible with Burawoy's original four-part framework for sociology but can be reconciled using community-based scholarship principles and cyborg feminism theoretical tools. And finally, the emerging category of online sexual violence encapsulates emerging re-understandings of feminism, gender, and violence by presenting us with a present-day cyborg problem (Haraway 1991). Within this new terrain, we must explore the trans-boundaries or "in between" the physical and the digital and to move forward under a VAW prevention framework where the digital is real.

The above four arguments are overarching dissertation conclusions and they are presented here to signal where the discussion and analysis that follows is headed. To reach these conclusions, however, it is important that first I synthesize my findings in several ways. As such, this chapter is divided into four parts: First, I consider how research findings fit into VAW prevention work on bystander intervention. Next, I explore how VAW prevention in social media informs our understanding of public sociology. Third, I put forward recommendations for a VAW-focused feminist public sociology. Finally, I draw from feminist theorist Donna Haraway and her concept of the cyborg to consider how this theoretical tool is helpful to understand VAW prevention in social media.

Part I: Conversational Activism as Bystander Intervention

In Chapter Seven I explained that through what I am calling “conversational activism”, participants are trying to use culture to change culture. Four elements of this process include: (1) two-way communication (conversations); (2) changing narratives and “getting in” to mainstream media; (3) exploring storytelling, emotional engagement, and experiential knowledge; and (4) prioritizing listening and intersectionality. In this section, I argue that approaching conversational activism as a form of bystander intervention helps to integrate VAW prevention work in social media with VAW prevention models more broadly.

Expanding understandings of bystander intervention

The proliferation of social media in recent years has created new ways to be part of the social world. Much research has focused on how social media is related to changes in activism and social movements more broadly (for example, see Joyce 2010; Lievrouw 2011; Poell 2014). My research explores what social media brings to the table for VAW prevention, which, until recently, focused almost entirely on reducing risk among potential victims and perpetrators (McMahon and Banyard 2012). However, as McMahon and Banyard (2012:3) explain:

More recently, prevention has begun to focus on bystanders - third party witnesses to situations where there is high risk of sexual violence and who by their presence have the ability to do nothing, to make the situation worse by supporting or ignoring perpetrator behavior, or to make the situation better by intervening in prosocial ways.

Bystander intervention can also focus on low risk situations:

Another type of reactive bystander opportunities can be labeled low risk, which can be defined as situations in which negative attitudes toward women and/or sexual violence are expressed, but do not pose immediate or high risk of harm to potential victims of sexual assault. These bystander opportunities address the lower side of the continuum of sexual violence behaviors, such as calling out sexist language, questioning media portrayals that objectify women and girls, challenging the use of pornography, and confronting friends who rank girls' appearances (McMahon and Banyard 2012:9).

Bystander intervention fits with ecological models of VAW prevention that move beyond targeting individuals considered at-risk to focusing on the entire community and changing interactions, norms, and behaviours (McMahon and Banyard 2012). To date, bystander intervention has focused heavily on preventing sexual violence on college campuses (see Banyard et al. 2007; Banyard et al. 2009; Potter et al. 2009; Coker et al. 2011; Gidycz, Orchowski, and Berkowitz 2011; Moynihan et al. 2011; Potter 2012) as

well as through programs designed to engage young men in traditionally hyper-masculine environments such as sports teams and the military (see Jaime et al. 2014).

The Internet is no longer the Wild West of society (Citron 2009) and it is now widely understood as much more than an extensive network of information transmission: it involves relationships, communities, and structures. Much academic work discusses this in relation to activism and social movements (e.g. Hwang 2010; Earl and Kimport 2011; Hands 2011), and we can see this broadened understanding among my research participants specifically in the context of VAW prevention. That is, the more that participants are knowledgeable and experienced with/in social media, the less they see it as a one-dimensional space, and the more they talk about it as an ecological space with individual, relational, community, and social levels. In this way, VAW prevention and activism converge. As a society, we are what VAW prevention literature calls active bystanders (see Cook-Craig 2012) when we intervene in situations to reduce the likelihood of violence. My research findings suggest that these situations also include social media. In Chapter Seven I explain how “awareness raising” is a general term for information sharing and building audiences, and then becomes conversational activism when it becomes more targeted, active, and interventionist. We can see the link here within discussions of proactive bystander intervention on university campuses:

Proactive bystander intervention opportunities can be defined as positive actions that students can take to demonstrate a commitment to addressing sexual violence regardless of whether they have witnessed an explicit behavior along the continuum of sexual violence. In these situations, there is no perceived risk of harm to potential victims... Though not linked to specific instances of behavior, *proactive bystander opportunities set a foundation for the broader attitude shifts that may make sexual violence less likely. Proactive situations are opportunities to shift social norms to create a community that does not tolerate any type of violence.* In many ways, this form of bystander intervention may be viewed as a

form of activism to promote a social movement to end violence against women (McMahon and Banyard 2012:10, emphasis mine).

This form of bystander intervention is increasingly recognized as a critical focus of prevention efforts, as in recent years:

A growing number of authors have concluded that effective rape prevention efforts must therefore address the underlying assumptions about gender and sexual violence, and change rape supportive ideologies and social norms that will ultimately decrease sexual violence perpetration (McMahon and Banyard 2012:6).

Discussions of bystander behaviour note that potential bystanders may fail to take action not because of lack of willingness but because of lack of information (McMahon and Banyard 2012). Although high-risk opportunities for intervention (immediately prior to an assault) are more widely recognized, low-risk opportunities, or “situations posing no immediate harm to victims but which may indirectly support sexism or violence”, are less well understood (McMahon and Banyard 2012:5). Participants use social media as a tool to build audiences and convey messages about VAW, including trying to educate their audiences about what they can do in their everyday lives to end VAW. However, by speaking out against sexist media content (including content on social media) more generally, their activities are also bystander intervention.

Thus, bystander intervention needs to be understood along a spectrum of prevention work. In Chapter Six, I presented an ecological framework for understanding benefits of social media for VAW prevention. This highlights that VAW prevention in social media can occur at different ecological levels of violence prevention (e.g. supporting survivors, building NGO relationships, targeting social norms, critiquing policy) as social media brings new elements into each level (speed, expanded global networks, intense public accountability). In this way, bystander intervention can occur in

relation to a spectrum of behaviours, and at a variety of levels. Bystander intervention fits well with feminist understandings of VAW (e.g. Kelly 1987; Stout and McPhail 1998) that, as McMahon and Banyard (2012:6) explain, conceptualize sexual violence “not as separate, discrete acts but rather as connected and all based in patriarchal power and control”. By promoting an ontology of violence as a continuum:

The continuum of sexual violence framework provides a foundation for developing a nomological¹⁴⁸ network by understanding that there are a range of behaviors that support sexual violence and therefore, there are simultaneously multiple points along the continuum when bystanders can intervene... (McMahon and Banyard 2012:6).

Within these feminist understandings, social media work that targets systems of patriarchal power and control is a form of bystander intervention. Along these lines, bystander intervention experts wonder:

...whether the nature of activism has changed, transforming to more “virtual” opportunities such as posting views on social networking sites... Therefore, it is critical for educators to assist students in identifying these opportunities to take proactive actions and to explain their link with sexual violence (McMahon and Banyard 2012:11).

McMahon and Banyard explain that a “Spectrum of Prevention” tool already exists (see Cohen and Swift 1999), and that this tool can be used to outline six levels where individuals can engage in proactive opportunities to take a stand against sexual violence. These six levels include: strengthening individual knowledge (e.g. taking a course on sexual violence), promoting community education (e.g. arranging a presentation), educating providers, fostering coalitions and networks (e.g. joining a an anti-violence group), changing organizational practices (e.g. rejecting sexist language), and influencing policy and legislation (e.g. participating in protests) (McMahon and Banyard 2012).

¹⁴⁸ A nomological network is “a theoretical framework including the conceptual definition of a construct, the observable manifestations, and their interrelationships” (McMahon and Banyard 2012:5).

These levels of prevention opportunities can be adapted to different communities, including college campuses. My dissertation findings can inform how these efforts can be tailored to social media communities. Table 13 provides a starting point outlining how these actions might take place in social media.

Table 13: Examples of social media actions to prevent VAW as part of the spectrum of prevention

Levels of opportunity for engagement	Example of actions related to social media
Individual	Support survivors using hashtag campaigns and/or sending individual direct messages of support; follow key social media players and encourage others to follow them; consciously seek out diverse perspectives such as activists and educators who are women of colour, women with disabilities, and part of LGBTQ communities.
Promoting community education	Start or participate in Tweet-ups; create and share webinars about yours or others organization's work; use creative spaces such as art and slam poetry to talk about VAW and share these on social media.
Educating providers	Conduct and disseminate social media research; work on sharing/translating advocacy work in accessible methods and spaces; create and share lists of important VAW hashtags.
Foster coalitions and networks	Amplify ("signal boost") others whose work you admire; translate knowledge (e.g. research findings); start social-media fundraising campaigns for VAW coalitions/organizations.
Change organizational practices	Take screen shots of advertisements that appear on pages promoting VAW; create and/or share social media posts that point out sexist language, victim blaming, and/or areas where additional context around VAW is required; Tweet at companies who advertise on these sites; disseminate media toolkits/tip sheets to journalists when VAW news breaks.
Influence policy and legislation	Sign petitions; conduct and disseminate social media research; follow politicians, policy-makers, and businesses that support VAW prevention and equity more broadly; follow and support organizations such as Take Back the Tech working on systemic change online.

Benefits of understanding conversational activism as bystander intervention

In Chapter Seven, I introduced the term conversational activism to describe VAW prevention work in social media. Here, I am explaining how it relates to bystander intervention literature and prevention models. Shortly, I will argue that conversational activism should still be understood as its own concept and practice; however, there are four reasons why it is useful to make this link between conversational activism and bystander intervention. First, *understanding that conversational activism is bystander intervention builds stronger networks*. Focusing on how they are the same creates common ground between socio-political activist networks (e.g. feminist activists) and those working in education and social psychology that may be more focused on individuals and geographically bound communities (e.g. bystander intervention programs on college campuses).

A second reason it is useful to make this link is that *understanding conversational activism as related to bystander intervention may provide legitimacy and therefore, resources*. This legitimacy is important because it may create opportunities for formal, funded programs and evaluation. Bystander intervention programs such as the *Green Dot* (Edwards 2009) and *Bringing In The Bystander* (Moynihan, Eckstein, Banyard, and Plante 2010) are funded, curriculum-based programs. Currently, a great deal of what I call conversational activism is unfunded (or indirectly funded) and informal practice. Yet it is clear from interviews that, unsurprisingly, social media work is more likely to occur when specific resources (funding, staff position) are provided or allotted. While perhaps obvious, it is worth stating explicitly given that much social media activism and advocacy has been criticized for being “slacktivism” (see Christensen 2011). Even if this

association is not explicitly used to refer to VAW prevention, there may be hesitation to provide resources to social media work if it is seen as taking away from more immediate or more “real” needs.

A third reason to link conversational activism and bystander intervention is also related to legitimacy: *to acknowledge it as labour (in terms of time and emotional and financial resources)*. If conversational activism/bystander intervention in social media is creating additional strain on personal and organizational resources (which my research suggests is the case), it is important that we develop a research trail in this area.

Additionally, my findings surrounding online violence, and emerging advocacy work in this area, point to a potential need to develop anti-harassment interventions when this form of labour takes place.

In this regard, and as a fourth and final point, understanding conversational activism as VAW prevention means that *we can start to think about how to design online spaces in ways that encourage bystander intervention*. In this regard, drawing from interdisciplinary research is particularly important, and we cannot simply transfer what we know about offline behaviour online. For example, emerging research from computer science and psychology suggests that likelihood of online bystander intervention may be affected by perceptions of surveillance and risk in chat rooms (e.g. Palisinki 2012).

Additionally, contrary to notions of diffusion of responsibility, people may be more likely to intervene in situations where there are other people present *and* when they are aware they are being monitored by technology such as security cameras (van Bommel, van Prooijen, Elffers, and van Lange 2014). By treating social media as a legitimate space for bystander intervention, we may be able to influence attitudes, beliefs, and social norms in

timely, personalized, and low-risk¹⁴⁹ ways, while simultaneously supporting survivors and minimizing resource drain and abuse directed at prevention experts and activists.

Yet conversational activism is its own concept

Despite the importance of linking conversational activism to bystander intervention, it should still be recognized separately in sociological work. This is because conversational activism emerges out of a different context than bystander intervention, and may be more sociologically salient for several reasons. First, *conversational activism has its roots in language and narrative*. While bystander intervention historically focuses on individual interactions (how we act and talk to each other) in physical settings, conversational activism focuses on societal interactions (how we talk about social problems) as manifestations of power systems (e.g. patriarchy). Second, *conversational activism focuses on emotions and their relationship to social norms*. Here, the power of social media is that our collective failures as a society surrounding VAW are revealed to us through our emotional reactions captured in online expression. Sociologically, this is important in terms of how social norms are visible. Attitudes and behaviours are perhaps most obvious in people's reactions to breaking news. For example, in fall 2014, when news of the Jian Ghomeshi sexual assault allegations first broke, social media was flooded with support for the now ex-host of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporations

¹⁴⁹ To further understand this notion of "low risk" points of intervention, McMahon and Banyard (2012:9) use the example of racial microaggressions. This concept is highly relevant to intersectional feminist work and there are many examples of it online. In the context of sexual violence, microaggressions "may be defined as subtle, intentional, or unintentional acts that communicate hostile, derogatory, or sexualizing insults toward women generally and rape survivors specifically. Examples of this type of behavior include but are not limited to: using sexist language and jokes, talking about women as sexual objects, displaying pornographic images of women, ranking women's physical appearances, joking about the use of sexual aggression, using degrading language to describe rape survivors or using rape jokes, displaying sexual images of women on social networking sites, and making harassing comments or gestures."

radio show, Q. Ghomeshi took to social media to have the first word regarding his dismissal (see Star Staff 2014), and social media was flooded with expressions of support for Ghomeshi, disbelief of the allegations, and victim-blaming. In her piece “The Jian Ghomeshi Story Turned Us Into Social Media Fools”, blogger Angelina Chapin writes:

The Ghomeshi story has proved that we desperately need to have open dialogues about consent, sexual abuse and powerful figures... When news like this breaks, there shouldn't be a race to have the right opinion. But we also don't need to hide from social media. Instead, let's aim to have a conversation.

In conversational activism, people are not just trying to change attitudes and beliefs, but they are doing so in a moment that is emotionally salient. Although we often use the more emotionally neutral term “public interest” to describe these stories, these publics are emotional beings (see Mopas and Moore 2012), just as are those doing VAW prevention. This is why storytelling and experiential knowledge (key facets of conversational activism, e.g. the hashtag #BeenRapedNeverReported) are so powerful, as they can enter these intellectual/emotional “third spaces” (see Licona 2005) to influence attitudes and beliefs about VAW. Storytelling relies on emotional engagement and encourages empathy. It is an important element to the sociological imagination (and therefore sociology), since stories illuminate personal histories, and empathy helps us to see how forces outside of individual choices shape social realities. Public sociology and related fields such as newsmaking criminology (Barak 2007) advocate narrative engagement, but have not discussed storytelling as a knowledge sharing practice.

Finally, a distinctive focus on conversational activism is important because it *acknowledges and centers feminism and feminist work*. In this way, it keeps the personal political, emphasizes reciprocal communication (conversation, listening, reflexivity) as active elements of social change. Furthermore, since feminists have historically

challenged the rational/emotional divide and been successful at including experiential knowledge into academic analysis, feminist conversational activism is better suited to “reach up” from the grassroots level, to take down patriarchy. This is illustrated by the Jian Ghomeshi case discussed above, where the millions of voices mobilizing and sharing stories of sexual assault, and expressing support for survivors coming forward (#BeenRapedNeverReported; #IBelieveLucy) was able to offer support to individuals while simultaneously challenging social norms. While bystander intervention focuses on the actions of individuals in preventing violence, conversational activism centers the power in numbers and emphasizes coordinated efforts.

This section has discussed research findings about VAW prevention in social media in terms of what they can contribute to bystander intervention work. In the next section, I consider what we can draw from my research findings to contribute to public sociology. Based on my own public sociology, survey results, and interview findings, I see VAW prevention in social media as informing our understandings of public sociology in four significant areas: (1) *conversational activism, discourse, and reciprocity*; (2) *understanding the relationship between news media and audiences*; (3) *educating epistemic communities*; and (4) *translation as praxis*.

Part II: VAW Prevention, Social Media as Public Sociology

Conversational activism, discourse, and reciprocity

Discourse around social issues has been a point of attention for public sociology and public criminology (Felizer 2009; Mopas and Moore 2012). In my research, we see many participants presenting feminist “(re)articulations” of VAW events (see Harp,

Loke, and Bachmann 2014), such as hashtags challenging and reframing news stories. Although both public sociology and VAW prevention in social media are concerned with discursive intervention, a framework of reciprocity underlies much VAW prevention work in social media. This reciprocal framework is what I call cooperative ways of knowing in Chapter Eight. Here, knowledge is reflexively produced and translated in ways that demonstrate an awareness of the environment in which knowledge production is taking place, as participants attempt to amplify or signal-boost the work of others. This knowledge production process also recognizes that communities where we hope to participate in discursive work are also sites of information and support.

Discourse has been a significant focus of feminist media research on news stories (e.g. Berns 2001; van Zoonen 1992; Jiwani and Young 2006), and the notion of “discursive activism” has been used to explain public sociology such as feminist blogging (e.g. Shaw 2012). However, there is an important distinction between conversational activism and discursive activism in the context of my research. In part, the term conversational activism is more closely linked to my participants’ own words, as I explain in Chapter Eight. Conversational activism is, additionally, more in line with standpoint feminist sociologies that start with the individual and their interactions (Smith 2005). In social media, conversational activism starts at the point of individual texts (what is being said) in the form of posts, comments, and sharing of news stories. It also takes relationships into account (whom people are saying it to, who is responding).

Because there is reciprocity within conversational activism, this can lead to increased ability for lower profile individuals/smaller organizations to access more powerful players in VAW prevention. We see this in research findings, where more

isolated individuals and smaller organizations are able to connect with the more traditionally powerful actors in the VAW sector. In this way, social media does not just narrow the gap between mainstream news organizations and publics, but enables more traditionally remote and/or lower profile individuals access to high profile discursive arenas. Social media therefore enables stakeholders some level of access to new and potentially powerful spheres within VAW prevention work, and potentially reduces hierarchy. Because discourse is where power and knowledge join together (Chasteen 2001),¹⁵⁰ those with less power to exercise have less ability to participate in discursive activism. For those who may not historically have access to public spheres where much discourse is produced (media, policy, and governmental organizations), conversational activism allows for the everyday, often taken for granted interactions to become active and meaningful through how they intersect with the relations of ruling (Smith 2005).

For public sociologists interested in developing relationships with communities and organizations, an important point to understand is that these communities, and the larger social movements to which they may belong, are not flat, non-hierarchical entities, but have embedded in them different power structures and profiles. Social media may be an important tool for helping to challenge these power structures, such as the failures within feminism to see race and class (Burawoy 2005a). In the context of public sociology, conversational activism may help to make the abstract (and potentially inaccessible) objectives of discursive intervention (see Loader and Sparks 2010:771, 778) more concrete by removing one level of academic jargon, and by encouraging public

¹⁵⁰ Chasteen (2001:103), in her study of women's definitions and interpretations of rape, draws on Foucauldian notions of discourse to explain that discourse is where power and knowledge are joined together, and that "knowledge about any social problem is socially constructed through struggles between groups over who has the power to establish their argument as truth".

sociologists to more thoroughly consider individual interactions and relationship-building elements of conversational activism. It also means that we may be increasingly preoccupied with audiences over news media outlets.

Understanding the relationship between news media and audiences

Both public sociology and feminist work have, in recent decades, approached news media as an important arena for shaping public attitudes and influencing policy work (Benedict 1992; Wykes 2001; Burawoy 2005a; Barak 2007). In Chapter Three, I discuss various areas where mainstream news media have historically failed to provide a sufficient framework for understanding VAW and also examine recent VAW prevention work to engage journalists to shift media coverage.¹⁵¹ In my interviews, several participants spoke about the need for training in journalism school and dissemination of toolkits/media resources for reporting on VAW. Additionally, in Chapter Five, I explain how working on the Media Hub for journalists with OCTEVAW was one of my public sociology projects.

In social media, these hubs and toolkits have multiple functions. First, they exist as a resource for journalists prior to reporting on VAW, and can be created in participatory contexts with journalists as allies (relationship building), as I discuss in Chapter Five. However, they can also be used as an accountability reference point after the coverage (some might call this public shaming, but I believe it can be done in productive ways). For example, in Ontario, when there is news reporting of a sexual assault that stakeholders deem to be poor coverage, advocates may tweet at a reporter or

¹⁵¹ These critiques, and these strategies, have centered on five themes: (lack of) context, perpetrator portrayals (e.g. perpetrator excusing/bad apple themes), victim portrayals (e.g. victim blaming), crime of passion framing, and inadequate news sources.

news organization the link to the Femifesto (2013) toolkit. In my survey and interviews, participants identify holding organizations and institutions accountable in this manner as a benefit of VAW social media work. In this capacity, numbers are important, and so social media features such as the ability to like, retweet, and favourite are visible to both the target of the accountability action, and to passive bystanders. Thus, what was a resource in the Web 1.0 is both a resource and a resistance tool in social media.

Given this shift, what then is the significance of news coverage of VAW in social media? Much audience research suggests that media portrayals foster and reinforce particular perceptions of (and attitudes towards) violent crime (e.g. Roberts and Doob 1990; Reiner 2003; Anastasio and Costa 2004), and help set the political and policy agenda concerning criminal justice (Doyle 2003). However, the relationship between media content and public interpretation and attitudes is a complex one, and scholars have cautioned against assuming the existence of media effects on audience attitudes and beliefs (Doyle 2006). This dilemma is also present in feminist media research. For example, Christie (1998:212) writes,

While it must be acknowledged that representation is a significant issue, if the media's failure to mobilize public recognition and support for feminist ideas is to be rectified, we also need greater understanding of how these representations are received by audiences.

More than fifteen years after Christie's (1998) article, we have social media to assist in exploring audience involvement in the construction of meaning. With a more permeable media/audience boundary, the direction of information transmission goes both ways, as the participatory audience is now able to become the news story. The core examples of participatory audience becoming the news stories from my research are news coverage of hashtag campaigns discussed in Chapter Seven. (#YesAllWomen;

#BeenRapedNeverReported). These campaigns target attitudes and behaviours (for example, the belief that VAW is rare; stigma against those who do not report sexual assault) rather than focusing specifically on media representations. In this way, VAW prevention in social media sets aside mainstream news coverage as the primary marker of public attitudes and beliefs about VAW. Although this could arguably be thought of as reactive prevention since it occurs after a news article or event, I argue that it is also proactive, precisely because of targeting broader audiences rather than individual journalists or news organizations. In light of the discussion in part one of this chapter, we understand that in social media, audiences are bystanders. Thus, by drawing people into discussions about the complexities of VAW events as the reactions are occurring and responses forming, conversational activism is targeting the frequently elusive and hard to measure prevention arena of social norms (see Johnson and Dawson 2011).

Social media also helps to overcome historical challenges of the media/movement relationship outlined in Chapter Three, such as a lack of a singular leader. The movement does not necessarily need to name or identify a leader, since journalists can instead seek out sources based on crowdsourced¹⁵² forms of expertise, such as looking at what tweet started the viral hashtag, or whose post got the most crowd support (likes, favorites, retweets, etc.) Additionally, the challenge of media misrepresentation/mischaracterization of feminist messages is mitigated by the fact that the hashtag is the message. Therefore, a message such as #YesAllWomen serves as the protest placard that is elevated by hundreds, thousands, or millions of people. By reporting on a hashtag rather than an event, *the “context” surrounding VAW that has historically eluded news coverage*

¹⁵² Crowdsourcing is defined as “the practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people and especially from the online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers.” (Merriam Webster Online n.d.).

becomes the news story. Although this may not mean that nuance and complexity make it into the news story, it at least signals that there are additional factors of importance. A hashtag such as #BeenRapedNeverReported, therefore, provides a frame for the entire story (e.g. there are many reasons why women may not report sexual assault) that might otherwise be visible only in the form of a quote from an individual advocate or service provider who is positioned as presenting “one side” of the story.

The public nature of social media also provides researchers and advocates with a plethora of data. In this context, social media may help to collectively view the social landscape (attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, policies, stories) that we are working with, and may provide a richer and more detailed picture of changes over time. Furthermore, in terms of VAW prevention, social media can tell us something about how different strategies, campaigns, and messages “land” or resonate in the public sphere. For example, social media metrics and marketing tools allow us to see who likes, clicks, views, comments, and so forth, and can provide various analytics based on user demographic features such as region, gender, age, and so forth. News stories, then, function as sort of a societal Rorschach test, where the extent and nature of the social response may tell us more about attitudes and beliefs related to gender and violence than any singular news story. Of course, as with VAW prevention work generally, it is still difficult to determine a causal relationship between attitudes and beliefs and perpetration of violence in the physical sense. Yet within social media, other manifestations of VAW can be seen in a more public fashion than was previously possible. Screenshots of rape threats, images of women holding up signs with quotes from the person who assaulted them, and even real-

time pleas for help for women attempting to escape abusive relationships¹⁵³ mean that stories that did not previously make the mainstream news can become widely viewed. In this environment, power comes not from ability to enter mainstream media, but from ability to garner public attention in social media. Yet as my findings around backlash and online sexual violence illustrate, not all attention in social media is positive.

Of course, there are still key questions about the effects of social media work, perhaps most significantly in terms of audience. Among stakeholders, one concern that is brought up around social media and VAW prevention is “are we just preaching to the choir?” Public sociologists also have a preoccupation with audiences (e.g. Mochnacki, Segaert, and McLaughlin 2009; Gabriel et al. 2009; Wade and Sharp 2013), since the foundational sentiment of public sociology is that we should not be preaching to the choir, but instead writing for and engaging broader, general, and diverse audiences. Although my research on VAW prevention reveals a similar concern among stakeholders, this is divided differently. In public sociology, the “in group” (non-public) is made up of sociologists in the academy, and the “out group” consists of publics outside the academy. For VAW prevention stakeholders, this line is drawn differently, and exists based on the existence of a VAW lens, or what I would label the “do they ‘get it’” criterion. We see this in the survey and interviews where participants speak repeatedly about wanting to reach broader audiences who do not yet “have that understanding” of a VAW lens. Those who “get it” are those who see VAW as a systemic problem and believe in the mission of

¹⁵³ On February 8, 2015, a Kelowna, B.C. woman posted a video to Facebook entitled “Please Help Me,” alleging her now-ex-boyfriend repeatedly subjected her to domestic and emotional abuse. After she went into hiding and posted the video, four of the man’s previous ex-girlfriends reached out to her with similar allegations and fears. As of March 19, 2015, the video had 36,078 views (CTV News Staff 2015).

preventing VAW. Thus, when participants say they are worried about “preaching to the choir” they are talking about this latter group. As with bystander intervention, the focus is on engaging those who are not already actively working to end VAW. In this way, they are concerned with going beyond their epistemic communities (Adler and Haas 1992; Coy and Garner 2012). However, thinking through my research findings around notions of reflexivity, intersectionality, and listening also points to alternate ways to understand the concept of preaching to the choir, in particular through a framework of educating epistemic communities.

Educating epistemic communities

In Chapters Six and Seven, I discuss the ways that stakeholders “educate within” their professional and activist sector through building connections and sharing resources among other activists and advocates, and using social media to educate themselves about intersectionality and to privilege and center marginalized voices. In this way, what many would call “the choir” (in terms of preaching to the choir) is not a homogenous, fixed group following a coordinated script that consistently results in a cohesive and media-friendly message. Rather, the epistemic community of those doing VAW prevention is a fluid, shifting, diverse, and eclectic group of individuals, organizations, and institutions that share a commitment to resisting oppression, ending violence, and promoting human rights, with a focus on women and girls.¹⁵⁴ Individuals are on a spectrum in terms of their knowledge and understanding of VAW, and even those who are subject matter experts have knowledge that is partial and incomplete.

¹⁵⁴ This is a modified version of Coy and Garner’s (2012) use of epistemic communities that focuses on policy-making contexts.

Understanding that all knowledge is situated and partial (Haraway 1988, 1991; Harding 1991) means that when we are preaching to the choir, we can also be educating the choir. There is no person doing VAW prevention work that has a complete understanding of VAW in all its forms because such an understanding does not exist. Thus, there is always value in educating the choir. Because VAW prevention in social media is a webbed, multi-directional process of knowledge mobilization, advocates and activists inside the epistemic community can educate themselves, as well as “outsiders”, about VAW. Additionally, supporting the choir becomes an important principle in environments where anti-feminist backlash regularly happens. In this way, key parts of working within epistemic communities are that there is a baseline level of support, awareness that they belong to a community, and a relative assurance of safety from abuse.

In this regard, doing prevention work within epistemic communities is not unlike the comforts offered by academic disciplinary interactions and environments. In sociology, we know that certain terms (e.g. “discourse”, “statistically significant”) will be understood and accepted as meaningful, even if their use is contested or critiqued as part of intellectual tradition. In VAW prevention in social media, similar examples might include “triggered”,¹⁵⁵ the acronym “VAW”, or more recently, “online sexual violence”. We can observe successful academic/community translation in terms that transcend both environments (e.g. feminism, intersectionality), providing a framework of understanding individual struggles in a broader ways. Of Burawoy’s four types of sociology, critical

¹⁵⁵ According to the “Geek Feminism” wiki, “Trigger warnings are customary in some feminist and other spaces. They are designed to prevent people who have an extremely strong and damaging emotional response (for example, post-traumatic flashbacks or urges to harm themselves) to certain subjects from encountering them unaware. Having these responses is called ‘being triggered’.”

sociology is most closely related to the notion of educating epistemic communities. Critical sociology is characterized by internal debate and ongoing examination of the foundations of professional sociology, aiming to draw attention to its biases and silences (Burawoy 2005a). When thought of in relation to both public sociology and VAW prevention, these processes highlight the importance of not only being able to “translate out” information from the epistemic community to broader audiences, but also of being able to “translate into” this realm in order to identify where more work is needed.¹⁵⁶

Educating within epistemic communities also involves relationships, both in terms of building relationships and collaborations, as well as awareness of where one’s work is situated in relation to other interdisciplinary and community-based work. Traditional public sociology focuses on disseminating information to wider audiences, and (as I discuss in Chapter Two), has generally taken the approach that sociologists should seek out professional journalists and/or publish accessible literature to disseminate their ideas. More recently, public sociologists such as Lisa Wade from *Sociological Images* have advocated for blogging as public sociology (Wade and Sharp 2013). My research suggests an additional route: building relationships with key players in an epistemic community and translating information to these experts, who might then help with broader knowledge dissemination. While each person’s social network is unique, there are names (actual names as well as Twitter handles) that come up repeatedly as important sources. Traditional public sociology may assume that individual academics are responsible for translating from specialized realms (academic jargon) to broader (so-

¹⁵⁶ Within university settings, we might talk about this as interdisciplinary work: seeing where our sociological knowledge fits in relation to interdisciplinary knowledge and current discourse. In non-university settings, this might be more often talked about as intersectionality. The two notions are of course not mutually exclusive, as VAW prevention in social media is heavily reliant on both interdisciplinary and intersectional frameworks.

called layperson) audience. What we forget is that, in many cases (such as VAW prevention), there is a sector of writers, bloggers, journalists, and advocates (in addition to doctorates of sociology working outside the academy) who have extensive knowledge of the issues we are writing about with the training and capacity to translate to wider audiences. The passage below from one of my interviews illustrates how one advocate/writer sees translation of research as a critical aspect of her work:

When I set out to write, it was very explicit in my mind that what I wanted to do was take academic work and translate it into popular media. Because I consume a lot of academic research, because I love it and I think there's so much great work being done. But there's a real disconnect between what is being published in academia and what makes it into the news. There's just so much useful information, and I can't even imagine being an academic, I would be the most frustrated academic on the planet... I think that in a lot of the environments, certainly academic environments, this notion of neutrality holds sway. Like "we're just here to present the data, and not to tell people what to do with it". Which is fine, except people actually sometimes need to be told what to do with it, right? So I've decided I'm going to tell people what to do with this research. I'm not an expert, but I can tell people what I think they should do with it. But I think that sometimes it should be incumbent upon researchers with the social justice gene to say "teachers, look at this thing I just found in this work, in this research." Wouldn't it be great if the Chronicle of Higher Education published this?" Because nine times out of ten - and I research every day, I'm looking for information every day- I find things, and I second-guess myself, because I think, "Why hasn't this been publicized?" or "Why has it been sitting in this journal for three years?" because it's super interesting and important (F3).

Social media is helpful not simply for the public sociology starting point of "engaging publics", but for engaging certain influential stakeholders within networks. This participant is not suggesting that we as academics teach individuals about our research. Instead, she is asking us to make adjustments in form and content, and to give our work a small "push" into a network of others who can help to disseminate. This not only enhances feasibility, but effectiveness. For example, I am an academic who likes to read Twitter but infrequently tweets, and I have, currently, about 150 Twitter followers on a

given day. Comparatively, the research participant quoted above has tens of thousands of followers. Writers, bloggers, and journalists make it their business to reach broad audiences, and, through social media, academics have increased opportunity to reach out and engage these individuals outside the institutional framework of media organizations and their bureaucratic channels.

This is another reason why focusing on relationships and collaborations as a foundation for public sociology is helpful. A single sociologist, advocate, or even a campaign will not end sexual violence or intimate partner violence. As one participant explains, holistic approaches that are respectful of diverse forms of expertise are needed:

As a sector- and feminism more broadly I think - we often times invest in one campaign, like it's one campaign is just going to solve all our problems, or one piece of research or whatever and I'm a firm believer that we need, we have to, attack it from all angles. As I think that's where academia respecting the expertise that we have [is important], and respecting that you know, I might speak a different language than you, but we're all doing the same thing (F2).

Social media is a hybrid in that it works as an “in between”: it allows for the coming together of so-called academic and layperson knowledge, various forms of mass media (television, radio, music), news coverage and reader response, storytellers and listeners. Because of this, there is more to knowledge mobilization in social media than simply transmitting information. Instead, converging disciplines and roles in social media means that there is a more pronounced need for knowledge translation. In this way, translation is a central component of VAW prevention in social media, as well as for the reflexive, praxis-based, and interdisciplinary public sociology that I put forward in this dissertation.

Translation as praxis

In social media, translation happens among media (television to YouTube, radio to podcast, news story to Twitter) and among audiences (journalist to reader, activist or lobby group to policy maker, educator to community). In my interviews, participants are well aware of how much variation there is between platforms. As I explain in Chapters Six and Eight, participants use different sites to address different objectives, and make these decisions based on (1) resource availability; (2) perception of audience they can reach through the site; and (3) design features (such as the ability to swear or to avoid being throttled by Facebook's news feed). Safety and risk management also come into play, seen primarily through avoidance of certain spaces (e.g. YouTube) because of the frequency and nature of harassment experienced there. All of these factors shape stakeholders' ability to transmit information and translate knowledge.

Burawoy's categories of traditional and organic public sociology collapse in social media (Schneider 2014). However, we can use the ideas of transmission, translation, and transformation to develop a framework within which to understand public sociology and VAW prevention in social media. For example, in Chapter Six, I put forward an ecological model for understanding the benefits of social media for VAW prevention work. Additionally, in Chapter Five I draw from community-engaged scholarship to re-imagine public sociology as made up of public intellectual, community-engaged scholar, community educator, and social movement actor. Keeping all these levels of understanding and roles in mind, I want to consider how we can understand the process of VAW prevention as public sociology, in relation to social media. Klein's

(2013) distinction between awareness and knowledge offers assistance in this regard.

Klein (2013:6) explains the difference between awareness and knowledge in this way:

Awareness that something is a problem does not automatically imply insight into its nature or knowledge of solutions. Many people probably are aware of numerous social and political problems around the globe without necessarily having deeper insight into the particulars of these problems or what to do about them.

Klein explains that different kinds of language are needed for three purposes: awareness, knowledge, and institutional change. By expanding this notion of language and adding the category of social change (which includes social norms), I argue that VAW prevention work in social media (and potentially other areas of public sociology) can be thought of as involving three facets: transmission (of awareness through information), translation (of knowledge) and transformation (of culture and institutions). As Klein (2013:6) explains,

Language particularly suited for one of the three purposes may not be suited for any of the others. Instead, different kinds of language may be needed so that each may “speak” most suitably to the task at hand: language for articulating what exactly it is about abusive dynamics that makes them so harmful and difficult to deal with; language for alerting the wider public to the seriousness and pervasiveness of sexual and domestic violence; and language for identifying, initiating, and implementing changes to institutional policies and practices that transform institutions into settings in which perpetration of abuse becomes less likely and support for victims more forthcoming.

Here, I am expanding the notion of language into social media engagement more broadly. We know from ecological models of VAW prevention that prevention must target a variety of levels. On the next page (Table 14), I adapt Klein’s conceptualization of the use of language at a variety of levels, and integrate it with ecological understandings of VAW prevention. I also expand Klein’s theoretical framework to include mediated processes (Process column) and conceptual requirements (Requires column) as

categories. This framework is intended to synthesize ecological understandings of VAW prevention with public sociology in social media contexts.

Table 14: Proposed public sociology model for VAW prevention

Level of Change	Involves	Process	Requires
Awareness	Alerting the public and the authorities to the fact that sexual violence and intimate partner violence are serious, widespread, and in need of societal attention.	Transmission	Information
Knowledge	Naming of rape and domestic violence; articulating what exactly it is about abusive dynamics that makes them so harmful and difficult to deal with; explaining research findings; articulating solutions.	Translation	Information; expertise
Societal	Changing attitudes, beliefs, and norms; language; news media; pop culture; and other representations/communications that contribute to VAW.	Trans personal, trans media	Information; expertise; emotional/affective engagement
Institutional	Management and institutional leadership create institutional transformations aimed at making perpetration of abuse more difficult and victim support easier.	Transformation	Information, expertise; emotional/affective engagement; institutional action

**Adapted from Klein (2013)*

In this framework, the concept of hybrid becomes increasingly important, and refers to the in-between, the shifts, and the changes. My research participants, and public sociologists more broadly, are located in these hybrid spaces. Feminism and public sociology are important for unpacking the fusions of categories such as academic and community, theory and practice, woman and man, virtual and real. This is not about seeking to abolish categories, but instead, aiming to explore these hybrids as third spaces,

understood as a location and/or practice where “dualities are transcended to reveal fertile and reproductive spaces where subjects put perspectives, lived experiences, and rhetorical performances into play” (Licona 2005:105).

I will return to the idea of third spaces at the end of this chapter when I discuss how Haraway’s work can help us to move forward in VAW prevention in social media and in particular in addressing online sexual violence. In the next section, I want to address several aspects and challenges for feminism that come from working in these in-betweens.

Part III: Feminist Public Sociology

My research findings underscore how ongoing conversations about feminism and feminist work are integral to research and practice surrounding VAW. As I discuss in Chapter Eight, feminism is interwoven in my participants’ work and identity in a myriad of ways. Like public sociology, an individuals’ path in and through feminist theory and action is both personal and dynamic. There is no accepted universal feminist model, just as there is no universal sociology with which to do public sociology. What feminism and public sociology look like in practice is determined by a combination of social forces and individual agency, as historically established ideologies and institutions shape how each individual takes up feminist work. However, my research findings point to three important considerations for feminist public sociology of VAW to navigate that are particularly salient in social media: (1) language; (2) cooperative ways of knowing, and (3) anti-feminist backlash. While these issues are not restricted to so-called online or offline spaces, social media may shape them in particular ways.

Language

In knowledge production, language and terminology matter. Violence against women (VAW) is a political and feminist term, although it has been arguably mainstreamed through the proliferation of publications, organizations, coalitions, and associations using this framework.¹⁵⁷ However, VAW remains a political and feminist term because, by using the VAW terminology, people doing VAW work are inherently recognizing and labelling VAW as a separate and gendered phenomena. Yet as feminist work increasingly centers intersectionality, diversity, and a plurality of identities, there is an important relationship and tension between the language of VAW and that of gender-based violence (GBV).¹⁵⁸

My research findings, particularly qualitative survey responses around definitions and terminology, indicate that this is an important area of consideration. For some participants, working explicitly in a VAW framework is important for acknowledging the historical success of feminism in identifying and problematizing men's violence against women. It is also central to the struggle to combat the "violence is gender neutral" arguments employed explicitly by Men's Rights Activists and that proliferate social media commentary (Fairbairn 2013). However, as gender is increasingly recognized as something on a spectrum rather than a binary (see Ferber, Holcomb, and Wentling 2009), and homophobic and transphobic violence increasingly are recognized as important areas of intervention, this rigid focus on men's violence against women becomes a bit messier. As this evolution takes place, some stakeholders see gender-based violence (GBV) as a

¹⁵⁷ But also arguably de-mainstreamed and made more political, given government shifts towards "Family Violence" language, for example.

¹⁵⁸ This tension is not specific to VAW discourse, but can also be seen in other arenas, such as whether or not departments should be labeled "Women's Studies", "Gender Studies", or some variation/combination of the two.

more progressive and inclusive term, free of the potentially gender-essentializing binary that a strict VAW label arguably implies. Additionally, gender-based violence might arguably signal the fact that trans individuals experience disproportionately higher rates of violence when compared to cis-gender people (Wathen, MacGregor, and MacQuarrie 2014; National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs 2015). This is not a point I will resolve in this dissertation, but one that I raise as a necessary consideration for public sociology, particularly in light of audiences, intersectionality, and cooperative ways of knowing.

What do cooperative ways of knowing mean for public sociology?

Within cooperative ways of knowing, knowledge is more than a product to be translated into accessible terms (as in traditional public sociology), but is a work in progress that aims to centre historically marginalized voices. In this way, the idea of cooperative ways of knowing acknowledges that knowledge construction is a messy process, that “knowledge with” marginalized communities is preferable to “knowledge of”, and that listening must go hand in hand with dissemination. Based on the reflexive, praxis-based, and interdisciplinary public sociology put forward in Chapter Two and the university and community integrated model put forward in Chapter Five, we see then that within cooperative ways of knowing, public sociology is most rigorous and potentially transformative when it accounts for the diversity of relevant community identities and experiences and specifically acknowledges historical marginalization (for example, in the case of VAW prevention, violence against Indigenous women). The fact that cooperative ways of knowing are uncomfortable and hard work at times is exactly the point:

cooperative ways of knowing focus on illuminating power, privilege, inequality, and the subjectivity of all knowledge. This does not mean accounting for every individual viewpoint, but means considering the expertise (experiential and academic) underlying various viewpoints. In academia, we crowdsource published knowledge in semi-anonymous ways through peer-review. However, for the most part, this process obscures rather than illuminates cooperative ways of knowing in an attempt to make acceptance (or rejection) from epistemic communities (e.g. journals) feel objective and neutral.

Additionally, and of particular importance for sociologists, cooperative ways of knowing involve awareness that you are working in a community whether or not you explicitly engage in community-based research or public sociology. This means that sociologists' work depends on various experiences and knowledge produced by community members, and that the findings of the research may impact these communities regardless of researcher intent (particularly through social media). In Chapters Two and Five, I discussed the position of the expert in public sociology and explain my discomfort with the idea that, as sociologists, "we" have knowledge that "they" (publics) do not (see Mesny 2009). In this context, I was exploring the notion that public sociology overstates an individual sociologist's influence in public debate. At the same time however, in further unpacking my research findings, I want to argue an ostensibly different view: that sometimes, research can also have a deeper and longer lasting impact than we might expect. In thinking about cooperative ways of knowing, there is therefore a responsibility to be aware of where one's theoretical and empirical research findings fit in current political debates, public discourse, and social movements. To unpack this idea further, I return to one of the themes from Chapters Six and Eight relating to online harassment,

and consider anti-feminist backlash and men's rights activists in the context of feminism, public sociology, and the sometimes-unintended consequences of sociological research.

Anti-feminists online

In Chapter Seven I discuss several examples of backlash and harassment experienced by participants related to social media, and explain how strategies employed by men's rights activists (MRAs) (e.g. gaslighting) are similar to abuser tactics. In this section, I highlight what we know from broader research about MRAs as a challenge for VAW prevention, and I explore the role of researchers in this capacity. I argue here that, while it is important to focus on online sexual violence (e.g. rape threats) and gendered harassment online, we must also explore the broader, seemingly less serious, but deeply embedded resistance to VAW prevention (specifically, intimate partner violence) in the form of gender parity arguments.

The "overtly angry antifeminist backlash" of MRA voices:

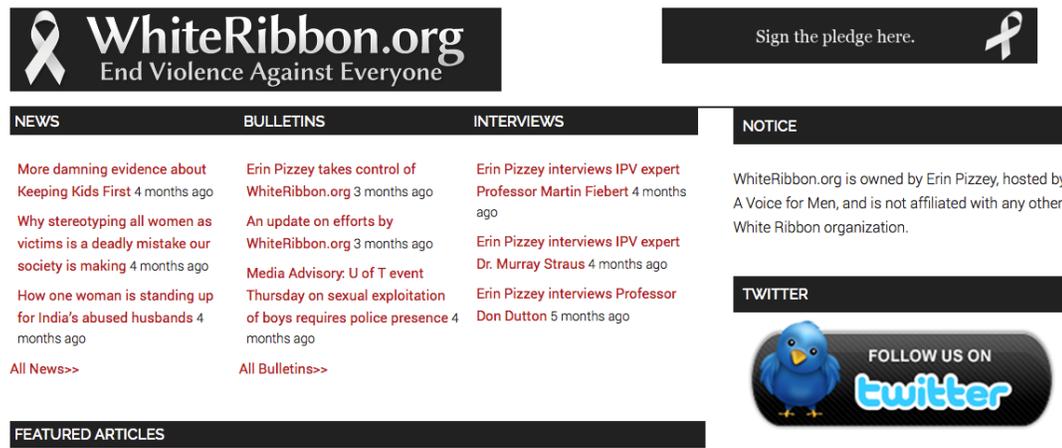
Argue that women are equally or indeed more violent in domestic contexts than men, and that abused women shelters, restraining orders, antistalking laws, risk assessment tools, and other feminist-supported anti-domestic violence interventions promote hatred of and bias against men (Mann 2008:44-45).

Increasingly "vocal, visible, and organized" (Mann 2008:44), MRAs have employed social media strategically in recent years. As one of my participants notes,

The Men's Rights Activist movement is so big and the Internet works for them too. They are able to connect and share resources and rally together (F10).

We can see one of the ways that MRA groups are able to make the Internet work for them in Figure 4:

Figure 4: White Ribbon copycat site



In this example (screen shot taken February 1, 2015), the MRA group *A Voice For Men*, in collaboration with advocate and former shelter worker Erin Pizzey (positioned as their in-house domestic violence expert)¹⁵⁹ took over the URL WhiteRibbon.org,¹⁶⁰ imitating the design and framework of the international anti-VAW organization White Ribbon Campaign.¹⁶¹

MRAs have been successful in setting up a false dichotomy between their work and that of feminists surrounding VAW. Instead of understanding feminism as against patriarchy, in this MRA constructed dichotomy, feminists are constructed as against men, and MRAs are “telling the other side” of the story, one where violence is gender neutral.

This work relies heavily on the small but widely referenced body of work that argues that

¹⁵⁹ Erin Pizzey is credited with opening the world’s first domestic violence shelter in 1971. Her research and advocacy work argues that domestic violence is gender-neutral. According to one National Post opinion piece titled “On Domestic Violence, No One Wants to Hear the Truth”, Pizzey is “a humanist [who] challenged the belief system directed by radical feminists...[whose] ideological mantra, still alive and kicking, insists that men are the default perpetrators in domestic violence.” Pizzey’s work is described as a crusade that is “emblematic of the hostility truth-tellers confront in the domestic violence industry.” (Kay n.d.)

¹⁶⁰ The actual White Ribbon Organization owns both WhiteRibbon.com and WhiteRibbon.ca.

¹⁶¹ White Ribbon Campaign is an international organization of men working to end violence against women and develop healthy masculinities. The White Ribbon Campaign’s response to the copycat site can be found at: <http://www.whiteribbon.ca/news/white-ribbon-copycat-statement/>.

domestic violence is gender neutral. Specifically, Murray Strauss' Conflict Tactics Scale (see Mann 2008:52-53 for further discussion), and his findings around gender symmetry of violence, have become a foundational tool of the Men's Rights movement, despite feminist critique and significant research problematizing the framework and methodology of this research (see Johnson and Dawson 2011:54-56). For example, the Conflict Tactics Scale has been criticized

[F]or failing to provide the context, intentions, or meanings needed to provide accurate interpretations, for equating less severe acts with more violent ones, for equating a single act with chronic ongoing violence meant to terrorize, for leaving out sexual assault and violence after separation, for failing to distinguish between offensive and defensive acts, and for ignoring gendered power imbalances in intimate relationships and society more generally (Johnson and Dawson 2011:55-56).

Despite counting only individual physical actions and not factoring in analyses of power and social inequality, Strauss' research results have nonetheless served as intellectual ammunition for the notion that feminist conspiracies created a propaganda-based moral panic around VAW. It is, somewhat ironically, the most viral example of public sociology related to intimate partner violence. I use this example to highlight how social media is an important meeting and outreach space for MRA groups, but also, and more importantly, to illustrate my earlier point that academic research may be taken up in public spaces regardless of researcher intention.

Throughout my research, participants comment on the difficulty in having nuanced conversations about complex social issues, both in mainstream media and online. Although participants have increased control over the message in social media (framing, phrasing, terminology, etc.), nuance is still a challenge. Within intimate partner violence work in particular, this challenge is exacerbated by the false dichotomy of

feminist/meninist¹⁶² that has been propagated by MRAs. The problem with this false dichotomy is that within broader publics (outside of feminist epistemic communities), there does not appear to be a space within which to discuss and critique certain aspects of feminist work without falling into a meninist rabbit hole (for example, recall the participant discussed in Chapter Seven who was horrified that a men's rights activist had retweeted her comment about sensationalizing human trafficking at sporting events). Feminism is not a unified movement or set of ideas, and within the rapid and decentralized social media landscape a single message or argument can take root and be circulated repeatedly and variedly before another idea comes along to refine or rebut the first. Although the Conflict Tactics scale has been reshaped and revised by domestic violence researchers (e.g. Dobash and Dobash 2004), the widely cited initial research has been taken up and reaffirmed so many times that this evolving academic trajectory and attention to nuance and complexity is diluted within social media and public discourse more broadly.

Recommendations for VAW-focused feminist public sociology

In the context of VAW prevention, social media, and feminist public sociology, then, I have four recommendations. The first is to *disentangle trolls (and the notion of "don't feed the trolls") from MRAs*. MRAs are not (only) trolls, since they are not simply seeking to start flame wars about various topics online. Rather, they are a focused and arguably organized movement with defined leadership and objectives, who may yield

¹⁶² See for example, Zand (2013:para. 2), who explains: "The #MeninistTwitter hashtag was initially started by men sharing jokes - some of which were criticised as offensive by feminists. But supporters of the hashtag say it's become a channel for men to express the difficulties of being a man in the 21st Century." For examples of social media content using this hashtag, see Warren (2014).

influence in policy arenas (Girard 2009). They also have financial resources: the movement's core website avoiceformen.com had merchandising sales of approximately \$120,000 US in 2014 (Serwer and Baker 2015).

A second recommendation is to *think beyond MRAs to acknowledge that gender-symmetry arguments are a significant obstacle for people doing VAW prevention work in social media*. Public sociology can be helpful in working beyond epistemic communities to explore these attitudes. Gender-symmetry debates are also an area where further feminist theorizing is needed. Of course, there is a tension here between engaging with gender-symmetry beliefs and giving MRAs legitimacy, and I am not arguing that MRAs should be given credibility as “the other side” to VAW prevention. However, in the spirit of Mopas and Moore's (2012) argument that emotions in public criminology must be taken seriously rather than trivialized, it seems necessary to explore the prevalence and nature of social attitudes and beliefs that feminists overstate the gendered nature of VAW. Social media gives us a glimpse into many expressions, conversations, and interactions about social issues, and it is apparent that the actual or anticipated need to respond to gender-parity critiques is a disincentive for deeper social media engagement for many potential VAW prevention efforts. It is tempting to write off all online critics of VAW prevention as illegitimate, trolls, out to lunch, and so forth. However, as sociologists, we aim to connect individual experience with broader social patterns. In this light, we need to take seriously attitudes and beliefs surrounding the notion that there is gender parity in intimate partner violence, and explore how these beliefs might also impact other forms of VAW (e.g. the “women lie” belief that surrounds sexual assault).

My third recommendation for VAW-focused feminist public sociology is to *flip how we think about traditional public sociology as starting from the academy and moving outward*. As my participants note, and as most academics realize, there is so much research that simply sits in academic journals behind paywalls.¹⁶³ I argue that it is beneficial for sociologists to be aware of the community-based issues and contexts where our research might be taken up, and that these communities include the Internet. In this flipped traditional public sociology then, an academic is not simply thinking about awareness (transmission), but about knowledge (translation). This translation is more than removing jargon or adapting the writing style to make it accessible, but involves translating academic work into a context fitting of current debates; in other words, it involves connecting research to current social discourse. One tangible suggestion for this might be as straightforward as having a statement on one's webpage/academic profile/social networking sites that reads: My research involves ___ and is relevant in light of current discussions about ___. Some of my findings are ___. If you are writing about or working in ___, I might be a good person to talk to.¹⁶⁴ For copyright reasons, most academics cannot post copies of journal articles and book chapters online, but could likely send them to an interested party, assuming the interested party could first find the

¹⁶³ Paywalls are where users must pay to access some or all of a particular website.

¹⁶⁴ In my case, this might read: "My research involves gender and feminism, mass media/social media, and violence against women, and is currently relevant in light of discussions about how mainstream media cover VAW (e.g. Ray Rice/Janay Rice case; Jian Ghomeshi or Bill Cosby coverage; and any other domestic homicides reported in the press), how people working to prevent VAW use social media, and growing attention to online sexual violence (e.g. Facebook "rape joke" pages, so-called revenge porn, and the online harassment of feminists). Some of my research findings are that there is a lack of VAW experts in mainstream media coverage but that other positive changes have taken place over time, that people working to prevent VAW are using social media in a variety of capacities to raise awareness and change conversations about VAW, and that there is a growing recognition of and resistance to online sexual violence, particularly against feminists online. If you are writing about or working in news media covering VAW, VAW prevention, online feminist activism, online sexual violence, I might be a good person to talk to."

researcher. Of course, many sociologists do the above in a variety of ways already, many of them informal. However, what if it was institutional practice, similar to how university-based academics (professors) frequently list their courses taught and/or recent publications? While this could be a recommendation for public sociology more broadly, it is particularly fitting for feminist work. This is because feminism has been historically stigmatized in the academy (Chesney-Lind and Morash 2013), but also because feminist work has had significant success from a public sociology standpoint (Risman 2003).¹⁶⁵

In this spirit, my fourth and final recommendation for feminist public sociology around VAW is *to consider activism as more than political action, but as something that emphasizes creativity in knowledge translation*. Cunningham, Walker, and Curry (2007:346) define activism as “changing the way people think, understand, and act”, and argues that activism “implies action or involvement on the part of all participants, including researchers, as a means of effectuating social change.” In Chapter Two, I argue that it may not be up to an individual researcher to decide whether their research is considered political, since research and knowledge construction is a political process shaped by the broader political environment (e.g. climate change research). In Chapter Seven, I discuss the idea of conversational activism at length as a term to describe participants’ activities around VAW. There have been similar concepts to conversational activism in academic scholarship, such as narrative communication activism

¹⁶⁵ For example, in 1994, researchers studied social reactions to the Ecole Polytechnique shootings (the Montreal Massacre) and argued that “men and women must change their perceptions of feminism as being separate from and incompatible with the world of men” (Sansfacon, Levy, Samson 1994:107).

(Cunningham, Walker, and Curry 2007), discursive political activism (Shaw 2012)¹⁶⁶ and poetic activism (Gergen 1994). Poetic activism in particular emphasizes creativity, as it:

Challenges us to develop creative methods of analysis, presentation, and dissemination of research results. Perhaps most importantly, poetic activism offers researchers the opportunity to approach the research relationship “poetically”, so that the partnerships created within a research project also can serve as effective change agents. Therefore, the process, as well as the product, of a research project can generate social reform (Cunningham, Walker, and Curry 2007:346).

In recent years, feminist academics have discussed the activist scholar (Belknap 2015), action research (Gallagher 2001; Williams 2004; Reid 2008), and intellectual activism (Collins 2012). My research participants also recognize the interwoven nature of scholarship and activism. As one participant explains, for VAW prevention, academia and activism are interdependent:

I think it’s really funny that there seems to be this boundary between academic work and activism, when you can’t really do either of them without the other (F4).

Creativity is an important facet of social media work, and my research suggests that integrations of informational and visual content such as infographics¹⁶⁷ are an effective strategy for social media knowledge dissemination. Feminists such as criminologist Chesney-Lind (2006:6) argue that creativity must be an important part of scholarship as well:

The field must seek creative ways to blend scholarships with activism while simultaneously providing support and encouragement to emerging feminist criminologists willing to take such risks.

¹⁶⁶ Shaw (2012) argues that feminism has a strong history of discursive political activism, involving “speech or texts that seek to challenge opposing discourses by exposing power relations within these discourses, denaturalising what appears natural (Fine 1992:221 as cited in Shaw 2012:42). Of course, this is also explored in a Foucauldian sense (see, for example, Chasteen 2001).

¹⁶⁷ Infographics are “graphic visual representations of data that are intended to present complex information quickly and clearly” (Futterman 2013).

Academic sociology is practiced within a risk-averse institutional climate that does not traditionally foster creative activist practices. This is particularly salient given the increasing proportion of contract and non-tenure track workers in universities (Cross and Goldernberg 2011). However, sociologists and criminologists can gather creative insights for low-stakes practices from the digitally mobilized communities that we study. Some of the strategies my participants are currently using are storytelling/sharing experiential knowledge, developing visuals and infographics to summarize data, and re-framing or contextualizing news stories through conversational activism.

As my research findings demonstrate, some participants embrace activism at a structural level, taking on high profile institutions and companies to pursue VAW prevention work, and rely on social media to raise awareness, make connections, and garner public support. Others reach out in a more individual or local capacity within their online social networks to speak up against online material promoting violence, or to develop initiatives to support marginalized groups in their community. As with the label of feminist, the concept of an activist may be widely used and understood, and take on different meanings depending on the political context and relations of ruling we are navigating (see Smith 2005). Feminism and sociology share an ability to creatively bridge the private/public and individual/social by exploring everyday behaviours as significant, and to denaturalize the taken for granted. This includes actively and creatively exploring how the world could be different than it is presently. In recent years, feminist work fighting for the right to take up space safely has expanded its gaze beyond the home and the workplace. This work is particularly visible in online feminism and has

included facets such as rights to street space (street harassment),¹⁶⁸ conversational space (e.g. “mansplaining”¹⁶⁹) and online space (see Garde-Hansen and Gorton 2013). This creative and digitally based activism often focuses on gendering everyday practices and recognizing the interconnectedness of patriarchy, sexism, misogyny, and violence. While still struggling to be intersectional and to mitigate backlash, online feminist work presents a valuable roadmap for navigating the hybrid spaces of academic/community and virtual/real.

In this third section, I have discussed three important considerations for feminist public sociology of VAW: language, community based and cooperative ways of knowing, and anti-feminist backlash. In the context of VAW prevention, social media, and public sociology, I have put forward four arguments. The first and second are related. First, to disentangle trolls from MRAs, and second, to acknowledge that gender-symmetry arguments are a significant obstacle for people doing VAW prevention work in social media. A third argument is to flip how we think about traditional public sociology so that an academic is not simply working for awareness (transmission), but for knowledge (translation). This translation is more than removing jargon or adapting the writing style to make it accessible to read, but involves translating academic work into a context fitting of current debates. And finally, we need to consider activism as more than political action, but as something that emphasizes creativity in knowledge translation.

¹⁶⁸ For example, Hollaback! is a non-profit movement to end street harassment working 84 cities across 25 countries with a strong online presence, including geo-mapping sites of street harassment.

¹⁶⁹ For example, as Hart (2014:para. 2) explains, “the word ‘mansplain’ can be traced to Rebecca Solnit, a writer whose 2008 essay “Men Explain Things to Me” laid out the mansplaining fundamentals (though the actual term only began cropping up on feminist blogs months later). In its early form, it had a straightforward definition: “when a man condescendingly lectures a woman on the basics of a topic about which he knows very little, under the mistaken assumption that she knows even less” (Hart 2014:para. 2). In 2014, “Mansplaining” topped a list of new entries to the Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English (Groves 2015).

This creativity involves an awareness of new topics to be explored, strategies for shaping knowledge, and also creative ways to support those doing this work.

The Internet, as I explain in Chapter One, can be understood as three facets: social, media, and technology (Cavanagh 2012). This research focuses in large part on the social and the mediated aspects from the perspective of doing prevention work.

Throughout this dissertation, I have repeatedly visited the blurring and converging boundaries of online/offline, virtual/real, community/academic, and physical/non-physical. In this last section, I further explore feminism and blurring boundaries by using Donna Haraway's (1988, 1991) work, and in particular the cyborg metaphor and Licona's (2005) notion of third spaces. Here, I consider how the cyborgs and third spaces can weave together social, media, and technological aspects of VAW prevention and layer this understanding with feminist public sociology. I argue that the emerging category of online sexual violence encapsulates new understandings of feminism, gender, and violence by presenting us with a present-day cyborg figure (Haraway 1988; 1991). In this way, it allows exploration of the hybrid nature the physical and the virtual, and enables us to move forward under a VAW prevention framework where the digital is real.

Part IV: Cyborgs and Third Spaces

The Internet is no longer merely an information Internet. It is a social and participatory web with an increasingly expansive capacity for visual and auditory engagement through images and sound. From webcams to emoticons to teledildonics,¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Originally coined by Ted Nelson (1974), the term "teledildonics" was popularized by Howard Rheingold in his 1990 essay "Teledildonics: Reach Out and Touch Someone". Present-day teledildonics are marketed by companies such as the Dutch company KIIROO, market their products as "designer couples toys for long distance relationships" (Kiir n.d.). At least one recent article has

as a society we are finding more and more ways to integrate sensory and emotional experience and expression within digital technologies. Looking forward, our future is likely to feature a more sensory-dimensional Internet, perhaps including taste and smell (see Volpicelli 2013). We are, as Haraway (1988, 1991) observes, “boundary blurring tricksters”, and it is precisely within this hybrid identity, this in between, where the most fruitful and necessary conversations about gender, violence, and prevention can consider future technologically mediated possibilities.

Boundary blurring tricksters

In this dissertation, I have explored the intersections of social media and VAW prevention through the experiences of individuals doing this work. Discussions about negotiating identity online, the influence of design on VAW prevention, and experiences of online violence highlight the intersections of online and offline experiences. But what does it mean to say that part of us exists online? Here, Haraway’s metaphor of the cyborg (1989, 1991) can be used to broaden and deepen understanding of VAW prevention in social media. Beyond its significance in terms of intellectual influence, Haraway’s *Manifesto for Cyborgs* is also notable as the first article that Haraway wrote on the computer (i.e. as a cyborg), and because this work occurred at a time where many academics were beginning to experience computers in their working lives (Bell 2007). In her writing, Haraway summoned the cyborg as a “boundary blurring trickster figure,

argued that these “smart internet connected sex toys” may be at risk of security hacks from strangers (e.g. Prigg 2015), which has important potential connections to emerging understandings of online sexual violence.

working to undermine the dualisms which structure how we think and live” (1987:7).¹⁷¹ By rejecting essentialism, Haraway’s cyborg is a collection of “disparate, incongruent parts”, where each individual is composed of “multiple elements of oppressor and oppressed” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2014).

Haraway (1987:10) argues that the cyborg is possible by breaking down three boundaries (what she terms “leaky distinctions”): (1) between human and animal,¹⁷² (2) between animal-human (organism) and machine, and (3) between physical and non-physical. In challenging the perceived naturalness of boundaries between nature and culture, Haraway presents a cyborg world as one where people may explore “transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work” (pp. 12-13) and where people may be unafraid “of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints” (p. 13). The cyborg is “no longer structured by the polarity of public and private” (p. 9), but recognizes that “the relation between organism and machine has been a border war” (p. 8). In the cyborg world, Haraway (1987:8) argues for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction, emphasizing the role of power and inequality in creating bounded spaces.

My research findings explore how participants, through technology, are extending various parts of their work and identities through different platforms. Technologically facilitated communication helps to shape their knowledge and awareness of VAW, and allows them to extend and adapt their work through social media. Of course, VAW

¹⁷¹ Although there is much more to Haraway’s manifesto than the use of the cyborg (see Bell 2007), it is this query that I will focus on as most relevant to my analysis purposes.

¹⁷² Haraway (1991:10) argues that “Language, tool use, social behavior, mental events, nothing really convincingly settles the separation of human and animal.”

prevention work has been technologically facilitated for as long as there have been pens and paper, since these are also tools. However, my research demonstrates that there are four cyborg elements that are unique or magnified within social media. First, *an individual may choose what “digital skin” they wish to put on to do this work*. That is, they may represent themselves by their personal name, by a chosen username, through the organization they work with, and so forth. They can be a unified persona throughout Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, and in the physical world, or they can fragment their bodies/personhood throughout these spaces as their needs and desires dictate.

Second, *participants understand that being cyborgs (particularly doing VAW prevention) affects their mental and emotional capacity*. Digital experiences affect one’s mental and emotional capacity (bandwidth) in positive and negative ways. For example, recall the participant that talked about needing to unplug from VAW conversations on social media and acknowledged that she was privileged because she had the power to exercise those boundaries. As Haraway notes, power is seen and practiced through the ability to define and construct boundaries. Being able to unplug and leave the public sphere is one facet of this power, and is more readily available to some feminists working in hybrid spaces than others.

Similarly, a third cyborg element relevant to VAW prevention online is that *people do not have complete control over the parts of themselves that exist online*. This can have arguably positive effects, such as journalists or researchers being able to access information and content outside of real time. For example, in Chapter Seven, I explain how journalists are contacting participant’s social media selves (e.g. Twitter profile) for context and quotes rather than reaching out to the individual in live time. However,

content and meaning may be circulated, broken down, and re-made in ways that are not always beneficial to the individual. For example, in Chapter Eight I discussed a scenario where someone created a fake account under a participant's name, using their image to provoke an online hate campaign. This further illustrates the relationship between social media policies and an individual's lack of control over their online self. For somebody who wanted to start a harassment campaign against a feminist, her image and online character was accessible. There is a disconnect here where, as cyborgs, a part of ourselves comes to live online and can be used and manipulated without our consent, yet social and legal policies are currently insufficient to address these harms. Understanding social media as a hybrid space means that it is taken seriously in discourse, legislation, and policies rather than being conceptualized as virtual in the sense it is "not quite real".

Finally, and perhaps most significantly for VAW prevention, a fourth cyborg element of VAW prevention is that *social media is a powerful force for challenging dualisms of violence as physical or non-physical*. For decades, feminists have argued that VAW exists on a spectrum: that it is more than physical violence, and involves a range of emotional, psychological, verbal, financial, and spiritual abuse. My qualitative survey findings around definitions of VAW echo this sentiment. This has been particularly the case in domestic violence work, but we also see this in sexual violence prevention in efforts to move beyond understanding of "real rapes" that involve explicit physical attacks to an understanding of sexual violence as involving threats, coercion, intimidation, and/or tools such as alcohol to incapacitate a victim.

Certainly, there is still a long way to go. However, social media features such as the ability to capture (record, screenshot) and publicly circulate visible and audible

evidence of power and control (photos of sexual assaults, so-called rape jokes or joke pages) make it more difficult to ignore that such misogyny and abuse exists, and enable the formation of smart mobs (Rheingold 2007) to address them. Consequently, social phenomena such as the recently profiled Dalhousie “Gentleman’s Club”¹⁷³ are both *the abusive event* in terms of sexual violence that targets specific individuals, but are also constructed as *the evidence* of a larger socio-cultural problem (what is currently widely labeled “rape culture”). This awareness (of the event) and knowledge (of the evidence) are shared rapidly and in a far-reaching manner, with trending hashtags such as #DalhousieHatesWomen emerging as a meeting point for information (about the evolving news story), context (about hate speech, sexism, rape culture, and campus sexual assault), emotions (public reactions), and calls for change (what needs to happen now).

Moving beyond physical violence

Violence is not a universal constant but, rather, a constructed understanding of socially defined harms resulting from aggression and abuse of power (Fairbairn 2015). Definitions of violence are therefore historically, socially, and politically located, and are presently evolving among activists, scholars, and advocates to capture harms associated with online violence.¹⁷⁴ For example, in recent years, we have seen increased attention to non-consensual distribution of intimate images (often called revenge porn) as a form of VAW. International campaigns such as *Take Back the Tech* are one example of how this

¹⁷³ The Dalhousie “Gentleman’s Club” is was a Facebook group of fourth-year male dentistry students whose closed group page included misogynistic comments and so-called jokes about sexually assaulting female classmates (see CBC News 2014).

¹⁷⁴ Citron (2009) explains that society has historically marginalized harms that primarily affect women. Citron argues that we must break down myths pertaining to online harassment such as: 1) it represents innocuous teasing; 2) women can address the harassment on their own; and 3) it is part of the Internet’s unique norms.

work of evolving definitions of violence is taking place in ways that highlight that power and control are complex and multi-faceted online. In Canada, recent initiatives such as the 35 recommendations made by West Coast LEAF (2014) around legal responses to gendered hate and harassment online and Status of Women Canada's (2013) recent funding for projects addressing cyber and sexual violence are indicative of growing awareness among various sectors that online sexual violence must be addressed.¹⁷⁵

To date, feminist actions around online sexual violence have focused on awareness and knowledge, and are currently working on social and institutional transformation. As Chapter Three explains, widespread recognition of sexual violence and intimate partner violence as social problems did not happen organically. Dedicated research, survivor, and advocacy work built a conversation in legal arenas, social services, and research practice in order to provide a framework to talk about rape. As Johnson and Dawson (2011:188) explain:

In the past four decades, numerous achievements can be attributed to the tireless efforts of those involved in the violence against women movement. The definition of violence has been broadened to include those victimized by marital and non-marital partners and to recognize the equally detrimental effects of psychological, verbal, and financial abuse along with physical and sexual violence.

As Johnson (2007) argues, VAW prevention efforts have been hindered by a lack of consensus about what behaviours constitute violence. This is also the case with efforts to build awareness and knowledge of online violence (Bluett-Boyd et al. 2013).

Furthermore, social sluggishness to accept the idea that the Internet (and violence against women) is real (i.e. meaningful) as social phenomena is an obstacle. The cyborg

¹⁷⁵ In doing so, it is also important to draw from feminist work to look beyond individual situations to consider how abuse occurs based on gender, racialization, sexuality, ability, class, and other social forces.

metaphor helps us to extend our understanding of VAW prevention into online spaces and transcend the idea that the real and the virtual world can be understood in a dichotomy.

VAW prevention literature and my participants' work tell us that widespread but narrow understanding of violence as physical assault is not sufficient for current digital contexts. The feedback on definitions of VAW (presented in Chapter Six) in particular indicates that the knowledge of the spectrum of violence must be translated into definitions used to continually work towards change. As digital spaces become increasingly sensory and embedded in the physical world, societal responses to "online" violence will, therefore, become less about the online nature of this violence, and more about the emotional, verbal, psychological, financial, and spiritual nature of abuse. In part, this is because recent events have made the cyborg nature of VAW clear when several young women (and some young men) took their lives following online harassment related to their sexuality and/or sexual assaults.¹⁷⁶ Technology has frequently been the target of moral panics in society, particularly around young women and their sexuality (Bivens and Fairbairn 2015), but we know that sexual violence existed long before the Internet and social media, and feminists working to combat online harassment are actively engaged in constructing online sexual violence as part of a larger spectrum of VAW.

¹⁷⁶ In recent years in Canada and the U.S., there have been numerous high-profile cases of online victimization and suicides of young women and girls following the distribution of photos or video of their sexual assaults (Almasy 2013), the non-consensual sharing of intimate photos (Keneally 2012), and/or sexual bullying in the form of 'slut-shaming' (Newton 2013). On October 10, 2012, Amanda Todd, a 15 year old British Columbia student, committed suicide following months of online sexual exploitation, blackmailing, and bullying. On April 7, 2013, Rehtaeh Parsons, a 17 year old Nova Scotia high school student, committed suicide after months of digital abuse related to her sexual assault.

Misogyny in social media is understood as violence when those who exercise power to define violence are the same individuals who understand that our bodies do not end at the skin (Haraway 1991). In other words, it benefits those perpetrating violence if online spaces are not real, and it harms those experiencing it if such violence is not taken seriously. We are only just a decade or so into the emergence and proliferation of social media, and we are still working through dichotomous understandings that view online and offline as unreal and real, respectively. We have been through this process with other technology: for many people, their cyborg identity involves clothes and eyeglasses, pens and typewriters, perhaps word processors and a more informational Internet (see Beetham 2005). In this context, we are comfortable with the notions that forcibly removing someone's clothes, or mailing death threats via pen and paper, are crimes. But as those who were borne into a more recent cyborg culture come to yield more power to define social norms, policies, and laws, we will see online violence and offline violence converge in our ontology of violence, and words like "online violence" will evolve just as constructions of "date rape" and "wife abuse" have become subsumed under categories of sexual assault and intimate partner violence/domestic violence more broadly.

Third space sociology

As awareness and knowledge create cultural and institutional transformations, feminism and public sociology can play significant roles. Understanding the cyborg metaphor as part of a third space can help to illuminate this potential. Haraway's cyborg manifesto has had important implications for feminism. As Senft (2008:37) explains, Haraway's manifesto:

Helped a generation of feminists to definitively reject essentialist notions of what women 'are' by arguing that bodies, machines, geographies, genders, and sexualities co-determine one another's meanings in a dialectical fashion.

While the cyborg figure is often thought of as an individual actor, we can also think about "third spaces" in terms of location and practice. Licona (2005:105) explains that:

As a practice [third space] reveals a differential consciousness capable of engaging creative and coalitional forms of opposition to the limits of dichotomous (mis)representations. As a location, third space has the potential to be a space of shared understanding and meaning-making. Through a third-space consciousness then dualities are transcended to reveal fertile and reproductive spaces where subjects put perspectives, lived experiences, and rhetorical performances into play.

Public sociology has its greatest potential as a third space location and/or practice. We can use this theoretical work around cyborgs and third spaces to highlight three themes from my dissertation pertaining to public sociology: First, public sociology works as an academic/ community hybrid where these identities are blended in ways that present great third space potential through partnership, reciprocal knowledge translation, relationship building, collaborative expertise, and linkages to current events and news stories. This requires interdisciplinary knowledge of where one's research topic fits within broader debates. There are also challenges for public sociologists working in this hybrid space where there are fewer institutional supports and/or roadmaps. Yet understanding that, just as Haraway asks, "Why should our bodies end at the skin?" we must explore the question of how sociological practice transcends the academy.

Second, third space takes us beyond offline/online binaries. While this binary may be helpful at times (e.g. recognizing the need to "unplug" and recharge batteries), it is not a solid theoretical foundation on which to move forward. VAW prevention in social media tells us that we cannot simply "add and stir" the Internet to offline practices, as

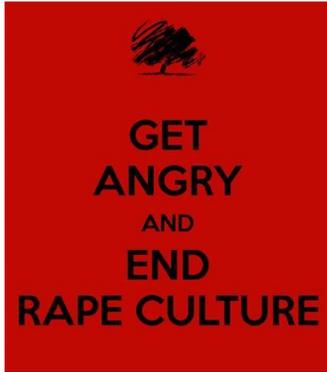
VAW prevention work and social media mutually shape each other. As social media become increasingly integrated into our everyday lives and bodies, we see growing awareness of the importance of considering sociological practices and concepts within these contexts (see Cavanagh 2012; Orton-Johnson and Prior 2013). For public sociologists who wish to further develop their hybrid identities through social media engagement, understanding the processes that I have outlined in this chapter (for example, in Table 14) may be helpful.

Finally, public sociology as third space makes us re-think intellectual/emotional boundaries and opens up systems of creativity and play.¹⁷⁷ Public sociology is about having our work resonate in spheres beyond the academy. People doing VAW prevention use experiential knowledge, storytelling, conversational activism, and multi-sensory methods (text, visual, audio) to attach to emotional social currents (see Figure 5) and draw in new audiences and participants. Making sociology accessible also means emotional accessibility. Thus, traditional notions of intellectual, detached academic work require translation for various emotional contexts as well as various publics.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, hybrid practice requires an awareness of the emotionality of public sociologists. Rather than attempting to nullify our emotions, we can instead explore the way that they drive our work, shape our interactions with our participants and networks, and encourage creative processes among epistemic communities pursuing social change.

¹⁷⁷ See Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) for further reading on emotions online.

¹⁷⁸ To some extent, this may happen over time. As new generations enter academia, they will have grown up with extensive experience as emotional cyborgs; that is, as writing online (texts and social media) using short forms and symbols that convey emotion.

Figure 5: Emotion and social change



Conclusion

This chapter has discussed and synthesized my research findings with scholarship on VAW prevention, feminism, and public sociology. In the first part of the chapter, I analyzed research findings about VAW prevention in social media in terms of what they can contribute to VAW prevention work. Specifically, I discussed conversational activism in relation to bystander intervention, and put forward examples of social media actions to prevent VAW as part of the spectrum of prevention (Table 13). I have also argued that linking conversational activism to bystander intervention builds stronger networks, may provide legitimacy and therefore resources, acknowledges it as labour, and enables interdisciplinary conversations about designing online spaces in ways that promote and encourage bystander intervention. However, recognizing conversational activism as a distinct sociological area of interest is also important because conversational activism has its roots in language and narrative, highlights emotions and their relationship to social norms, and acknowledges and centers feminism and feminist work.

In the second section, I have explored how my findings about VAW prevention in social media can inform our understanding of public sociology in four key ways: (1) understanding conversational activism as involving reciprocity and different from discursive intervention; (2) emphasizing audiences over news media; (3) educating epistemic communities; and (4) working on translation within networks as praxis. In the third section of this chapter, I outlined language, community based and cooperative ways of knowing, and anti-feminist backlash as important considerations for feminist public sociology of VAW, and put forward four arguments. The first and second are to disentangle trolls from MRAs and to acknowledge that gender-symmetry arguments are a significant obstacle for people doing VAW prevention work in social media. A third argument is to think about traditional public sociology as knowledge translation, where translation is more than removing jargon or adapting the writing style to make it accessible to read, but involves translating academic work into a context fitting of current debates. Finally, I argue that activism can be thought of as more than political action, but as something that emphasizes creativity in knowledge translation.

In the fourth and final part of this chapter, I have drawn from Haraway's cyborg metaphor and Licona's notion of third space to understand the hybrid nature of VAW prevention in social media and feminist public sociology more broadly. I have argued that the idea of the cyborgs can help to understand participants doing VAW prevention in four ways: (1) possibilities for various "digital skins" or identities; (2) awareness of the impact of social media on their individual mental and emotional capacity; (3) absence of control over the parts of themselves that exist online; and finally, (4) challenges to dualisms of violence as physical or non-physical. Finally, I concluded by exploring the third space of

public sociology as breaking down three sets of boundaries: academic/community; online/offline; and intellectual/emotions. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will revisit and summarize core findings from the various chapters, expand on my theoretical findings, consider the limitations of this research project, and explore directions for future research possibilities.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

This dissertation is a study of violence against women (VAW) prevention, feminist public sociology, and social media. I have explored two intersecting research foci. First, how do people working on VAW prevention use and experience social media? And second, what is the role of feminist public sociology in preventing VAW? My dissertation makes three central contributions. First, it advances theoretical and empirical understanding of VAW prevention work by presenting an account of how participants use and experience social media, by considering what is unique about VAW prevention in social media relative more traditional forms of prevention, and by conceptualizing VAW prevention in social media according to an ecological model of VAW prevention. Second, it contributes to feminist theory and feminist media studies by tracing the evolution of feminist anti-VAW work from older forms of media into social media spaces and identifying what new feminist questions and issues have emerged in these spaces. Finally, my dissertation re-theorizes public sociology in interaction with feminism and within social media. In this vein, I also aim to provide a practical roadmap for sociologists working in academia and community hybrids, for whom the line between interpreting and changing the world is increasingly indistinguishable.

I began this dissertation by outlining the empirical context of VAW. I laid a foundation by discussing research on sexual violence and intimate partner violence, the two clusters of VAW that I focused on in this research. I explored the gendered nature of sexual violence and intimate partner violence and examined what we know in terms of prevalence data. I discussed approaches to prevention and explained that my dissertation focuses on primary prevention, which aims to stop violence before it occurs. I also

introduced the ecological model, a widely used framework in offline VAW prevention work, and explained that this model understands VAW according to individual, relationship, community, and societal levels of risk factors. In this regard, I argued that understanding VAW prevention efforts in social media according to the ecological model of VAW prevention is helpful in translating and transforming offline VAW prevention efforts, while at the same time, analyzing what is new or unique about VAW prevention in the realm of social media should be a key feminist research priority. Additionally, rather than understanding social media as a monolithic “additional dimension” to VAW prevention, I argued that we should understand social media as its own diverse space containing various relationships, communities, and structures (i.e. sites). While this mass media/VAW prevention relationship has spanned decades, the emergence and proliferation of social media over the last ten years has been important for resistance and knowledge mobilization around VAW, and represents new opportunities as well as potential challenges for this work. Examining these opportunities and challenges has been a key focus of my dissertation.

This brief concluding chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I expand on my theoretical findings, which were previously presented at the start of Chapter Nine. In the second section, I explain how my core findings from the various chapters are mobilized as research and policy recommendations and discuss research dissemination. Finally, I acknowledge the limitations of this research project and explore directions for future research possibilities.

Part I: Mapping Our Route As Cyborgs

Based on the empirical findings, practical examples, and proposed typologies put forward in this dissertation, I draw four theoretical conclusions from my research findings to contribute to public sociology and feminism. First, converging disciplines and roles in social media means that knowledge translation is a necessary point of praxis between information transmission and social and institutional transformation. In this vein, social media may be involved in all three stages of transmission, translation, and transformation, but offers the most untapped potential at the knowledge translation stage. Second, VAW prevention in social media reveals a rapidly reflexive, increasingly intersectional feminism that prioritizes experiential knowledge and conversational activism. Third, this feminism is incompatible with Burawoy's original four-part framework for sociology but can be reconciled using community-based scholarship principles and cyborg feminism theoretical tools. And finally, the emerging category of online sexual violence encapsulates re-understandings of feminism, gender, and violence by presenting us with a present-day cyborg problem (Haraway 1991). Within this new terrain, we must explore the hybrid of the physical and the digital and move forward under a VAW prevention framework where the digital is real. In the remainder of this first section, I outline the implications of these conclusions for public sociology, and for feminism.

Public sociology

The emergence and proliferation of social media in recent years has created new ways to be part of the social world. Much research has focused on how social media is

related to transformations in activism and social movements more broadly. My research explores what social media brings to the table for VAW prevention, which, until recently, focused almost entirely on reducing risk among potential victims and perpetrators. The Internet is now widely understood as much more than an extensive network of information transmission: it involves relationships, communities, and structures. The more that participants are knowledgeable and experienced with/in social media, the less they see it as a one-way communication space, and the more they talk about it as an ecological space with relationship, community, and social levels. In light of this, translation emerges as a central area of preoccupation.

My findings suggest that public sociology should emphasize audiences over news media. There is a continued need for training in journalism school and dissemination of toolkits/media resources for reporting on VAW. But in social media, these hubs and toolkits have multiple functions. First, they exist as a resource for journalists prior to reporting on VAW, and can be created in participatory contexts with journalists as allies (relationship building). However, they can also be used as an accountability reference point after the coverage. Audiences also become a priority through hashtag campaigns (e.g #BeenRapedNeverReported), which target attitudes and behaviours over media representations. In this way, VAW prevention in social media sets aside mainstream news coverage as the primary marker of public attitudes and beliefs about VAW. Additionally, by drawing people into discussions about the complexities and nuances of VAW events as the reactions are occurring and responses forming, conversational activism is targeting the frequently elusive and hard to measure prevention arena of social norms (see Johnson and Dawson 2011). Moreover, this is frequently done in a visual and multi-sensory way,

where VAW can be seen in a more public fashion than was previously possible. Screenshots of rape threats, images of women holding up signs with quotes from the person who assaulted them, and even real-time pleas for help for women attempting to escape abusive relationships mean that stories that did not previously make the mainstream news can become widely viewed. In this environment, power comes not from ability to enter mainstream media, but from ability to garner public attention in social media (although this is not always positive, as my findings around backlash and online violence demonstrate).

My findings also suggest that it is important to educate epistemic communities as part of public sociology and when thinking through concerns about preaching to the choir. Participants educate within their professional and activist sectors through building connections and sharing resources among other activists and advocates, by using social media to educate themselves about intersectionality, and by privileging and centering marginalized voices. In this way, what many would call “the choir” (in terms of preaching to the choir) is not a homogenous, fixed group following a coordinated script that consistently results in a cohesive, media-friendly message. Rather, the epistemic community of those doing VAW prevention is a diverse and fluid group of individuals, organizations, and institutions that share a commitment to resisting oppression, ending violence, and promoting human rights, with a focus on women and girls. Individuals are on a spectrum in terms of their knowledge and understanding of VAW, and even those who are subject matter experts have knowledge that is partial and incomplete.

Finally, my findings inform public sociology because they conceptualize translation as praxis. Specifically, my research suggests that an additional route for public

sociology is building relationships with key players in an epistemic community and translating information to these community experts, who might then help with broader knowledge dissemination. Social media is a hybrid space in that it allows for the coming together of so-called academic and layperson knowledge, various forms of mass media (television, radio, music), news coverage and reader response, storytellers and listeners. Because of this, there is more to knowledge mobilization in social media than simply transmitting information. Instead, converging disciplines and roles in social media means that there is a more pronounced need for knowledge translation. In this way, translation is a central component of VAW prevention in social media, as well as for the public sociology that I put forward in this dissertation.

We also need to shift how we think about traditional public sociology where translating academic work into a context fitting of current debates (connecting research to current social discourse and emotional reactions) is important. This might involve including additional information on faculty webpages about how faculty research connects to current news and policy debates, and/or doing a scan of attitudes expressed in social media as part of developing research questions or research proposals. Finally, feminist public sociology should consider activism as more than political action, and as something that emphasizes creativity in knowledge translation. Creativity is an important facet of social media work, and my research suggests that informational and visual data integrations such as infographics are a promising strategy for social media knowledge dissemination. Academic sociology is practiced within a risk-averse institutional climate that does not traditionally foster creative activist practices. Sociologists can gather creative insights for practices from the digitally mobilized communities that we study,

including using storytelling, developing visuals and infographics to summarize data, and re-framing or contextualizing news stories through conversational activism.

Feminism

My research findings point to three important considerations for feminist public sociology of VAW to navigate that are particularly salient in social media: (1) language; (2) cooperative ways of knowing, and (3) anti-feminist backlash. While these issues are not restricted to so-called online or offline spaces, social media may shape them in particular ways. In terms of language, feminist work increasingly centers intersectionality, diversity, and a plurality of identities. As such, there is an important relationship and tension between the language of VAW and that of gender-based violence (GBV). This is not a point I resolve in this dissertation, but one that I raise as a necessary consideration for feminist public sociology, particularly in light of audiences, intersectionality, and cooperative ways of knowing.

In terms of cooperative ways of knowing, feminist public sociology is most rigorous and potentially transformative when it accounts for the diversity of relevant community identities and experiences and specifically acknowledges historical marginalization. Cooperative ways of knowing focus on illuminating power, privilege, inequality, and the subjectivity of all knowledge. This does not mean accounting for every individual viewpoint, but means considering the expertise (experiential and academic) underlying various viewpoints. Additionally, and of particular importance for feminist sociologists, cooperative ways of knowing involves awareness that you are working in a community whether or not you explicitly engage in community-based

research or public sociology. There is, therefore, a responsibility to be aware of where one's theoretical and empirical research findings fit in current political debates, public discourse, and social movements. MRAs have been successful in setting up a false dichotomy between their work and that of feminists surrounding VAW. Instead of understanding feminism as against patriarchy, in this MRA constructed dichotomy, feminists are constructed as against men, and MRAs are "telling the other side" of the story, one where violence is gender neutral. This work relies heavily on the small but widely referenced body of work that argues that domestic violence is gender neutral, despite feminist critique and significant research problematizing the framework and methodology of this research. In light of this, it is important to disentangle trolls from MRAs, and to acknowledge that gender-symmetry arguments are a significant obstacle for people doing VAW prevention work in social media.

In looking forward in VAW prevention, social media, feminism, and public sociology, I draw from Haraway's (1989, 1991) cyborg metaphor and Licona's (2005) notion of third space. These ideas help us to understand those doing VAW prevention in four ways. First, an individual may choose what "digital skin" they wish to put on to do this work. They may represent themselves by their personal name, by a chosen username, through the organization they work with, and so forth. They can be a unified persona throughout Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc. and in the physical world, or they can fragment their bodies/personhood throughout these spaces as their needs and desires dictate. Their capacity to do this tells us a lot about power. Second, participants understand that being cyborgs (particularly doing VAW prevention) affects their mental and emotional capacity. Digital experiences affect one's mental and emotional capacity

(bandwidth) in positive and negative ways. As Haraway notes, power is seen and practiced through the ability to define and construct boundaries. Being able to unplug and leave the public sphere is one facet of this power, and is more readily available to some feminists than others.

Third, people do not have complete control over the parts of themselves that exist online. This can have arguably positive effects, such as journalists or researchers being able to access information and content outside of real time. However, content and meaning may be circulated, broken down, and re-made in ways that are not always beneficial to the individual. There is a disconnect here where, as cyborgs, a part of ourselves comes to live online and can be used and manipulated without our consent, yet social and legal policies are currently insufficient to address these harms. Understanding social media as a third space means that it is taken seriously in discourse, legislation, and policies rather than being conceptualized as virtual in the sense it is “not quite real”.

Finally, and perhaps most unique to VAW prevention, a fourth cyborg/third space element of VAW prevention is that social media is a powerful force for challenging dualisms of violence as physical or non-physical. For decades, feminists working in VAW prevention have argued that violence is more than physical violence, and that it involves a pattern of emotional, psychological, verbal, financial, and spiritual abuse that exists on a spectrum. My findings around definitions of VAW echo this sentiment. Making non-physically violent abuse visible has been, in particular, a part of intimate partner violence prevention work, but we also see this in sexual violence prevention in efforts to move beyond understanding of “real rapes” that involve explicit physical

attacks, to an understanding of sexual violence as involving threats, coercion, intimidation, and/or tools such as alcohol to incapacitate a victim.

Hybrids

My re-conceptualized public sociology helps to integrate three sets of boundaries: academic/community; offline/online; and intellectual/emotions. This works with the feminist cyborg and third space metaphors in helping us to extend our understanding of VAW prevention into online spaces and transcend the idea that the real and the virtual world can be understood in a dichotomy. As social media become increasingly sensory and embedded in the physical world, societal responses to violence (including “online” violence) will become less about the online nature of this violence, and more about the emotional, verbal, psychological, financial, and spiritual harms related to this abuse. As awareness and knowledge create cultural and institutional transformations, feminism and public sociology can play significant roles.

Public sociology has its greatest potential as a third space location and/or practice for three reasons. First, public sociology works as an academic/community hybrid where academic and community identities are blended in ways that present great potential through partnership, reciprocal knowledge translation, relationship building, collaborative expertise, and linkages to current events and news stories. This requires interdisciplinary knowledge of where one’s research topic fits within broader debates. There are also challenges for public sociologists working in this third space where there are fewer institutional supports and/or roadmaps. Yet just as Haraway asks, “Why should our

bodies end at the skin?” we must explore the question of how sociological practice transcends the academy.

Second, public sociology as a third space takes us beyond offline/online binaries. While this binary may be helpful at times (e.g. recognizing the need to unplug and recharge batteries), it is not a solid theoretical foundation on which to move forward. VAW prevention in social media tells us that we cannot simply add and stir the Internet to offline practices, as VAW prevention work and social media mutually shape each other. As social media become increasingly integrated into our everyday lives and bodies, we see growing awareness of the importance of considering sociological practices and concepts within these contexts (see Cavanagh 2012; Orton-Johnson and Prior 2013). For public sociologists who wish to further develop their cyborg identities through social media engagement, understanding the processes that I have outlined in this dissertation (for example, in Table 14) may be a helpful roadmap.

Finally, public sociology as third space makes us re-think intellectual/emotional boundaries and opens up systems of creativity and play. Public sociology is about having our work resonate in spheres beyond the academy, including during the research process. In varying degrees, VAW prevention (and feminist work more broadly) use experiential knowledge, storytelling, conversational activism, and multi-sensory methods (text, visual, audio) to attach to emotional social currents and draw in new audiences and participants. Making sociology accessible also means emotional accessibility. Thus, traditional notions of objective, intellectual, detached academic work require translation in an emotive sense as well as an accessible one. Furthermore, cyborg and third space locations and practices require an awareness of the emotionality of public sociologists. Rather than attempting to

quash or bound our emotions, we can instead explore the ways that they drive our work, shape our interactions with our participants and networks, encourage creative processes, and provide a common language to connect epistemic communities pursuing social change.

Part II: Mobilizing Research Findings

Research dissemination and mobilization is a process that will continue beyond completion of this dissertation. As a starting point, I have identified three strategies. First, I will distribute an executive summary, select infographics (3-4), and a list of social media campaigns pertaining to VAW to participants for feedback, and then broader distribution in their networks (as well as a copy of the full dissertation, if they wish to receive one). These tools were deemed most useful and accessible by a majority of participants upon follow up. Second, I will discuss my research findings on two feminist radio shows in Canada. Finally, as I produce journal articles based on chapters from this dissertation, I will write a blog posts highlighting the key findings and takeaway actions that can more readily be posted/circulated through social media.

At present, my core research contributions are mobilized in four key Figures and Tables throughout this dissertation. These models illustrate the various ways that VAW prevention stakeholders, and public sociologists, might think about their work (“interpret the world”) and then take action (“change it”). First, in Chapter Five, I proposed a reworked public sociology in light of my findings about the limitations of Burawoy’s notions of traditional and organic public sociology. Here, (Figure 2) I conceptualized public sociologists as public intellectuals, community-engaged scholars, community

educators and/or advocates and activists. My intention in revamping traditional and organic public sociology is not to put forward a prescriptive model for how public sociology should be practiced, or to assert that researchers must fit into one or more boxes at all times. Rather, it is to offer an alternative for a more interdisciplinary public sociology that is not defined exclusively by university ties and allows for public sociology to take place with more loosely defined social justice communities. Thus, this model is intended to help individual researchers think through how they might approach (theorize) public sociology. In this model of public sociology, roles are fluid and boundaries permeable, and the nature and extent of our engagement in each sphere will depend on where we are focusing and whether we are prioritizing knowledge production or knowledge dissemination at any point in time. To help navigate these blurry roles, I continue to emphasize the three key pillars of feminist public sociology (reflexivity, praxis, and interdisciplinary work) identified in Chapter Two as a guide in my own work.

A second tangible research outcome is in Chapter Six (Table 12), where I presented social media benefits for VAW prevention as an ecological model. This table included seven key themes (benefits) of social media that VAW prevention workers might pursue: dissemination, efficiency, community, audience engagement, amplification, accessibility, and accountability. This table can contribute to VAW prevention work because stakeholders interested in social media work could target their prevention efforts to a particular goal, and level, of violence prevention. Additionally, it could serve as a rubric for beginning to measure success in VAW prevention in social media. Thus, this model is intended to help VAW prevention workers think through how they are approaching or theorizing VAW prevention work in social media.

A third core research contribution takes place in Chapter Nine, where I synthesized findings from my survey and my 19 qualitative interviews with empirical research on VAW prevention work, specifically, bystander intervention and the spectrum of VAW prevention. There are many ways that social media can be utilized for VAW prevention as part of the spectrum of prevention. In this regard, Table 13 (*Examples of social media actions to prevent VAW as part of the spectrum of prevention*) serves as a working roadmap of how this might occur. Table 13 includes actions to engage individuals (e.g. support survivors using hashtag campaigns); promote community education (e.g. create and share webinars); educate providers (e.g. share/translate advocacy work in accessible methods and spaces), foster coalitions and networks (e.g. amplify or “signal boost” others whose work you admire); change organizational practices (e.g. take screen shots of advertisements that appear on pages promoting VAW and tweet at companies who advertise on these sites); and influence policy and legislation (e.g. follow politicians, policy-makers, and businesses that support VAW prevention and equity more broadly). Thus, this model is intended to help individuals think through how they are taking action to prevent VAW using social media.

My fourth and final core finding mobilization is found in Table 14, where I presented tangible ways that a public sociologist might do VAW prevention work targeting various levels of change (e.g. awareness, knowledge, social, institutional). Here, I adapted and expanded Klein’s (2013) work on using language for social change in order to synthesize ecological understandings of VAW prevention with public sociology in social media contexts. In this Table, I emphasized process (transmission, translation, trans-personal/trans-affective/transformation) and encouraged public sociologists to think

about what is required for each process (e.g. information, expertise, emotional/affective engagement, social action). Like social media, public sociology is not monolithic and can take place in a variety of ways. By theorizing our position as public sociologists (Figure 2) and then thinking through how to work to pursue social change (Table 14), we are better equipped to navigate the complex social world we are working within.

Part III: Research Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are five limitations of this research project that are important to acknowledge, and these limitations are helpful to identify areas for future research. First, there is a great deal more to be said about technology-based strategies to prevent VAW such as mobile apps and other “smart” devices than I have been able to discuss. Perhaps because I did not include computer scientists, engineers, and software developers as part of my target group, these technologies are not a focus of this project, but are relevant to conversations about VAW prevention. For one, they are salient in light of discussions on individual safety strategies and responsabilization. However, they are additionally important for knowledge about bystander intervention, as some apps (Circle of Six, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women’s R.I.S.E.) attempt to integrate bystander intervention approaches within mobile apps. Future research in this area should focus on data collection surrounding use patterns, how to define prevention success in this context, and in particular how to measure the impact of apps on survivors’ well being. Knowledge from areas such as social network analysis may be helpful in these pursuits.

Second, this research is conducted with participants from both Canada and the United States (but primarily Canada), meaning that it (1) conflates Canadian experiences with American experiences in the context of VAW prevention and social media; and (2) is North-American centric. Future research on VAW prevention and social media should therefore continue to build a knowledge base by exploring perspectives from more global contexts, as well as delving further into potential differences between Canada and the United States. Third, as with much quantitative research, the relatively small sample size and missing data are both challenges within survey research. Given the extensive nature of the survey (31 questions, many with various drop-down lists and additional comments boxes), I am pleased with having 109 cases to analyze, but I acknowledge that this is a small sample given the plethora of VAW prevention work taking place related to social media, and the number of different roles involved. In this regard, my qualitative interviews highlight the importance of mixed-method research in this area. As quantitative data, the descriptive numbers presented in this dissertation represent only a small exploratory glimpse into this area, and future research capturing the extent and nature of social media use on a larger scale would be very valuable.

Fourth, my reflections on public sociology intersect with social media, but are not focused in this area. While this was an invaluable part of my own research process in terms of interweaving public sociology and mass media and coming to further explore VAW prevention and social media, additional public sociology work focusing on the public sociologist as a social media participant is important. Some of this work is already underway in the United Kingdom, and I encourage sociologists interested in this area to explore the work of digital public sociologists such as Mark Carrigan (see Carrigan

2013). However, as with public sociology more generally, emerging work in digital public sociology would be greatly strengthened by attention to feminist work, including identifying intersecting axes of oppression.

Finally, my research has explored a lot of different roles within one project. While this provides valuable insights given the overlapping roles and blurred boundaries of activism, advocacy, education, communication, writing, and research, it also limits the extent to which we can draw larger conclusions about work in any particular area. For example, how do experiences of online harassment vary by role, and how might we target prevention efforts accordingly? Future research unpacking some of the nuances and complexities in these areas would be helpful, in particular exploring some of the organizational challenges faced by non-profit organizations. Moreover, as we move forward in VAW prevention in social media, additional research exploring implementation and effectiveness of policies and programs targeting online sexual violence is an important area for further sociological work. Our ability to effectively collect and mobilize knowledge in all of these areas will be an influential part of the holistic and cooperative process of preventing violence against women.

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Appendix A: Public Sociology Activities

A.1: Links to online content

(Where possible- not all activities have online content)

Workshops

June 2012, Journalist lunch and learn

<http://www.ottawacommunitynews.com/news-story/3962277-violence-against-women-group-tackles-honour-killings-/>

September 2012: Community Media Course

<http://youtu.be/YZXFw830Zhl>

October 2012: Media Representations of Violence Against Women

<http://vimeo.com/57265971>

Blogs

December 2012: Legal studies Blog Post

<http://fuseblawg.wordpress.com/2012/12/08/shine-the-light-on-violence-against-women/>

April 2013: WAMOttawa Blog

<http://wamottawa.wordpress.com/2013/04/10/rape-bullying-led-to-n-s-teens-death-says-mom/>

Sexual Violence, Social Media, & Youth Research

May 27 2013: Ottawa Citizen article:

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/City+Hall+discussion+targets+online+sexual+bullying/8440533/story.html>

May 28, 2013: Research Presentation, Sexual Violence & Social Media

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssyPHrSXqOg>

Thoughts from Consultation Participants:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IA1rYLo--uI>

May 28, 2013: Radio Canada: [http://www.radio-](http://www.radio-canada.ca/regions/ottawa/2013/05/28/004-violence-sexuelle-jeunes-ottawa-prevention.shtml)

[canada.ca/regions/ottawa/2013/05/28/004-violence-sexuelle-jeunes-ottawa-prevention.shtml](http://www.radio-canada.ca/regions/ottawa/2013/05/28/004-violence-sexuelle-jeunes-ottawa-prevention.shtml)

May 28, 2013: CBC News:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/story/2013/05/27/ottawa-crime-prevention-young-people-social-media.html>

May 28, 2013: CFRA: <http://www.cfra.com/News/Ottawa-Regional-News/Crime-Prevention-Ottawa-holds-community-consultati>

May 28, 2013: 1310 News: <http://www.1310news.com/2013/05/28/public-meeting-on-social-media-and-youth-at-city-hall/>

May 28, 2013: Ottawa Sun: <http://www.ottawasun.com/2013/05/28/online-sexual-violence-growing-panel-hears>

May 28, 2013: CBC Ottawa Morning
<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Local+Shows/Ontario/ID/2388032861/>

May 28, 2013: Vancouver Sun
<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/City+Hall+discussion+targets+online+sexual+bullying/8440533/story.html>

May 28, 2013: Rick Gibbons interview on CFRA
http://proxy.autopod.ca/podcasts/chum/189/13724/RGHP_130528.mp3

June 18, 2014: Safe Cities Mississauga
<http://safecitymississauga.on.ca/stopping-crime-before-it-happens/>

Media Hub

Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women
<http://mediahub.octevaw-cocvff.ca>

May 28, 2014: Ottawa Sun
<http://www.ottawasun.com/2014/05/28/groups-seeking-to-stamp-out-sexual-violence>

A.2: Copies of blogs and news stories

Jul 05, 2012 | Vote 0 0

Violence against women group tackles 'honour killings'

Nepean Barrhaven News

A west-Ottawa based coalition wants to make sure the overall issue of violence against women in Canada isn't ignored.

Along with launching a new website, the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women will now be producing position papers throughout the year on a variety of topics for the community's interest.

"We're building our capacity, making connections, and we're really excited about these movements," said Stefanie Lomatski, executive director of the coalition. "(Having these) position papers are a way to be more cohesive."

The coalition hopes to release three to five position papers a year.

The first position paper coalition launched on June 28 dealt with how violence against women has been portrayed in the media, particularly when it comes to honour killings.



Violence against women group tackles 'honour killings' - Image1

Kristy Strauss, Metroland

Stefanie Lomatski, executive director of the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women spoke about the group's first position paper on how violence against women is portrayed.

"The assumed cultural nature of the case spread like wildfire," said Corrine Mason, a PhD student from the University of Ottawa, who studied how the recent Shafia murder trial was covered by two daily newspapers.

Mason's research forms the basis of coalition's position that the way the trial was presented in the media was

that violence against women in Canada became "ordinary" and honour killings became "extraordinary."

Mason concluded through her study of the Shafia trial that there were implications Canada was superior to the "Muslim world" regarding violence against women.

She said that's simply not true, however.

Citing Statistics Canada reports, she said of the 146 women killed in homicides in 2008, 45 were murdered by their spouse or domestic partner. Between 2007 and 2008, more than 61,600 women were seeking abuse shelters.

She added that according to the Native Women's Association of Canada, there are 583 missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls in the country.

"Honour killings (were portrayed as) a misogynist culture, committed by Muslims against Muslim women and children, and it was carefully planned," she said. "Domestic violence by contrast (was portrayed as) individual men who were a few bad apples, non-Muslim, and women were not killed for transgressing cultural boundaries."

The coalition also said they'd like to work with media organizations and come up with a collaboration project that would help both parties get the message of violence against women out.

Jordan Fairbairn who does public engagement for the coalition, and is also a PhD student, said the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence worked successfully with journalists and together came up with a hand book on reporting violence against women stories.

"This is a model to work off of in Canada," said Fairbairn. "They started from a point in recognizing that these are tough issues to cover."

For more information on the coalition, visit their website at: www.octevaw-cocvff.ca.

Mu:

FusebLAWg

A Resource for Contemporary Legal Studies Debates

Shine the Light on Violence Against Women

By: Jordan Fairbairn and Tanya Castle

November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, marks the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. During this time period, December 6th commemorates the anniversary of the 1989 Ecole Polytechnique Massacre in Montreal, where fourteen women were singled out and shot...for being women.

This year, the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) partnered with businesses on Elgin Street to start the first annual SHINE THE LIGHT campaign to raise awareness on violence against women.

Why Shine the Light on violence against women?

In Canada, half of women have survived at least one incident of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Eighty-three per cent of victims of spousal violence are women, while in 91 per cent of domestic homicide cases women are the victims. Women are about eight times more likely than men to experience violence in relationships, especially choking, threats with a weapon and sexual assault. One in three Canadian women will experience sexual assault in their lifetime and of those who do, less than six per cent will report the incident to the police.

Violence against women does not occur due to a few bad apples. There are individual, community, and systemic factors that contribute to, sustain, and facilitate violence against women. Pervasive societal attitudes that trivialize violence, dehumanize individuals, and/or blame victims are also important to consider when addressing violence against women, particularly in relation to historically marginalized communities such as Indigenous women, transgendered individuals, and street-based sex workers

Preventing and ending violence against women requires a significant community commitment to raising awareness and promoting education surrounding this violence. In this spirit, we've begun "Shine the Light," adapted from a campaign in London, Ontario that turns the Southwestern Ontario city purple by using purple lights, balloons, streamers, and more to highlight violence against

women. The London Abused Women's Centre explains that purple is a symbol of courage, survival and honour, and has come to symbolize the fight to end woman abuse. By turning different parts of the city purple each year, they are showing their solidarity with survivors of violence and their commitment to raise awareness to prevent and end violence against women.

So why not do the same in Ottawa?

This year, that's exactly what OCTEVAW members asked ourselves. So, prior to the 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Gender Violence, we started reaching out to local businesses on Elgin Street asking them to join us and "go purple" to Shine the Light on violence against women. We first approached businesses on Elgin Street because OCTEVAW has been consistently impressed with the dedication that Elgin Street businesses have shown to ending violence against women. Over the years the businesses have taken various creative approaches to assist OCTEVAW in drawing attention to violence against women. This year was no different, they embraced purple, from displaying and giving out purple ribbons, to painting their windows purple or creating purple window displays, to having employees wear purple to work. (Click [here \(http://www.octevaw-cocvff.ca/shine-light-campaign\)](http://www.octevaw-cocvff.ca/shine-light-campaign) for a list of Elgin Street businesses and how they are Shining the Light this year)

Several groups at Carleton University also came on board. They decorated their spaces purple and turned their virtual presence purple. The Graduate Student's Association, GLBTQ Centre, BECAMPS, the Womyn's Centre, CUSA have all taken steps to display purple, and Carleton's Campus Safety is wearing purple ribbons for ten days. Shine the Light campaign information was also featured on the Carleton homepage banner.

Our sincere gratitude goes out to the Elgin Street businesses and Carleton groups for being part of Ottawa's first Shine the Light campaign. The response has been fantastic, far exceeding our initial expectations and making us very excited to see where we can "go purple" next year.

In the meantime, what can you do? How can you "go purple?"

Speak up about violence against women. Not sure how? Check out Pledge It, OCTEVAW's social media community building campaign on Facebook to see how people all over Ottawa are committing to prevent and end violence against women.

Speak up against victim shaming, victim blaming, and myths about violence against women. Challenge others to do the same.

Lead by example. Question your own attitudes and behaviours and how they may disrespect or harm women. Choose not to use sexist language, to make rape jokes, to partake in street harassment – they all contribute to a culture of violence.

Share your voice. Let us know how we can support you, what information you need to speak up, and how you are getting involved in ending violence against women. Have a presentation on Bill 168 to be aware of your workplace responsibilities surrounding prevention of violence and harassment. Contact OCTEVAW!

So why Shine the Light?

Because an end to violence against women is possible. We just can't see it yet. So we're turning up the lights this year and hopefully for years to come!

Jordan Fairbairn is a member of the Public Engagement Committee at the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women and a PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at Carleton University.

Tanya Castle is Coordinator of Preventing Violence Against Women on Campuses, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women.

www.octevaw-cocvff.ca/ (<http://www.octevaw-cocvff.ca/>)

December 8, 2012 by *FusebLAWg* Categories: [In the News](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

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WAM!OTTAWA (HTTP://WAMOTTAWA.WORDPRESS.COM)

Gender Justice in the Media

“Rape, bullying led to N.S. teen’s death, says mom.”
(http://wamottawa.wordpress.com/2013/04/10/rape-bullying-led-to-n-s-teens-death-says-mom/)

April 10, 2013 (http://wamottawa.wordpress.com/2013/04/10/rape-bullying-led-to-n-s-teens-death-says-mom/) by wamottawa

This post refers to the following story: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/story/2013/04/09/ns-rehtaeh-parsons-suicide-rape.html> (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/story/2013/04/09/ns-rehtaeh-parsons-suicide-rape.html>)

As I sit here looking at a photograph of Rehtaeh Parsons, a 17 year old young woman from Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia who took her life this past weekend, all I can think is “we failed”.

We failed when our society produced four young men who raped this young women in November 2011.

We failed when one of them took a photograph of this assault. When it was posted online. We failed every time a person viewed that photo, shared that photo, commented on that photo.

We failed when Rehtaeh went back to school after the assault and was called a slut.

We failed every time, in the year following the assault, people harassed Rehtaeh through text messages and Facebook.

We failed when our police force, after a year of investigating the assault, said it was a “he said / she said” case and that “we have to deal in facts and not rumours”.

These things have already happened. In this case, and far too many others, we failed.

But here is where we as a society do not have to fail:

We can support Rehtaeh's family and friends by listening to their stories and hearing their experiences in a way that we did not for Rehtaeh in life. We can apologize to them for having failed their loved one. We can commend them for having the courage to speak out while respecting their right to privacy and to grieve.

We can remember this story the next time we hear about someone who has been sexually assaulted. Instead of saying "If only she hadn't been drunk/led him on/been wearing that", we can say "I believe her".

We can say "that's not funny" the next time we hear or see a rape joke. We can delete, unfriend, block, and/or report that person, post, joke, tweet, or photo. We can do this again and again until every single person that we know understands that rape culture is failure, and we cannot continue to fail.

We can remember Rehtaeh's story the next time we find ourselves tempted to speak about 'other cultures' and 'their' violence against women. We can acknowledge that Canada has an epidemic of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, whose stories are most often passed over or misrepresented by mainstream media but who are loved and valued nonetheless.

We can ask tough, big picture questions about what it is going to take as a society to stop producing boys and men who rape, and people of all genders who enable and encourage this to happen. This will be hard. We will want to draw boundaries around Rehtaeh's rapists and around those who directly bullied and harassed her, and talk about what makes them so different from 'us'. We cannot do this. We will continue to fail if we do this. We cannot continue to fail.

Rest in paradise Rehtaeh. We are sorry, and we will work to do better.

Jordan Fairbairn, Ottawa WAMer

Category: [Uncategorized](#)

Archives

- [April 2013 \(http://wamottawa.wordpress.com/2013/04/\)](http://wamottawa.wordpress.com/2013/04/)

Categories

- [Uncategorized \(http://wamottawa.wordpress.com/category/uncategorized/\)](http://wamottawa.wordpress.com/category/uncategorized/)

City Hall discussion targets online sexual bullying

Teresa Smith

The Ottawa Citizen

Date Published: Monday, May 27, 2013

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Online bullying is becoming increasingly sexual and violent — and while the crimes may begin online, researchers say perpetrators using sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to control and blackmail their victims are having a very real-world effect.

More than 100 parents, police, and community members concerned about the growing trend will gather Tuesday morning at City Hall to discuss a new Ottawa-based report on the increasingly sexual nature of online bullying.

Earlier this year, the issue was catapulted onto the national stage by the suicide of Halifax teen Rehtaeh Parsons. Parsons was tormented online after a video showing her allegedly being sexually assaulted by a group of teens at a party surfaced and was shared thousands of times.

In Ottawa, front line workers say they see teen victims of sexually explicit online harassment every day.

Some remain in abusive relationships over fear that explicit photos will show up online. Others feel unsafe because their harasser can track their every move using online global positioning tools. Others are afraid to open their personal Facebook accounts to see cruel comments on their public walls. Many victims may not even know their partner is sharing intimate photos without their consent.

Carleton researcher Jordan Fairbairn, 32, led the study entitled *Sexual Violence and Social Media: Building a Framework for Prevention*.

Along with fellow Carleton researcher Dr. Rena Bivens and University of Guelph's Myrna Dawson, Fairbairn surveyed nearly 200 front line workers across Ontario.

Fairbairn said she hopes to provide a base point for further exploration and spark a broader discussion about who is being targeted, why harassers are choosing the digital realm and how to collect data about a crime that is rarely reported.

She said sexual violence is nothing new, but as social media use grows and becomes more embedded in the lives of young people, society will be forced to think more about how we can understand and prevent sexual violence in those spaces.

"Technology moves so quickly, so how do you support people with information when the thing itself is changing almost on a daily basis?" noted Stefanie Lomatski from the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women, a supporter of Fairbairn's work.

She said a common question from parents, police officers and health workers is how to start a conversation with a teenager about online violence.

"How do you even know about that world when really the relationship is between that young person and their computer screen?"

According to a 2012 Ipsos Reid study, 83 per cent of Canadian teenagers have regular access to a computer and 67 per cent to a mobile phone. Canadian teenagers with web access spend an average of three hours online each day and do much of their communicating through online social networks or by text.

“People do things in trusting relationships, they do things when they’re young, they do things when they’re drunk, but it’s the permanency of photographic images in a digital world which has taken things to a new stratosphere,” said Nancy Worsfold, the executive director of Crime Prevention Ottawa, which funded the research.

Crime Prevention Ottawa, a coalition between the city, police, school boards, United Way, Children’s Aid, community members and academics, put out a call earlier this year for researchers interested in looking at the link between sexual violence and social media after the widely publicized case of three teen girls accused of using Facebook to lure their peers into an Ottawa prostitution ring.

“It doesn’t look like that’s a very common use of Facebook, although blackmail seems to be very common,” said Worsfold, who had heard about the issue first from school boards and police.

For Fairbairn, the key to changing the outcome will be changing the definition of violence so that parents, academics and government listen up.

“We’ve often thought of sexual violence as something that has to be physical to be taken seriously. But what this research points to is that we need to understand sexual violence on a continuum that includes psychological and emotional harassment ... something that’s being used to intimidate and harass and the harm that can cause.”

Registration for the free public event begins Tuesday at 8:30 a.m. at City Hall. The discussion begins at 9 a.m.

tesmith@ottawacitizen.com

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Ottawa en mode prévention de la violence sexuelle en ligne chez les jeunes

Mise à jour le mardi 28 mai 2013 à 19 h 40 HAE



Selon l'étude commandée par Prévention du crime Ottawa, la violence sexuelle en ligne entraîne des dommages importants. (archives) Photo : iStock Photo

Les organismes de prévention de la violence sexuelle se sentent mal outillés pour venir en aide aux jeunes victimes de violence sur les médias sociaux. C'est ce que révèle une étude commandée par l'organisme Prévention du crime Ottawa, dont les résultats sont dévoilés mardi.

Afin de remédier à la situation, une centaine de policiers et de membres de la communauté d'Ottawa se réunissent, mardi matin, à l'hôtel de ville d'Ottawa, pour développer un programme de prévention pour la capitale.

« Notre but à long terme, c'est de développer quelque chose. [...] On veut faire quelque chose, mais maintenant, on ne sait pas exactement ce qui va être efficace », explique Nancy Worsfold, directrice générale de Prévention du crime Ottawa.

Selon un sondage effectué de février à mars 2013 auprès de 187 organismes communautaires, d'éducateurs, d'activistes de prévention de la violence, et d'employés de première ligne de l'Ontario, les intervenants ont besoin d'aide. Quelque 35 % des répondants estiment que le manque de financement et de ressources est le principal obstacle à la prestation de programmes pour contrer la violence sexuelle dans les médias sociaux.

Le sondage a également mis en lumière la nécessité d'offrir de la formation et de l'aide au personnel et aux bénévoles, dans un contexte où les médias sociaux évoluent rapidement. Il met aussi en relief le manque de données et d'évaluation de la violence sexuelle chez les jeunes.

Le rapport de Prévention du crime Ottawa recommande notamment d'améliorer les compétences des enfants et des parents en matière de médias numériques, d'offrir de la formation aux éducateurs et aux employés de première ligne ainsi que de cesser d'utiliser en ligne des stratégies conçues pour les médias conventionnels.

« Souvent, tous nos problèmes commencent avec les médias sociaux. [...] Vraiment n'importe qui peut devenir victime de ce genre de gestes », rappelle l'agente Caroline Gallant, de la police d'Ottawa.

Selon l'étude, 83 % des adolescents canadiens ont un accès régulier à un ordinateur et 67 % à un appareil mobile. Les jeunes passent en moyenne trois heures par jour en ligne et la majorité d'entre eux visitent des sites comme YouTube et des réseaux sociaux.

EN COMPLÉMENT



OTTAWA—GATINEAU
AUDIO - Au « Midi trente », la journaliste Laurie Trudel rapporte les détails de l'étude commandée par Prévention du crime Ottawa



OTTAWA—GATINEAU
VIDEO - La journaliste Rachel Gaulin explique les détails de l'étude sur la violence sexuelle

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0 Commentaires



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Insolite		Jeunesse	Nos coordonnées	
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Plaisirs		Archives	Services français de Radio-Canada	
		Partenaires	Signalétique	
		Sirius	Transparence et responsabilisation	
		TV5	Vente d'archives	
			Vidéodescription	
Conditions d'utilisation	Ombudsman	Relations avec l'auditoire		
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Agency wants strategy for youth sexual violence online

Crime Prevention Ottawa holding workshop Tuesday morning for educators, youths, social agencies

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 28, 2013 6:42 AM ET Last Updated: May 28, 2013 8:21 PM ET

Crime Prevention Ottawa wants a strategy to prevent young people from using social media to sexually abuse and target others.

The agency is holding a workshop on Tuesday morning for educators, youth and social agencies to come up with prevention ideas.

It also commissioned a study to examine sexually abusive behaviour online, including sexting, spreading photographs and dating harrassment.

Jordan Fairbairn, a PHD candidate and the lead researcher on the study, said cyberbullying is mostly sexually violent in nature.

"We haven't done a great job as a society broadly at ending sexual violence offline that speaks to some of the myths and language like slut and whore and homophobic bullying," said Fairbairn.

She said parents need to spend less time worrying about websites and technology and more time on getting the message right.

Fairbairn said victims of cyberbullying need help to come forward without being shamed by their peers.

The agency's workshop is being held at City Hall from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

Poll question

Have you ever been a victim of sexual bullying online?

- Yes, and it happens a lot.
- Once or twice.
- Never.

[Vote](#)

[View Results](#)

Have you ever been a victim of sexual bullying online?

- Yes, and it happens a lot.



(<http://www.1310news.com/files/2010/12/8f668x501.jpeg>)

ZOOM

Ottawa City Hall

AUTHOR JEAN-LUC HENRY



Map

Public meeting on social media and youth at City Hall

Alex Black @1310AlexBlack (<http://www.1310news.com/inside/staff/alex-black-1310alexblack/>) May 28, 2013 09:12:29 AM

0 (<http://www.1310news.com/2013/05/28/public-meeting-on-social-media-and-youth-at-city-hall/#respond>)

+ Tweet 8 Tweet 8 G+1 0 G+1 0

OTTAWA, Ont. – Crime Prevention Ottawa

(<http://www.crimepreventionottawa.ca/>) is holding a community consultation at Ottawa City Hall (<http://ottawa.ca/en>) called “Sexual Violence, Social Media and Youth.” The consultation will look at the relationship between the three.

Local doctors will release community-based research funded by Crime Prevention Ottawa, and supported by the Ottawa Coalition to end Violence Against Women (<http://www.octevaw-cocvff.ca/>), that looks at the increasingly violent and sexual nature of cyber-bullying.

The idea is to get the community discussing prevention tools, and start developing ideas to combat the problem in Ottawa.

The event runs until 12 p.m. Tuesday. You can use the hastag #svsmy to join the conversation.

Comments

Most recent (#) Recommended (#)

Leave a Comment Below

All fields are required.

Login with Facebook (#)

Sign in with Twitter (#)

Name

Email

Comment

Want to embed media into your comment? Just paste in a URL in a separate paragraph to the page where you would normally view the media (like on YouTube) and it will automatically be embedded into your comment.

Please enter the following letters :



Online sexual violence growing panel hears

BY DANIELLE BELL, OTTAWA SUN

FIRST POSTED: TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2013 03:23 PM EDT | UPDATED: TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2013 08:04 PM EDT

Online sexual violence among young people is growing, and more work needs to be done around prevention, say experts.

Dozens of people, including parents, educators, social agencies, youth and police attended a community consultation on Tuesday, as part of efforts to develop a plan to raise awareness and prevent social media from being used to target people in the first place.

The Ottawa-based project, Sexual Violence and Social Media: Building a Framework for Prevention, suggests incidents like online harassment, sharing of explicit photos or texts and cyber-bullying are not slowing down but there is a lack of data around the darker side of social media.

"I hope people take away that these are preventable. Even though social media is new, it moves quickly and it can be overwhelming, that we can take action in the community to prevent sexual violence in this context," said Jordan Fairbairn, project researcher.

"The speed at which (social media and violence) can happen, and the nature of it, presents some new challenges that we need to not just download on them to deal with but take on ourselves," said Jordan Fairbairn, project researcher.

Researchers, commissioned by Crime Prevention Ottawa, hope the project opens doors to discussions and asks some tough questions.

There is little known about the sexual nature of online abuse and harassment, the research suggests, and the majority of sexual violence that does happen through social media goes unreported.

While it may be tempting to just tell people to turn off the devices and delete profiles, the move off-line "doesn't really fit" with the way social networking is ingrained among young people today, said Fairbairn.

Stefanie Lomatski, executive director of the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence against Women, hopes the meeting is a "first step" for people to hear and draw meaning from such social media experiences.

"I think it's very much a growing issue," said Lomatski.

"Behaviours such as stalking or harassment are playing out on different forms of social media. That's very much a trend that we're hearing from our frontline workers."

Ottawa organizations cited addressing challenges related to online anonymity and cruelty, discussions around consent, victim-blaming and engaging parents as key directions on how to help prevent such sexual violence for local youth.

Following the presentation, attendees also split into break-out groups for feedback and next steps for youth, social workers, parents and others.

danielle.bell@sunmedia.ca

Twitter: @ottawasundbell

Groups seek to stamp out sexual violence

BY DANIELLE BELL, OTTAWA SUN

FIRST POSTED: WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2014 04:44 PM EDT | UPDATED: WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2014 04:56 PM EDT



Ottawa Police cruiser

As police released information about a 19-year-old woman who was sexually assaulted in Barrhaven, groups were gathering to discuss how to report on such crimes.

The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Crime Prevention Ottawa launched OCTEVAW's new Media Hub on Wednesday.

It's an online tool that provides tips, information and statistics surrounding violence against women and gender-based violence, including sexual assaults and domestic incidents.

The aim is to help "shift the understanding of violence against women as individual tragedy to a social problem requiring everyone's efforts to prevent."

"It's really important for the public to understand what type of violence is happening," said Sasha Elford with Femifesto, a group that works to shift "rape culture to consent culture."

When it comes to the number of rapes and sexual assaults, the majority go unreported, which means statistics fail to capture how widespread such violence is.

Ottawa police investigate, on average, 375 cases of sexual assault each year – more than one per day. Most of the victims are women.

Groups also want to put a halt to "victim blaming," which the Sun heard when canvassing the area in Barrhaven.

"What's really important in the case of any sex assaults, is that it's never the victim's fault. It doesn't matter what she's wearing, it doesn't matter where she is, it doesn't matter what time she's somewhere. The point is, somebody perpetrated this assault, and they are to blame for this assault," said Leigh.

"We need to all take responsibility for ending violence against women."

Twitter: @ottawasundbell

Appendix B: Survey Recruitment Email



Jordan Fairbairn
783D Loeb Building
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6 Canada
Tel. (613) 520-2582
jordanfairbairn@email.carleton.ca

Subject: Survey on social media use and violence against women prevention

Hello,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jordan Fairbairn from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, in partnership with the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence at the University of Guelph.

This project explores how people working to end violence against women use social media. For this survey, I am looking for **academics, activists, advocates, journalists, writers, bloggers, community organizers, researchers, and policy makers whose work relates to violence against women** to share their experiences and perspectives about their work.

The survey has 31 questions and should take anywhere from 20 to 40 minutes to complete, depending on the length of your answers.

Link to survey: [\[Invite Link\]](#)

It would be greatly appreciated if you could share this email and survey link with other potential participants in your networks.

The survey will remain open until **April 15, 2014** at 11:59 EST. More information on the survey, confidentiality, and access to the research findings is available through the above link, prior to entering the survey.

Thank you for considering participation in this survey! Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jordan Fairbairn
PhD Candidate
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton University
Ottawa, ON, Canada K1S 5B6

Appendix C: Information Given Prior to Entering Survey



Jordan Fairbairn
783D Loeb Building
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6 Canada
Tel. (613) 520-2582
jordanfairbairn@cmail.carleton.ca

Title of research project: Social media use and prevention of violence against women

Project no: #13-0622

Date of ethics clearance: 27 November 2012

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: 31 May 2014

Thank you for considering participation in this survey!

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jordan Fairbairn from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. This research is being conducted as part of a doctoral research project and is funded by Carleton University and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and supported by the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence at the University of Guelph.

This project explores how people working to end violence against women use social media. It is intentionally broad in scope to explore the wide range of ways that individuals and organizations work to prevent and eliminate violence against women and the role of social media in this work. In this study the term violence against women (VAW) includes violence against transgender and gender nonconforming individuals.

For this survey, I am looking for academics, activists, advocates, journalists, writers, bloggers, researchers, and policy makers to tell me about the use of social media in your work as it relates to violence against women. The focus in this study is on sexual violence and/or intimate partner violence.

The goals of this survey are two-fold:

(1) To gather information about social media use for activism, advocacy, reporting, researching, and policy work related to violence against women.

(2) To identify issues and challenges in using social media for the above objectives, including documenting abuse and harassment experienced by those using social media for activism and advocacy, reporting, researching, and doing public policy work related to violence against women.

At this time this survey is focused on Canada and the United States and is available in English only.

A note regarding terminology: As you proceed through the survey, you will notice the use of varying terminology including violence against women, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence. This reflects the focus of this study as well as the varying foci of a broad range of sectors. Definitions will be provided throughout the survey to provide further clarity.

Has this survey received necessary approvals?

This research has received ethics clearance through the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or would like more information please feel free to contact Jordan at jordanfairbairn@cmail.carleton.ca. You may also contact Dr. Aaron Doyle at aaron_doyle@carleton.ca, Dr. Myrna Dawson at mdawson@uoguelph.ca, or Prof. Andy Adler, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board at ethics@carleton.ca, or by mail at Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, ON, K1S 5B6.

How is the survey being conducted?

The survey is being conducted using Fluid Surveys, a Canadian-based survey tool.

How much time will this take?

The survey has 31 questions and should take anywhere from 20-45 minutes to complete, depending on the length of your answers. You do not have to complete the entire survey in one sitting, but can use the "Save and continue later" function within the survey.

Can I withdraw from the survey after beginning or completing it?

By entering the survey, you are consenting to participate in the survey. You may opt to not answer some of the questions and still remain in the study. You may also decide to discontinue at any point during the survey. If you discontinue, the questions you have answered will be included in the aggregate results of the survey. Please be assured that you are under no obligation to participate in this study and your participation or lack thereof will not be documented or noted in any way.

If you choose not to complete the survey but would like to participate in a research interview, please contact Jordan at jordanfairbairn@cmail.carleton.ca.

Can I access the survey findings?

A research summary will be written on the results of this survey. This research summary will be made available to all participants. You may contact Jordan Fairbairn to obtain a summary of the survey findings when the study is complete without disclosing if you were a survey respondent. A copy of this summary will also be made available through the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence website at <http://www.violenceresearch.ca/>.

Is the survey confidential?

Names and email addresses are not collected as part of survey responses. Participant responses will be presented in aggregate format in the final research document and any resulting publications and will not be linked to individuals, agencies, and/or

organizations. Selected quotes from text-based responses may be used to illustrate key research findings; however, if any identifying information is present (names, cities, publications, etc.) it will be removed.

Privacy considerations and potential risks

The information that you contribute may be used in subsequent publications, conferences, and classroom and community presentations. Your privacy will be maintained in the ways stated above. Again, no individual, agency or organization participating in this survey will be named.

Please note: Two questions on this survey (Q29 & Q30) ask you if you have ever experienced threats/abuse/harassment related to your work in general, and your work in social media specifically. It is possible that answering these questions may be triggering for some. Please note that these questions are optional and you can choose not to answer them. Alternately, if you would prefer to answer these questions by phone or Skype please send me an email at jordanfairbairn@cmail.carleton.ca. If you experience any distress when answering these questions and would like immediate support please call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-868-0511 (TTY 1-866-863-7868).

Potential benefits

This project aims to document social media work related to violence against women and to produce findings that will be valuable to a broad section of stakeholders. Some of the possible benefits to participating in this study include contributing your voice to working towards gender justice in media and ending violence against women. It is my hope that participants will find the research product personally and professionally beneficial and that it can be disseminated in a broad and accessible way.

How long do I have to complete the survey?

The survey will remain open until **April 15, 2014** at 11:59 EST.

Consent

By entering the survey, you are indicating that you have read the above information. You are also indicating that your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, and that you have agreed to participate in this study. Thank you for your interest in participating in this survey.

Appendix D: Letter of Information for Interview



Jordan Fairbairn
783D Loeb Building
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6 Canada
Tel. (613) 520-2582
Jordan.fairbairn@carleton.ca

Title of research project: Social Media Use and Prevention of Violence Against Women

Project No: 13-0622

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: May 31, 2015

July 2014

Hello,

Thank you for your interest in participating in a research interview!

This study is being conducted by Jordan Fairbairn from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. This research is part of a doctoral research project and is funded by Carleton University and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and supported by the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence at the University of Guelph.

This project explores how people working to end violence against women use social media. It is intentionally broad in scope to explore the wide range of ways that individuals and organizations work to prevent and eliminate violence against women and the role of social media in this work. In this study the term violence against women (VAW) includes violence against transgender and gender nonconforming individuals.

For this research I am looking for academics, activists, advocates, journalists, writers, bloggers, researchers, and policy makers to tell me about their experiences with social media in your work as it relates to violence against women. The focus in this study is on sexual violence and/or intimate partner violence.

Has this project received necessary approvals?

This research has received ethics clearance through the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or would like more information please feel free to contact Jordan at jordanfairbairn@cmail.carleton.ca. You may also contact Dr. Aaron Doyle at aaron_doyle@carleton.ca, Dr. Myrna Dawson at mdawson@uoguelph.ca, or Prof. Andy Adler, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board at ethics@carleton.ca, or by mail at Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, ON, K1S 5B6.

How will the survey be conducted?

The interviews will be conducted over Skype as either a video or audio call, or by phone, depending on your preferences. If you live in Ottawa or Toronto the interviews can be conducted in person at a mutually agreed upon location.

How long will an interview take?

Interviews will generally take anywhere from 30-60 minutes, but can be longer or shorter if you wish.

Can I withdraw from the study if I change my mind?

You can decide to withdraw at any point during the interview to not have your responses included in the final project. After completing an interview, you may decide to withdraw from the study and have your data removed from the final report anytime before September 30, 2014 by emailing jordanfairbairn@cmail.carleton.ca.

Can I access the final research project?

Yes, if you wish to receive a copy of the final dissertation when the study is complete you may do so by indicating during the interview or by emailing jordanfairbairn@cmail.carleton.ca.

Will my responses be anonymous?

Your name will not be included in the final research project or any related publications. Selected quotes from your responses may be used to illustrate key research findings; however, any identifying information is present (names, cities, publications, etc.) will be removed.

Privacy considerations and potential risks

The information that you contribute may be used in subsequent publications, conferences, and classroom and community presentations. Your privacy will be maintained in the ways stated above.

Please note: As part of the interview I will ask you whether you have experienced threats/abuse/harassment related to your work. It is possible that talking about this may be triggering for some. Please note that these questions are optional and you can choose not to answer them, and can feel free to let me know ahead of time that you do not wish to be asked this question. If you experience any distress when answering these questions and would like immediate support please call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-868-0511 (TTY 1-866-863-7868).

Potential benefits

This project aims to document social media work related to violence against women and to produce findings that will be valuable to a broad section of stakeholders. Some of the possible benefits to participating in this study include contributing your voice to working towards gender justice in media and ending violence against women. It is my hope that participants will find the research product personally and professionally beneficial and that it can be disseminated in a broad and accessible way.

Consent

To proceed to schedule an interview, please send me an email at jordan.fairbairn@carleton.ca and stating that 1) You have read the information in this letter and 2) You are agreeing to participate in this study. Thank you for your interest in participating in this research!

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Intro remarks: I am interested in your experiences with/in social media doing prevention work: What your objectives are, how you make decisions about social media use, who you are talking to and reaching out to, what technological features impact your decisions/outcomes, etc. More of a conversation than an interview, but I will ask follow up questions/expand/more detail/explanation of terms type of things as we go.

Conversation starter: Can you tell me about your work related to VAW and social media, walk me through a typical day in your work (and/or yesterday, if days are not typical)? (Bring up themes from intro blurb to probe).

Follow up questions, depending on what is addressed in first question:

- 1) What social media sites do you use the most? Can you tell me about how you use each of them differently?
- 2) Can you tell me a bit more about what prevention involves related to your social media work? (i.e. how you view prevention in this realm, different than offline, etc.?)
- 3) Could you tell me about some of the interactions and initiatives you have experienced on social media?
 - a. Example of positive/successful?
 - b. Example of negative/not successful?
- 4) Magic wand question: What would you do with social media (or change about social media) pertaining to VAW prevention if you could do anything?
- 5) Question about academia and social change: As part of my research, I am interested in the relationship between academic research and social change. Can you tell me a bit about the role of research for you, and/or how you think scholarship around VAW can play a role in prevention?

No concrete end point/question...follow leads/probing questions until feels complete.

Appendix F: Nodes Coded in Interviews

Name	Sources	References
Academia	18	33
Accessibility	11	25
Accessibility of the message	1	1
Accountability & Direct Access	6	8
Accuracy & Inaccuracy	4	5
Activism	4	10
Adaptation	1	1
Advertising policy	1	1
Agency	2	2
Allies	1	1
Amanda Todd	2	4
Amplification	2	3
Analytics	1	1
Anita Sarkeesian	2	2
Anonymity	4	5
Anonymous & Hacktivism	1	1
Archiving	1	1
Asking questions	1	1
Attention	1	2
Audience	14	24
Awareness	9	13
Backlash	15	26
Examples of backlash	2	2

Men's Rights	6	13
The what about men question	5	7
Bandwith	4	7
Becoming a news source in mainstream media	3	5
Blurred lines	10	18
Boom & bust cycles	2	2
Boosting	1	3
Boundaries	4	5
Branding	3	3
Bridging personal and political	10	16
Bringing prevention to people	5	7
Bureaucracy	2	2
Buy in	2	2
Bystander intervention	4	4
Calling people out	2	3
Canada	9	21
Capacity building	4	7
Celebrities	1	1
Changes from traditional media	6	10
Changes over time	7	19
Changing attitudes	4	4
Child sexual abuse	2	4
Choice	3	3
Civility	1	1
Closure	1	1

Cognitive dissonance	1	1
Collaboration	8	13
Colonialism	1	3
Comfort	4	5
ComicCon	1	1
Comics	2	2
Comments online	7	9
Communication	2	3
Community	10	17
Community-based research	3	5
Confidentiality	2	2
Connection	12	19
Consent	5	6
Content curation	2	2
Context	3	5
Continuum of sexual violence	2	2
Control	7	8
Conversations	11	37
Coordination	3	3
Creating social change	9	12
Cultural change	2	2
Current events	4	9
Making links to current events	3	4
Making sense of current events	1	1
Cyberbullying	3	5

Defining social media	1	1
Democracy	2	2
Design impacts use	9	19
Differences between activists and NGOs	3	3
Differences between sexual violence & IPV	1	1
Digital divide	4	4
Disability	2	7
Distance	1	1
Domestic violence	1	1
Echo chamber	1	1
Ecological understandings of violence	3	5
Economic violence	1	1
Education	3	7
Efficacy	5	7
Elliot Rogers	1	1
Emergence	1	1
Emotions	8	15
Empathy	2	2
Empowerment	5	5
Endorsing	1	1
Engagement	11	22
Male engagement	4	6
Not engaging	7	7
Equity	2	3
Ethics	1	1

Events	1	1
Exhausting	3	4
Existence depends on social media	2	3
Experience	6	7
Experiential knowledge	1	1
Expertise	8	11
Exploiting	4	4
Facebook is more personal than Twitter	2	2
Fear	8	12
Feminism	13	41
Anti-feminist	4	4
Consensus	1	1
Feminist divides	1	2
Feminist media	4	8
Online feminism	7	7
Financial factors	7	10
Freedom of speech	3	6
Future potential	4	5
GBV	1	1
Games	1	1
Gaps and missing from media	8	10
Gaslighting	1	1
Generational differences	5	7
Geographical context	1	2
Getting the news out	1	1

Goals & Objectives	13	22
Growing Pains	2	2
Gun control	1	1
Hashtags	6	14
Hate speech	1	1
Healthy relationships	3	3
Hope	1	1
Human Trafficking	2	4
Human interaction	4	5
Human rights	3	4
Humour & Entertainment	5	7
Identity	6	7
Images & Visuality	8	12
Indigenous	5	13
Information	10	14
Information on social media used against survivors	1	1
Infrastructure	1	2
Intention	1	1
Interaction	4	4
Interdisciplinary work	9	12
Intersecting identities	9	19
Intervention	1	1
Isolation	6	7
Jian Ghomeshi	2	2
Journalists	8	18

Knowledge mobilization	7	11
LGBT	1	1
Lack of social media use in the VAW sector	1	1
Language	8	12
Legal issues	5	8
Legitimacy	3	3
Level of engagement with social media	10	14
Level of experience with social media	2	2
Listening	2	3
Local context	4	8
Magic wand question	10	11
Mapping	1	1
Marginalization	1	1
Masculinity	2	2
Measuring success	3	3
Mental health	3	4
Message	9	20
Methodological issues	3	4
Misogyny	3	4
Missing people	2	3
Mobilization	3	5
Momentum	1	1
Morals	1	1
My target group	1	1
Myths	7	12

Narrative & Framing	11	24
Negotiating personal and organizational roles	9	12
Negotiating roles	10	12
Neoliberal shift	1	1
Networks	9	12
Expanding networks	4	6
Neutrality	2	5
Normalizing	2	2
Not all prevention should be online	1	1
Nuance & Complexity	9	20
Numbers & Statistics	5	11
Obscenity	2	2
Online comments	3	3
Online counselling	1	1
Online harassment dynamics are like IPV	1	3
Online violence	8	18
Responses to online harassment	4	10
Opportunity	2	4
Opposites are problematic	1	1
Oppression	1	1
Organization dynamics	12	19
Organizations not heavily using social media	1	2
Othering	3	4
Overwhelming	2	3
Parenting	1	1

Participant Roles	18	36
Broader roles of organization	4	7
Patriarchy	2	2
People who don't use social media see it as Web 1.0	1	1
Personal experiences of violence	7	11
Disclosing	2	2
Petitions	1	1
Pile ons	1	2
Points of intervention	1	1
Polarization	1	1
Police	1	1
Police and social media	3	5
Policy	5	8
Political Climate	6	7
Politics of the VAW sector	6	6
Positive and negative effects of social media are real	6	8
Power	6	6
Counter-power	4	4
Praxis	4	8
Preaching to the choir	5	5
Educating the choir	2	2
Supporting the choir	2	2
Prevention defined	9	13
Privacy	1	1

Privilege	6	6
Psychogeography	2	2
Public education	9	17
Bring the education to the public	3	4
Public health	1	3
Public sociology	9	18
Public understanding	9	14
Publics are the new juries	1	1
Quotes	8	10
Race	5	6
Whiteness	5	5
Radar	2	2
Rape culture	7	12
Reach	2	2
Reciprocity	5	8
Reflecting people's lives and experiences	2	2
Reflexivity	4	6
Rehtaeh Parsons	2	4
Relationships	8	10
Relevancy	4	5
Reliability	1	1
Resistance	3	3
Resonating	2	2
Resources	14	36
Respect	3	3

Responsibility	3	3
Responsibilization	1	2
Revenge porn	1	2
Risk & Safety	12	18
Role of mass media	9	21
Role of research	12	25
Qualitative research	2	2
Rural differences	2	3
Same sex violence	1	1
Sanctuary	1	1
Satire as message	1	1
Scene- cultural	1	1
Schools	2	2
Self-care	2	3
Self-regulation	1	1
Seniors	1	1
Senses	1	1
Sex work	7	10
Sexting	3	4
Sexual violence as a regulatory force	1	1
Sexual violence in conflict zones	1	1
Sexuality	3	4
Signalling	3	3
Silencing	2	2
Social media companies	1	1

Social media strategies are shaped by institutional context	2	2
Social movement	12	19
Social network analysis	1	3
Social perceptions of the Internet	1	1
Socialization	2	2
Solidarity	2	4
Soundbites	2	2
Space	12	16
Getting into people's space	3	3
Public space	3	6
Regulating women's space and movements	1	2
Safe spaces	7	8
Specific campaigns	12	27
Specific social media sites	3	3
4chan	1	1
Apps & Games	1	2
Blogging	8	15
Branch	1	1
Facebook	17	62
Google Alerts	2	2
Google+	2	2
Instagram	4	4
LinkedIn	5	6
Metafilter	1	1
Pinterest	1	2

Podcast	2	3
Reddit	1	1
Tumblr	7	12
Twitter	18	49
Tweet ups	2	3
YouTube	8	14
Speed	7	9
Standpoint experience	3	7
Staying in the loop	1	2
Stereotypes	1	2
Steubenville	1	1
Stigma	4	7
Storytelling	10	17
Strategy	10	17
Street harassment	1	1
Strength	1	1
Struggle	2	2
Successes	8	8
Success doesn't happen organically	2	2
Support	8	14
Survivors	8	9
Sustainability	3	4
Systemic critique	2	2
Taking societal temperature on VAW	1	1
Taking violence seriously	4	8

Target groups	1	1
Targeting social media sites	1	3
Technology vs social media	4	4
Technophobia	1	3
Television	1	1
Texting	1	1
Timeliness	6	6
Tools	1	1
Training	5	10
Transgender	2	3
Translation	2	2
Transmedia storytelling	3	4
Trauma	1	1
Trending	3	3
Trolls	4	8
Trolls in a positive sense	1	1
Trust	3	6
Unintended consequences	5	6
Universities	8	13
Campus sexual assault prevention	1	1
User generated content	1	1
VAW lens	9	14
Non-physical violence	6	8
Validation	1	1
Vicarious trauma	1	1

Victim-blaming	6	10
Visibility	8	13
Voice	7	10
Marginalized voices	7	10
Volunteerism	3	4
We don't actually understand VAW as a society	1	1
Web 2.0, Web 3.0	3	4
Webinars	1	2
Weighing costs and benefits	1	1
What good media coverage looks like	1	1
Women of Colour	3	3
Youth	10	18
Zines	1	1