

MISOGYNY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE, GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS PLUS,  
AND THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S PLAN TO END THE EPIDEMIC OF  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CANADA

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a  
Master of Arts degree

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

November 2024

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores and evaluates the Canadian government's response to the rise of misogyny-motivated violence (MMV) in Canada. This thesis first exposes an attitude of ambivalence within the Canadian government as an institution regarding violence against women and girls, which has underscored meager policy efforts to reduce gender-based violence (including MMV) in the country over the last several decades. Through a content analysis of strategy documents and other grey literature published by relevant line departments and agencies within the federal government, this research highlights the Canadian government's failure to effectively tackle the root causes of gender inequality, particularly within its own institutional structure, contributing to the rise of MMV in Canadian society. Results indicate that Canada's current approach to MMV prevention efforts lacks transformative feminist and intersectional perspectives, which this thesis argues are essential in making meaningful progress in combating MMV in Canada.

## **List of Abbreviations Used**

**2SLGBTQIA+** – Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual plus

**CAF** – Canadian Armed Forces

**CIRNAC** – Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

**CMC** – Canadian Military Colleges

**CSIS** – Canadian Security Intelligence Service

**DND** – Department of National Defence

**FPT** – Federal/Provincial/Territorial (jurisdictions of government)

**GBA+** – Gender-based analysis plus

**GBV** – Gender-based violence

**GDV** – Gender-driven violence

**GOC** – Government of Canada

**IMVE** – Ideologically motivated violent extremism

**IPV** – Intimate partner violence

**MCC** – The Joint Federal/Provincial Commission into the April 2020 Nova Scotia Mass Casualty

**MMIWG** – Missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls

**MMV** – Misogyny-motivated violence

**NAP** – National action plan

**NIMMIWG** – National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

**PM** – Prime Minister

**PSC** – Public Safety Canada

**RCMP** – Royal Canadian Mounted Police

**SWC** – Status of Women Canada

**VAW** – Violence against women

**WAGE** – Women and Gender Equality Canada

**WSC** – Women’s Shelters Canada

## Acknowledgements

Naturally, there are many individuals who I must thank for getting me here today. First and foremost, I have to thank my motherS: Andrea and Paula. Any attempt to express my full and total appreciation and admiration for you both is futile; I could not possibly put those sentiments into just a few words here and now. The one thing I will say is thank you both for fostering my sense of wonder and curiosity from a young age, for always answering truthfully (for whatever reason) every time I asked, “what iz zat?” as a child, and all the random, weird, sometimes existential questions that have popped into my funny brain in the years since. In all capacities, thank you for all your love and support.

On that note, I must also thank my wonderful in-laws (and on-and-off house mates), Cindy and Ron, who have been a second set of parents to me for the better part of a decade now. Thank you for taking me in as your own despite my snoring, incessant blabbering on about anything and everything there is to talk about, and screaming at the T.V. during football season (although sometimes, Ron, I know I was not alone in doing that).

Academically, I do not even know where to begin on the list of who all to thank. I suppose I can begin with my supervisor, Dr. Theresa Ulicki, whose guidance and support have been ever present and consistent for well over two years now. You have been an invaluable mentor to me through the most challenging years of my life. Thank you for everything.

To the entire IDS department – Nicole, Siza, Dr. Cameron, Dr. Parasram, Dr. Huish, Dr. Mannathukkaren, Dr. Schnurr, and Dr. Swanson – I owe each of you thanks for teaching me, mentoring me, and guiding me through the world of IDS for over five years now. Additionally, my second reader, Dr. Michael Halpin, has also played an indescribable role in my being here today. Thank you for being another key mentor in my academic and professional life, as well as a good friend.

If I am thanking my mentors and teachers, then I must thank them all. You often hear people talk about that one schoolteacher who changed everything, but I didn’t have just one teacher who changed my life, I had many: Mrs. Pearson, Ms. Taylor and Mr. Docherty, Mr. Burnside, “Miss A”, Mrs. Ward, Mr. Hillyer...I’m sure there are many

other teachers, professors, and mentors I could and should be thanking here, but I fear that would leave little room to document my actual research.

Throughout my life I have been very fortunate to have had many things come rather easy to me. Not to discredit my own achievements, which have absolutely taken hard work, but as a student of the social sciences I must also reflect on the privilege and opportunities I have been afforded in life which have allowed me to get to where I am today. I have undertaken many endeavours in my life while facing limited adversity. This was sometimes due to luck and chance, but mostly because I have consistently been afforded the resources and opportunities I needed in order to succeed. This was not necessarily the case for my graduate studies.

Over the past two years I have been truly challenged and forced to push myself further each day. In this time, I have had many positive experiences – finding lifelong friends in the other IDS MA candidates: Alex, Alyssa, Anna, Emma, and Philemon, building a home, getting married, and so on – but I have also faced some of the hardest times of my life. I now have the courage to admit that there were many days in the past year where I seriously weighed the option of quitting school altogether, an idea that would have been unthinkable to me in September of 2022 when I began this journey.

I know now that this time in my life, while absolutely agonizing and gutting in every way, was critical for me to experience. I have grown as a person in more ways that I can count over this past year, and I have proved to myself that the past successes I've had in life were not simply due to good fortune and privilege, but are truly my own. I did this. I had help (of course), but I am here, and not by accident. As a result, I write these final words of my thesis with a mix of emotions: pride, relief, humility, and most importantly, a strong sense of accomplishment.

Before I close this preface to my Master's thesis, there are two final people whom this sense of accomplishment would not have been possible without: my husband, John, and our pup, Baya. Baya has been by my side (quite literally) since the summer after my first year of undergrad when John and I first brought her home. She has watched me (with eyes pointed in two different directions) write an Honour's level thesis, a Master's thesis, a couple papers for publication, and countless other projects from her

little nest on my desk, on the floor beside me, or when I was really lucky, curled in a ball right on my lap. She has truly been my companion through all of this, and no amount of snuggles and treats could ever repay her for that.

And finally, to my husband – thank you for everything. No one will ever understand the kinds of sacrifices you have made for me to get here because, again, I cannot begin to put them into words. We were two 17-year-olds freshly dating when I flew out to Halifax with my mom to tour Dalhousie University, a school which you had never even heard of in a city you had never been to. The following year, I applied to Dal to get my Bachelor of Arts degree, and you were there to share in my excitement when I was accepted. This was all despite the fact that you knew this meant that in a matter of months I would be moving 2000 kilometers away from you, my family, your family, all our friends, and everything else that gave me a sense of home. Then the unbelievable happened: after only knowing me for a couple years – and having never even been East of Quebec before – you took a major chance and followed me to Halifax so we could chase my dreams side-by-side. Thank you for taking that chance and allowing me to not only chase, but actually reach all my goals and aspirations. Still, my most valued achievement is you. I love you forever.

## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

### **Introduction**

In 1993, as part of the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, the United Nations (UN) declared violence against women (VAW)<sup>1</sup> and girls to be an international human rights issue and health epidemic (UN, 1993). Nearly a decade later, in 2002, an assessment and statistical profile of violence against women performed by Status of Women Canada (SWC, now called Women and Gender Equality Canada, or WAGE) concluded that VAW represents “a unique aspect of the wider social problem of violence” that exists in Canada (p. 11).

VAW is a form of gender-based violence (GBV), which refers to all violence that is directed against individuals based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender, not limited to but including those who identify as women<sup>2</sup> (WAGE, 2019). While both types of violence are similar in that both VAW and GBV are impacted by factors such as power dynamics and social norms (Khan et al., 2019), the main difference between these two terms is the demographic implied by the use of the term: VAW is specifically and explicitly concerned with women’s safety and security, meanwhile GBV more broadly considers any and all violence with a gender-based motive, whether that is violence against women, men, gender non-conforming individuals, or another gender identity.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Declaration* (UN, 1993) defines VAW as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women” (p. 2, article 1).

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this research, the term “women” refers to cisgender women, transgender women, and femme-identified people, which Kashen & Mabud (2020) define as anyone “who identifies as feminine or is typically read as feminine by others, including those among them who are non-binary and/or gender-nonconforming” (p. 5).

In recent years, the VAW epidemic has been more aptly recognized by the Canadian government as a greater epidemic of GBV (see CIRNAC, 2021a-b; WAGE, 2022b). The effects of this epidemic, while amplified among certain communities of Canadian women (such as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, or MMIWG, crisis<sup>3</sup> for example) are not limited to any single demographic; thousands of Canadian women and girls of all races, ethnicities, gender identities, and other backgrounds have been subjected to violence by men (Conroy, 2018). In recent years, a specific form of gendered violence has become an increasingly prominent issue across the globe, including within Canada: misogyny-motivated violence.

### **Background: What is MMV?**

Misogyny-motivated violence, or MMV, refers to exactly what the name suggests: violence that is motivated specifically by misogynistic ideologies. For the purpose of this study, MMV includes any act of violence which follows three criteria: it must be 1) male perpetrated, 2) directly pursues the objective of harming and/or intimidating women on a mass scale and 3) sends a message of anti-feminism, pro-VAW, pro-patriarchy/male dominance, or otherwise supports women's oppression. An important distinction here is that MMV does not necessarily have to involve female victims exclusively; however, the violence must begin with a foundation of misogyny for it to be considered misogyny motivated.

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<sup>3</sup> The MMIWG crisis is an ongoing epidemic of violence against Indigenous women and girls across both the United States and Canada. The exact number of women and girls affected by this crisis is unknown, but estimates place this number in the thousands (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019).

MMV is a term I conceived<sup>4</sup> to describe acts of GBV that follow the above criteria. As Gentry (2021), Morris & Ratajczak (2019), Tonso (2009) and others have established, there is a definitive correlation between male perpetrated mass violence and men's histories of VAW, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV). Therefore, some MMV events involve acts of GBV such as IPV or other family violence. However, for any act of GBV to be considered MMV it must directly attack women on a mass scale by sending an ideological message of violence to society. While some may argue that most acts of IPV succeed in meeting these criteria, for the purpose of this study I am exclusively focusing on mass casualty events as acts of MMV. My reason for this specific focus on mass casualty events rather than other, more interpersonal forms of GBV, such as IPV, is because mass casualty events driven by gender-based motives – while not a new phenomenon in Canada – are rapidly growing and evolving in their frequency and complexity.

One developing source of MMV in Canada and internationally is the incel community: a community of self-proclaimed involuntarily celibate heterosexual men who, mostly among online forums, share beliefs of anti-feminism, voice support for the use of VAW as a control measure, and the complete abolition of women's rights<sup>5</sup> (Lockyer et al., 2024; Preston et al., 2021). While the incel community is a prominent source of violent misogyny in Canada, MMV is not contained to this community alone;

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<sup>4</sup> As this is an emerging area of research, MMV is not a term that is used in common circulation, therefore, there are few established definitions of the term to cite. In my research for this thesis and other projects (see Lockyer, 2022; Lockyer et al., 2024) I have seen terms such as “misogynistic terrorism” “gender-driven violent extremism” alongside “misogyny-motivated violence” used inconsistently between sources. I adopted the use of the term “MMV” based on the applicability of the term in prior research and sought to maintain consistency into this project.

<sup>5</sup> As I demonstrated in a prior study (see Lockyer, 2022), not all incels share these extremist beliefs. However, these perspectives tend to be upheld by more violently inclined incels, who are the focus of this thesis on violent misogyny.

there have been many mass casualty events in Canada driven by misogynistic motives over the years, many of which preceded the establishment of the incel community.

Perhaps most infamously among these examples, in 1989 self-proclaimed anti-feminist Marc Lépine took the lives of 14 female engineering students at L'École Polytechnique de Montréal in what has since been classified by the City of Montréal as an anti-feminist attack (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2019). Three decades later, in 2018, self-proclaimed incel Alek Minassian carried out a vehicle-ramming attack in Toronto where he killed 11 people and injured at least 16 others (Witt, 2020; Lockyer et al., 2024). Two years later, another incel attack occurred in Toronto which involved a 17-year-old boy stabbing a woman to death with a machete (Van Brunt & Taylor, 2021). Most recently, the Joint Federal/Provincial Commission into the April 2020 Nova Scotia Mass Casualty (hereafter referred to as the “mass casualty commission” or the MCC) identified that VAW also played a significant role in the 2020 tragedy<sup>6</sup>, an event which left 22 people dead, and three others injured – the most victims in a single mass shooting in Canadian history to date (MCC, 2023c-d). This event and others will be discussed further in the chapters to follow.

## **Significance**

This issue is especially important at this moment in time because MMV is a growing threat, one that is being propelled at an alarming rate by the incel community. When I first began researching the incel community in late 2021, around 15,000 members were registered to one of the most popular incel forums, Incels.is (Lockyer, 2022). Three

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<sup>6</sup>After assaulting, abducting, and attempting to murder his partner, Gabriel Wortman commenced his attack across Nova Scotia, which left 22 Canadians dead (MCC, 2023c).

years later, membership to this community has almost doubled in numbers. While these statistics reflect the growth of just one of many different online incel forums, there are also real world indications of the growing threat of violence from this community in Canadian society.

As previously noted, there have already been two (confirmed) deadly incel attacks in Canada in the last five years. In these years the Government of Canada (GOC) has made it clear that the incel community and other gender driven violent extremist threats have created a growing security problem for Canadians. More specifically, the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service, or CSIS, reports that Canada has seen an increase in misogyny-motivated threats of violence and violent attacks in the last five years (2019-2023). As a result, CSIS (2019) has become “increasingly preoccupied” (p. 11) with the threat posed by those who advocate for, support, or otherwise engage in misogynistic violence. More recently, CSIS (2021) has assessed that the incel community and other modern gender-driven “ideologically motivated violent extremist” (IMVE) threats are evolving with “unprecedented multiplicity and fluidity” (p. 27). As of 2023, roughly half of all federal terrorism resources in Canada were dedicated to gender-driven IMVE investigations (CSIS, 2023).

Bearing this in mind, the strategies proposed by the GOC to “end” this type of violence are not working. To understand why this is the case, I reviewed a collection of official reports published by relevant line departments and agencies<sup>7</sup> within the GOC to learn more of the strategies and solutions being put forth by these organizations to

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<sup>7</sup> A line department in this context is a government entity that is directly responsible to Parliament. The full list of these departments and agencies can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/dept.html>

manage MMV in Canada, what has informed these solutions, and uncover their strengths and weaknesses.

### **Research Question and Argument**

This thesis is guided by the following research question: How is the Canadian government, as an institution, responding to the rise of violent misogyny in Canada, and what strategies are being employed by the government to reduce MMV and ultimately produce better outcomes for women in the country? This thesis will argue that MMV is indicative of the systemic misogyny which pervades Canadian society and contributes to the nation-wide epidemic of GBV (and more specifically, MMV). Furthermore, I will demonstrate that this epidemic has been maintained, in part, by the GOC itself through perpetual inaction in addressing this long-established issue.

### **Scope of Research**

The GOC's current approach to VAW/GBV prevention and reduction can be found in a number of reports and strategy documents published by CSIS, as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), and others. As this thesis will identify, these documents contain many troubling claims and positions regarding VAW/GBV prevention and reduction strategies, as well as contradiction and confusion between the various government agencies and departments which have each presented their own strategies on this issue, seemingly with little coordination. Consequently, strategies, policies, and government responses to the threat of MMV are not adequately informed. This thesis also argues that a insufficient

understanding of feminist and intersectional concepts in policy and planning across government, as well as a lingering hesitancy to recognize violent misogyny as a problem with ideological roots, are some of the main barriers to ensuring women's safety and security in Canada.

## **Research Methods**

The method of analysis I used in this thesis was a systematic grey literature review. Grey literature includes a range of sources that are typically found outside of academic databases and traditional academic publishing channels. Examples of these materials include reports and strategy documents produced by government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and independent research institutes. For the purpose of this research, "grey literature", as referenced throughout this thesis, is exclusive to materials produced by federal government agencies and departments<sup>8</sup>.

I chose to use this method for my research because I wanted to gain an understanding of the strategies being promoted and employed by relevant departments and agencies within the federal government<sup>9</sup> to reduce violent misogyny, and see how these strategies have evolved over time. As this thesis will show, the federal government has released a bounty of reports and strategy documents on GBV, VAW, and related topics over the last 20-30 years. My analysis is based on a review of each of these relevant materials, after which I compared and contrasted these documents to measure the

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<sup>8</sup> The full list of grey literature materials included in this study can be found under Appendix A

<sup>9</sup> Henceforth, references to the "federal government" or the "GOC" signifies the collection line departments and agencies which form the federal government.

evolution of progress in regard to how these issues are being addressed by relevant departments and agencies within the GOC.

To satisfy the aims of this thesis, the grey literature had to meet certain inclusion criteria. All materials included in the results of this study had to be:

- Published between 1993 and 2023<sup>10</sup>.
- Published by any department or agency within the GOC.
- On the topics of GBV, VAW, or similar themes.
- A report, action plan, article, or similar style of publication; materials such as infographics, fact sheets, and newsletters were excluded.

All grey literature materials reviewed for this thesis were found on the GOC reports and publications database<sup>11</sup> using the above criteria as filters.

Upon screening titles and abstracts or executive summaries (when possible), materials were included based on relevance to my research question. Following this step, I inductively analyzed each piece of grey literature in full to capture key information regarding policies and strategies implemented by agencies in the GOC to prevent and reduce violent misogyny in Canada or otherwise address VAW and/or GBV in some capacity.

Materials were collected up until December 2023, when the list of grey literature materials for review was finalized. During my review and analysis of these materials in the months that followed, some additional relevant pieces of literature were found; these were also included in the study as long as they met the above noted inclusion criteria.

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<sup>10</sup>As Chapter 4 will outline in greater detail, VAW was not meaningfully researched by the GOC in any capacity prior to the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey by Statistics Canada (see Johnson, 2005), hence the decision to use 1993 as the “cut off” for materials collected for review.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/browse/index.html>

Any materials found in the following months which were published after December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023 (or before 1993, as previously noted) were not included in the results.

## **Overview of Chapters**

Following this introductory chapter, chapter 2 will outline the theoretical framework used to answer the driving research question of this thesis: how has the Canadian government responded to the rise of violent misogyny in Canada, and what strategies are being employed by the Canadian government to reduce this violence?

Chapter 3 will review the scholarly literature on GBV, VAW, and MMV in Canada. This chapter will explain the issues at hand by providing historical and contemporary examples of mass violence in Canada with misogyny-based motives, discussing the ideologies behind violent misogyny, and providing a summary of the actions taken by Canadian government in response to MMV attacks. Continuing on with this theme, chapter 4 provides a summary and timeline of the actions and positions taken by federal leadership in Canada over the years when confronted with threats and/or acts of MMV in order to demonstrate how perspectives on VAW/GBV in Canada have evolved (and devolved) over the years.

Chapter 5 outlines the key findings from my review of grey literature on VAW, GBV, and MMV in Canada. This chapter is divided into three sections, each of which reflect a central theme among the grey literature. These themes summarize the federal government's approach to reducing VAW in society, incorporating women's perspectives into government, and implementing gender mainstreaming (i.e., GBA+) into the public

service and beyond. This will be followed by chapter 6, which is comprised of a discussion of these findings in conjunction with the framework which guides this thesis.

The conclusion of this thesis (Chapter 7) will summarize my main arguments, areas of future research, and other considerations for future policy/strategy adjustments within the GOC that could influence more positive outcomes for women in Canada. After identifying strategies, policies, and perspectives which can be used in violent misogyny reduction and prevention efforts in Canada, I will provide recommendations for the way forward for Canada and concluding thoughts on this topic.

## CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework

### **Overview of Theoretical Framework**

The framework of this thesis is underlined by various feminist theories, each of which will be discussed in detail throughout this chapter. Feminist theoretical perspectives are generally understood to offer contributions and ideas which cannot be articulated through more “traditional” perspectives, many of which are masculinized by default (see Benton & Craib, 2011; Ferguson, 1984). More specific to the subject matter of this thesis, Wong (2022) notes that tools of feminist scholarship are *fundamental* in any effort to eradicate GBV, particularly within institutions such as the GOC. Bearing this in mind, this chapter will describe the specific approach taken in this study to analyze the issue of MMV in Canada and the accompanying theories to this approach which will also be incorporated into the framework of this thesis.

In order to answer the overarching research question of this thesis, we must first uncover the structural and cultural barriers within government to violent misogyny reduction and prevention of efforts in Canada. The preliminary theory which guides this thesis is gendered organizations theory (Acker, 1990; 2000), which is a social theory that examines how gender influences the structure, culture, practices, and overall dynamics of organizations. The application of gendered organizations theory in this context will position the GOC as a gendered institution, thus guiding my exploration of the systemic and cultural barriers within the Canadian government in their GBV reduction and prevention of efforts (see chapter 4), as well as informing the discussion of the findings of this study (chapter 6).

In conjunction with gendered organizations theory, I will also discuss models of feminist governance and current debates in scholarship regarding the (in)compatibility between feminist thought and bureaucracy (Ferguson, 1984). This will lead into a short section on transformative feminist approaches to governance to identify strengths, weaknesses, and applicability of this approach to this study. This chapter will also consider intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; 2016) as an essential component to understanding the various ways women living in Canada experience gender-based oppression.

Chapter 2 will conclude with an overview of gender mainstreaming, particularly the gender mainstreaming approach of gender-based analysis plus (GBA+), and its use throughout the GOC to establish a more gender-equitable and anti-oppressive environment for women in Canada (CSIS, 2020; DND, 2017; WAGE, 2019; WAGE 2021b). GBA+ will be discussed in greater length in chapter 5, where the more specific aspects of the GBA+ approach as well as the contents and lessons of the GOC's GBA+ training course are described.

### **Gendered Organizations Theory**

Gendered organizations theory is an approach that studies how gender shapes and influences organizational processes, structures, cultures, practices, and outcomes. This theory emerged as a way to understand how gender dynamics operate within workplaces and other organizational contexts, such as bureaucracy and government (Brodie & Bakker, 2008). While this theory can be used to explore how gender shapes aspects of organizational life, such as hiring practices and workplace dynamics, in this thesis this

theory will be applied to examine how the structure and culture, and resulting policies, of the GOC reinforce gender hierarchies and contribute to gender disparities (Mastracci & Bowman, 2015).

Gendered organizations theory suggests that gender is a fundamental organizing principle that permeates all aspects of organizational life; therefore, organizations are not inherently gender-neutral<sup>12</sup> but instead create, reinforce, and perpetuate gender inequalities and stereotypes which favour men and create gender imbalance (Mastracci & Bowman, 2015). Indeed, governments are generally conceptualized as gender-neutral settings, but as Acker (1990) posits, this is only because the gendered nature of organizations are masked and the embodied gender dynamics of work within these organizations are obscured.

Acker (1990) explains that traditionally, almost all organizations – certainly organizations with such a longstanding operational history like the GOC – originated in the “male, abstract intellectual domain”, and as such, take reality as the world seen from that masculinized standpoint (p. 142). Ferguson (1984) shared thoughts that reflect a similar idea, writing that traditionally, “bureaucratic discourse both creates and reflects the masculine notion of the subject, then posits that version of subjectivity as universal” (p. 205). Acker (1990) continues on to explain this tendency to view the masculinization of organizations as an objective or universal process (thus implying their gender-neutrality) by explaining that men in organizations habitually take their male perspectives to represent the collective human perspective. As a result, organizational structures and

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<sup>12</sup> “Gender neutral” is a term used to refer to something that is not specifically associated with or designated to a particular gender. For example, products marketed as “gender-neutral” are said to be designed to be suitable for individuals regardless of their gender identity.

processes become viewed as gender neutral simply because there is no alternative viewpoint.

The longer the bureaucracy is in existence, and the more time and energy officials invest into mastering and enforcing existing procedures, the more stable and rigid the organization becomes, and the less able it is to adjust to new systems of operation (Ferguson, 1984). In this case, patriarchal organizational procedures have become so normalized within organizations (such as the GOC, for instance) that they are rarely questioned or challenged by those with power to make change who are benefitting from these patriarchal organizational norms and standards (men, traditionally). Acker (1990) notes that, historically, when feminists have attempted to bring attention to the varying effects organizational structures can have on men and women, men in power have contended that it is *feminists* who are suddenly introducing gendered attitudes and behaviours into the organization, therefore contaminating what would otherwise be a perfectly gender-neutral organizational structure.

Bureaucracies typically have an enormous capacity of power in deciding who is “in” and who is “out”, but a successful bureaucracy is also dependant on certainty and control (Mastracci & Bowman, 2015); those who seek to alter the institution are a fundamental threat to its operation (Ferguson, 1984). In most cases, it is men who are in the position of power, and women who seek equality are perceived as a threat to patriarchal operations. This is because women’s entrances into male-dominated spaces challenges the existing power dynamics within the institution.

For example, the presence of women in spaces where men have traditionally held most of the leadership positions and decision-making authority may result in a shift in

organizational culture, wherein communication styles, decision-making processes, and approaches to problem-solving may change. Men in dominant positions who are accustomed to the existing culture may perceive these changes as threatening to the masculine identity, which is often closely tied to professional identity and status (Morris & Ratajczak; 2019). Furthermore, women who enter these male-dominated spaces are typically placed at the bottom of the organization's structural hierarchy, and generally brought up to the top as tokens of inclusivity (Acker, 1990).

This assumption that organizations will become less oppressive merely by incorporating women into them is a naïve expectation. The “add women and stir” approach, as it's often called, is in fact widely regarded as ineffective in changing the way an organization functions (Cadesky, 2020; Parisi, 2020). The argument that organizations will somehow be magically altered by simply recruiting women into them is false; according to Acker (2000), women are now found in many occupations and positions of power within organizations in which they were almost totally absent until only recently, but these changes have not significantly altered the fundamental gendered nature of these organizations.

As chapter 4 will describe in greater detail, this “add women and stir” approach has already been attempted within the federal government, and just as Acker (2000) predicted, these actions did not significantly alter the fundamental gendered nature of the GOC in any way. I argue that to improve gender equality in the federal government and work towards a truly gender-neutral body of government, we must first work towards eliminating the sources of women's oppression in Canada. As the following chapters will describe, Canada currently has a self-declared “feminist government” which seeks to

make these changes, but as I argue, Canada needs to adopt a more transformative approach to feminist governance in order to create meaningful change.

### **Organizational Transformation through Feminist Governance**

Ferguson (1984) writes, “the feminist movement is divided internally, as are most major movements for social change, between those who are primarily interested in gaining access to established institutions and those who aim at the transformation of those institutions” (p. 4). The divide in the feminist movement which Ferguson (1984) is describing here is the divide between transformative and reformative feminism. In practice, this divide can be best demonstrated through an analogy provided by O’Neill & Eyben (2013).

Imagine an old, rundown house: perhaps the foundation is failing, an inconveniently placed wall needs knocking down, or the kitchen is simply outdated in style. O’Neill & Eyben (2013) use this imagined house as an analogy in a discussion of how to effectively work within a bureaucracy as a feminist. The authors discuss the idea of “renovating the master’s house”, arguing that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”, but that one can use the master’s tools to renovate the master’s house, “to make it your house, and certainly to improve the view” (p. 89); this can be described as organizational reform. Naturally, however, there are drawbacks to renovating a house, and a rebuild – otherwise known as a transformation – may be the best option for the homeowner.

At first glance, a renovation may appear as the best option to fix a rundown house. While it may be quicker, cheaper, and possibly less risky to renovate instead of

demolishing and rebuilding, the homeowner must also make compromises in this process. In a rebuild, however, the homeowner has the option and capacity to radically alter the existing structure of the home, change its shape and form into something more desirable and efficient for not just some, but all the homes' residents. Not to mention that renovating a structure may be futile anyways because renovations do not address the root cause of some major problems, such as the structural integrity of the house. Similarly, organizational reformation does not address the root causes of gendered subordination within organizations, instead working around them through "changing the view".

This debate leaves feminist scholars with a question: if bureaucracies are instruments of discipline that work to maintain the status quo (Eyben, 2010), does this mean that bureaucracy is not fit to support the transformation feminism seeks? Ferguson (1984) would say yes, arguing that not all feminisms (radical feminism, for instance), are compatible with bureaucracy (p. 180). Yet while criticizing bureaucracies as "inherently and severely limited in what they can accomplish", Ferguson (1984) does recommend retaining bureaucratic channels as an option for organizational change, noting that "bureaucratic channels are sometimes the only ones available for individuals to press grievances" (p. 180). Furthermore, taking a strategic approach to collaboration can work in feminists' favour as there are advantages to working within the bureaucracy.

Working within bureaucracies allows for the formation of relationships with inside actors who may serve as powerful allies for achieving change (O'Neill & Eyben, 2013). Additionally, those on the 'inside' have a better ability to observe their own organization's culture within the context of the broader political landscape to recognize where emerging political opportunities may lie (O'Neill & Eyben, 2013, p. 92). For

feminists, collaborative engagement with bureaucracy also means having a bigger role in discussions surrounding strategies and tools that are being used by the GOC to address pertinent gender issues: True (2003) argues that this sort of collaboration among feminists and bureaucrats is part of what has made gender-based analysis a bigger part of the routine practices of institutions of governance globally.

According to True (2003), “The major question...is not how feminist scholars and activists can avoid cooptation by powerful institutions, but whether we can afford not to engage with such institutions” (p. 368). Thus feminists may have to work from within – as opposed to outside – the bureaucracy to achieve transformational change. After all, the contradictions that exist between feminists and bureaucrats can provide opportunities for policy change (Eyben, 2010).

On the other hand, Ferguson (1984) argues that institutions *must* be fundamentally transformed and redefined to achieve feminist governance goals, therefore, feminist governance may require organizational reform through a transformative feminist approach. Bearing this in mind, it is essential to consider a combined approach to feminist governance: not fully tearing down the structures in place, but instead keeping what provides value while demolishing and rebuilding what is causing the greatest amount of harm to Canadian citizens. This option, and other ideas to achieve feminist governance in Canada, will be further discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 to follow.

### **Intersectionality**

As noted in the previous section, Ferguson (1984) argues that in order to alter the terms of political discourse which limit women’s ability to engage in political processes,

our institutions must be totally transformed. According to Tiessen (2019), this begins with “an understanding of power relations and inequalities that perpetuate gender inequality individually and institutionally” (p. 8). This approach recognizes the underlying causes of gender inequality in relation to masculinity and patriarchy, but also considers how multiple sources of oppression can intersect with gender relations, ultimately enhancing inequalities for certain individuals (Tiessen, 2019); this concept is also known as intersectionality.

Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991; 2016), is a framework which explores how multiple interdependent social identities (such as race, class, and gender) intersect to create mutually constructed, interconnected systems of simultaneously experienced oppression. An intersectional approach demands that women not be generalized as a category defined by their shared gendered subordination, but instead considered as socio-economic political actors that exist within particular contexts (Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw (1991) emphasizes that forms of discrimination that are often framed as discrete experiences are not in fact mutually exclusive; when an individual faces various forms of discrimination each has a compounding effect on the individual.

Intersectionality is an essential component to the framework of this thesis due to the simple fact that the dangers, risks, and threats that many women experience in their day-to-day lives are not universally shared by all women in Canada. Intersectionality shines a light on how these threats are racialized, gendered, and otherwise influenced by aspects of an individual’s identity. In terms of risk of and exposure to GBV, women do share the common experience of discrimination or prejudice due to their sex or

gender, however, there are differences within the category of “women” when one considers the various ways in which women are additionally marginalized by their race, ability, socioeconomic status, and sexuality. One example of this which (will be discussed at greater length later in this thesis) was identified in the National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019), which highlighted that Indigenous women in Canada are at an increased risk of violence due to their gender, but also due to their race (and in some cases, socio-economic status).

Intersectionality ultimately advocates for a more comprehensive approach to addressing gender-based inequalities. By recognizing that individuals may face multiple forms of discrimination – or extreme social advantage (Collins, 2019) – based on their intersecting identities, intersectionality highlights the importance of inclusivity in policy development. In terms of policy, intersectionality is often complementary to other strategies and approaches, such as gender mainstreaming.

### **Gender Mainstreaming and the GOC’s Adoption of GBA+**

Gender mainstreaming, the final aspect of this framework, is a concept or strategy which promotes integrating a gendered perspective into policy agendas (Eyben, 2010). However, while gender mainstreaming is a strong strategy for *introducing* gender-based incentives into government, it does little to change discourse, values, and power relations within government (Brodie & Bakker, 2008; Eyben, 2010). True (2003) argues that gender mainstreaming is a potentially transformative tool “depend[ing] on what feminist scholars, activists and policy-makers collectively make of it” (p. 368), but Eyben (2010) has come to the conclusion that gender mainstreaming has failed as an instrument of

transformation, “because it has had to work within existing paradigms and organisational forms”, thus making “only modest changes to the status quo” (p. 56). Despite the flaws presented by gender mainstreaming strategies, the GOC has still pushed the strategy for nearly three decades as the best suited tool to address Canada’s gender-based inequity issues.

The Canadian government formally introduced gender mainstreaming and what was then simply ‘Gender-Based Analysis’ (GBA) in the 1995 *Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, although SWC (1995) claimed at the time that the federal government had been “conducting gender-based analysis” since 1976 (p. 18). As Brodie & Bakker (2008) explain, “*The federal plan* committed the government to an encompassing implementation of gender-based analysis in the development of policies, programs, and legislation” (p. 70), but as Chapter 5 of this thesis will identify, this has not necessarily led to improved conditions for women in Canada<sup>13</sup>.

While GBA offers some opportunity for creating more gender equitable policies in Canada, many academics have cautioned against the constraints associated with this governing instrument (see Brodie & Bakker, 2008). A major point of contention with the adoption of GBA at the time surrounded intersectionality, as there were concerns that GBA would not be sufficiently attentive to the needs of women additionally affected by family status, race, sexuality, ethnicity, or class related barriers (Brodie & Bakker, 2008).

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<sup>13</sup> It is crucial to note here that “women in Canada” or “Canadian women” as referenced in this thesis refers to not just Canadian citizens, but all women living and/or working in Canada. Dale et al. (2021) note that under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Canada is obligated to protect all women within its borders, regardless of formal citizenship; this includes women who are working in Canada as temporary foreign workers, attending school as international students, here as sponsored spouses or spouses of permanent residents or citizens, undeclared family members, in addition to refugees, victims of trafficking, and many other groups of women who are living in Canada and therefore affected by Canadian laws and policies, but are not legal citizens of the country.

Thus, a ‘plus’ was added to ‘GBA’ to serve as a response to this noted failure of GBA to account for intersectional diversity.

While the newer GBA *plus* (+) does have some positive attributes, such as the acknowledgement of how various identities including race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical ability can shape experience (i.e., intersectionality), the framework itself is lacking in other areas. As Mason (2019) and Hankivsky (2012) identify, the GOC moving to add a ‘+’ to what was then just the ‘GBA’ framework has ultimately not led to meaningful change in how the framework is applied. This is because a major flaw with gender mainstreaming strategies, including GBA+, is their inability to change discourse because they do not seek to alter the structures that prevent women and girls from engaging in social, economic, and political processes in the first place. Nonetheless, according to CSIS (2019) the federal government “expects that all policy proposals brought forward for consideration are informed and shaped by robust gender-based analysis” (p. 39).

The adoption of GBA+ and gender mainstreaming by the GOC will be further analyzed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, which will explain that GBA+ as an “analytical tool” (as WAGE suggests it is to be used as) was not designed to be implemented as a curative treatment to gender inequality or discrimination, yet as evidenced by the grey literature, the GOC often presents GBA+ as such. As a result, GBA+ and gender mainstreaming as a strategy is both “everywhere and nowhere” within the GOC (Brodie & Bakker, 2008, p. 71). This “everywhere and nowhere” presence of GBA+ within GOC strategy and policy documents will be demonstrated through examples in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has described the theoretical framework which guides this thesis. Gendered organizations theory, buttressed by the frameworks of transformative feminism, feminist governance, and intersectionality, challenge traditional views and perspectives which exist within the broader context of patriarchal structures, and emphasize factors which may intersect with gender to shape experiences of violence differently for different people. By drawing on feminist and intersectional perspectives, this thesis highlights the ways in which structural gender inequalities and organizational power dynamics contribute to the persistence of MMV in Canada.

This theoretical lens not only allows for a critical examination of the federal government's response to the rise of MMV in Canada, but also emphasizes the need to address the root causes of gender inequality, rather than merely reacting to its consequences. This framework will be applied to assess the effectiveness of current government strategies and to identify the institutional barriers that hinder the development of more transformative, gender-equitable solutions to MMV in Canada. Ultimately, this chapter has laid the groundwork for understanding the systemic nature of MMV, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: Literature Review

### **MMV in Canada: Background and Context**

There is an ongoing debate internationally as to whether or not MMV should be considered terrorism. While national governments (Canada included) are increasingly recognizing incel violence and other gender-based extremist threats as forms of terrorism, acts of misogyny-motivated mass violence are still commonly reduced to isolated acts of violence or “lone wolf” attacks by governments, law enforcement agencies, and media alike.

This chapter provides further background and context on the issue of MMV in Canada by providing a review of the scholarly literature on MMV. The objectives of this literature review are twofold: first, to show how past misogyny-motivated acts of mass violence, such as the Montréal Massacre and the Toronto Van Attack, have informed modern policy and opinions on MMV, and second, to display the precedent that has been set in terms of the political and social responses to VAW and other threats to women and feminism.

### **“Lone Wolf” Violence and the Montréal Massacre**

On 6 December 1989, self-proclaimed anti-feminist Marc Lépine entered L'École Polytechnique de Montréal and, at gunpoint, separated the students by gender (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2019). After freeing all the men, Lépine proceeded to murder 14 women, injure an additional 10 women, and incidentally injured 4 men (Halpin et al., 2024). Lépine then took his own life, leaving behind a three-page suicide note, which clearly stated that his goal in this attack was to send the “feminists,” who had “ruined” his life,

“to their maker” (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2019; Langman, 2014). The Montréal Massacre was the deadliest mass killing event in Canadian history at the time, a record which was maintained until Gabriel Wortman’s murder of 22 people throughout Nova Scotia in April of 2020 (The Canadian Press, 2020b).

The Montréal Massacre can be marked as the breakthrough event of modern MMV in Canada because, at the time, nothing like this had ever happened before in the country. While this event was not the first of its kind in terms of an event where a male attacker with motives based in misogyny targeted and killed women, but it was the first time this type of event occurred on such a scale (Eglin & Hester, 2003): fourteen deaths, all young women, all targeted not just for their gender, but for their status as female engineering students – for their status as “feminists”.

On that note, it is commonly stated that Lépine sought to kill women solely on account on their gender; this statement is incorrect, and a simplification of a more nuanced ideology at work. Former Minister of Women and Gender Equality, the Honourable Maryam Monsef, has claimed that the victims of the Montréal Massacre died “simply for being women” (WAGE, 2019, p. 6), but as Blais & Dupuis-Déri (2019), Eglin & Hester (2003), Halpin et al. (2024), and many others have demonstrated, the victims of the massacre were targeted not only because they were women, but because they were women who found success in a man’s domain, thereby earning the title of Lépine’s enemy: feminists.

Lépine had no way of knowing if the women he killed identified as feminists or not; it did not matter. Lépine arrived at the conclusion that the women he targeted and killed were feminists simply because of their status as “women who do men’s jobs”. As

Eglin & Hester (2003) explain, Lépine rationalized that “since these women in the classroom are going to be engineers, and engineering is a man’s job, and only feminist women would take men’s jobs, then these women must be feminists” (p. 55). Lépine had killed those women because he saw them as feminists, and by naming his victims as such, Lépine depersonalized and politicized them as representatives of feminism (Eglin & Hester, 2003).

Immediately following the massacre, a debate arose in the public sphere regarding how this attack should be addressed. Given the information presented by Lépine himself in his suicide note, in addition to comments he allegedly made during his attack<sup>14</sup>, feminist media contributors (see Eglin & Hester, 2003, and Malette & Chalouh, 1991, for example) called on the federal government to acknowledge and address this event not as an isolated act from a madman shooter, but instead a horrifying reflection of the misogyny that exists in Canadian society. Unfortunately, many men in positions of political power in Canada did not agree with this assessment.

Quebec’s Premier at the time, Robert Bourassa, asserted that the massacre had no political significance and was just a random act of violence that *happened* to exclusively target women (Côté, 1991). While Prime Minister (PM) Brian Mulroney agreed that Lépine singled out women “in a completely criminal and insensitive fashion”, he asserted that the massacre was ultimately an “isolated incident” (Poirier & McKenna, 1989, as cited in Eglin & Hester, 2003). These responses triggered more questions from feminists,

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<sup>14</sup> Witnesses to the massacre reported that during the attack Lépine had made statements such as “you’re all a bunch of feminists. I hate feminists”, which were directed at the women that he killed and injured (Eglin & Hester, 2003; Tonso, 2009).

who asked, even if L epine was an isolated attacker, how does that disqualify his ability to make a political statement with his violence?

While L epine was acting alone in a physical sense, his violence was symbolic of a greater cause, as Escomel (1991) explains, “L epine symbolizes a particular hatred: he is, therefore, not so isolated” (p. 133). Unlike lone-wolf violence, which is generally considered as violence carried out by an individual whose motives are conceived and directed without any specified agenda (McCulloch et al., 2019), L epine clearly had a political agenda; he said so himself. The following quote is an excerpt from L epine’s suicide note, written the morning of his attack and found on his body after the attack concluded (Langman, 2014):

Would you note that if I commit suicide today 89-12-06 it is not for economic reasons (for I have waited until I exhausted all my financial means, even refusing jobs) but for political reasons. Because I have decided to send the feminists, who have always ruined my life, to their Maker...Even if the Mad Killer epithet will be attributed to me by the media, I consider myself a rational erudite that only the arrival of the Grim Reaper has forced to take extreme acts...the feminists have always enraged me (p. 2).

L epine certainly intended that his act be interpreted as a political one; he did not just want to kill women, he wanted to break the feminist spirit. L epine would argue that his attack was ultimately justified because feminism had hurt him; feminists had gone too far. Was he, L epine, not entitled to defend himself? This is a sentiment that, today, echoes louder than ever before, thanks (in large part) to the incel community.

## Anti-Feminism and the Incel Community

Incels are a part of what is known as the “manosphere”: a community made up of various different subcultures of men who believe that men as a gender hold inherent superiority over “females”, feminism presents a threat to traditional masculinity, feminists seek to inflict a cultural war against males which involves the oppression of men, and that as society encourages the progression of women’s rights and gender equality, men’s rights will become increasingly jeopardized (Guy, 2021; Preston et al., 2021; Witt, 2020). The incel community is largely regarded as an online community, but over the last decade some men from this community have translated their online expressions of rage and resentment into real life acts of harassment and violence. Elliot Rodger’s 2014 attack in Isla Vista, California, which left 6 people dead, and 14 others injured, is most often highlighted as the first confirmed act of incel mass violence<sup>15</sup> (Allely & Faccini, 2017; Brown, 2015; Hoffman et al., 2020; Witt, 2020).

It should be noted that there is a debate among scholars as to whether or not Rodger’s attack was in fact the first global instance of incel violence; some researchers have made the argument that Lépine was actually the first incel. Bloom (2022) reasons that because Lépine was motivated by a hatred for women and he “resembles proto typical incels in both his physical appearance and psychological demeanor” (p. 60), that he could be considered the “original” incel. However, while both Lépine and incels share common ideological beliefs, specifically regarding women and feminism, Bloom (2022)

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<sup>15</sup> Rodger’s attack is typically cited as the “first” incel attack due to the contents of his 137-page “manifesto” in which Rodger describes his desire to achieve “retribution” through his attack for having been supposedly “wronged” by society. Namely, Rodger describes his resentment of men who are able to find success in establishing romantic partnerships with women and the women who choose other men over himself. Although Rodger does not specifically name “incels” in this manifesto, he references his involvement in adjacent communities in the manosphere, therefore he is widely regarded as an incel (see Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Lockyer, 2022; Witt, 2020, etc.).

acknowledges there is no way to confirm whether or not Lépine was (or would have been) an incel. Online communities centered around shared involuntary celibacy first began to appear in the late 1990s<sup>16</sup>, nearly a decade after Lépine’s attack, therefore, we cannot realistically argue that Lépine acted in the name of incels. At that point in time, there was simply no such thing as an “incel”. Yet while Lépine was not technically an incel, he is perceived as such by many in the incel community, which is a significant detail to consider when navigating this community (see Halpin et al., 2024).

Incels tend to identify with certain figures, hailing them with “sainthood” status or similar levels of praise and admiration (Witt, 2020). Marc Lépine is one of these “saints”, with many incels hailing him as a “hero” of sorts for his actions, to the extent where he often regarded by incels as having started the “incel revolution” (Lockyer, 2022). As Halpin, et al. (2024) have demonstrated, incels celebrate Lépine for his ruthless and methodical targeting of women and contextualize Lépine’s attack within the larger “gender war” they believe to be in progress. Incels consider their fight to be a “gender war” because they do not limit their hatred to feminists per se, but all women regardless of their actual position on feminism. Reflecting Lépine’s rationale, incels believe that all women benefit from feminism in some capacity regardless of if they explicitly identify as feminists (O’Donnell & Shor, 2022), making all women threats and targets to this community.

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<sup>16</sup> The initial conceptualization of forming an online community centered around shared involuntary celibacy is traced back to 1997 to a lesbian woman named Alana, whose goal was to create a space for “anybody of any gender who was lonely, had never had sex or who hadn’t had a relationship in a long time” (The Fifth Estate, 2019). Alana developed her community as a support group-like environment for individuals to share their relationship struggles, find companionship, and empathize with one another (Høiland, 2019); only later did incel communities become the toxic, violent subcultures that they are today.

Despite their misogynistic ideals and motivations, incels do not reserve their violence for women exclusively, but rather society at large; this is where incel objectives deviate from someone like Lépine. O'Donnell & Shor (2022) found that incels seek to harm anyone who does not subscribe to incel ideologies, thus assigning anyone who does not accept their anti-feminist, misogynistic beliefs as part of “the enemy”. In incel rhetoric, this means that all of society (i.e., all women, gender non-binary and/or gender non-conforming individuals, and non-incel men) are responsible for their victimization (Lockyer et al., 2024). Incels’ motivations are ultimately rooted in misogyny, but past attacks have proven that incels’ physical violence is not directed at women alone; this was demonstrated in the world’s largest proclaimed incel attack to date, the Toronto Van Attack of 2018.

### **Incel Violence in Canada**

On the morning of 23 April 2018, Alek Minassian posted on his Facebook page: “the Incel Rebellion has already begun!” (Feldman, 2018). Later that day, Minassian would kill 10 and injured an additional 16 people (one of whom would die two years later from her injuries) by driving a van down the streets and sidewalks of Yonge street in Toronto, Ontario (Casey, 2021; Cecco, 2021). Two men and nine women ultimately died from the attack, and countless other victims and witnesses were left physically injured and emotionally scarred. At the time, Minassian’s attack was the deadliest mass killing event in Canadian history since the Montréal massacre; as mentioned, the death tolls of both of these events were later surpassed by the Nova Scotia shootings of April 2020.

While Minassian's attack was the first confirmed instance of incel violence in Canada, this brand of violence seemed to appear on the government's radar slightly before this.

Beginning in 2017, Canada's Department of National Defence (DND) began to explicitly list gender as a potential motive for terrorism and other violent extremism in their reports, marking an apparent shift in how the GOC understands GBV. Two years later, CSIS (2019) released a report similarly marking "gender-driven violence" (GDV) as a form of what they call "ideologically motivated violent extremism" (IMVE). This is one of the first times (and few, to date) when any branch or department of the GOC has officially designated GBV (or in this case GDV) as potentially ideological.

Yet despite the DND's acknowledgement of gender as a possible motive for terrorism and violent extremism a full year prior to his attack, Minassian was not tried as a terrorist for his crimes. According to Nasser (2020), this is likely because prior to charging Minassian there was still not enough information on the incel community to prove that this movement rises to the level of an ideology that motivates violence. Instead of terrorism charges, Minassian faced 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 counts of attempted murder, for which he was convicted of and sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole for 25 years (Casey, 2022). Nonetheless, in the aforementioned CSIS (2019) report, the Toronto van attack was provided as an example of gender-driven IMVE.

Just one year after this report was published (and two years after Minassian's attack), a 17-year-old male<sup>17</sup>, who claimed to be an incel inspired by Alek Minassian, was charged with terrorism after murdering a woman and injuring a man, again in

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<sup>17</sup> Under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the perpetrator of this crime cannot be named.

Toronto, in February 2020 (Nasser, 2022). The young man was initially arrested on first-degree murder and attempted murder charges, but the RCMP and the Toronto Police Service later decided to upgrade these charges to “murder - terrorist activity” and “attempted murder - terrorist activity” after learning that the attack was inspired by the incel movement (Bell et al., 2020). This marked the first time – and only, to date – when Canadian law enforcement has laid a terrorism charge onto a self-identified incel (Bell et al., 2020), and just the second time since 2001 where a terrorism charge was made against an individual who was *not* inspired by Islamic extremism (Nasser, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

Despite progress being made within the GOC in better recognizing gender as a motive for terrorism, this does not erase the fact that up until recently, the ideological nature of VAW and GBV had been consistently underexplored (Brodie & Bakker, 2008). VAW is one of the most common cases that the Canadian criminal justice system encounters (Hotton Mahony et al., 2017), but gender as a motive for non-interpersonal violence has been perpetually minimized as a legitimate security concern by the GOC until this past decade. This is not an issue exclusive to Canada by any means, but a problem shared internationally.

Gentry (2021), Guy (2021), McCulloch et al. (2019) and others assert that violence motivated by misogyny has been historically discounted as ideological because of an unfounded hesitancy on behalf of governments, law enforcement, and security agencies worldwide to apply labels such as “terrorism” or “violent extremism” to gender-based violent crimes. McCulloch et al. (2019) argue that this global failure to recognize

the relevance of gender to public safety and security concerns over mass violence and terrorism indicates a failure to take women's security seriously. As the following chapter will demonstrate, by failing to recognize VAW as an ideological trend rather than an inter-personal or domestic issue until recently, the GOC long contributed to the trope that VAW is not "real" violence.

## CHAPTER 4: Political History

### **The Political Landscape of Canada**

A question that arose in the initial stages of research for this project was, how far back in time should an analysis of MMV in Canada go? This question soon transformed into how far back in time *could* this analysis go? The answer I ultimately arrived at was a timeframe that roughly reflects the years where former Prime Minister (PM) Brian Mulroney was in power: 1984-1993. I came to this conclusion due to the simple fact that reliable data on women's experiences of violence in Canada are largely unavailable before the early 1990s. Prior to the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey by Statistics Canada, VAW was not meaningfully researched by the GOC in any capacity (Johnson, 2005). Thus, the era of Mulroney's government was initially selected as the loose "starting point" for the review of literature relevant to this thesis.

This chapter presents a background and history of political positions, policies, and perspectives on gender and feminist issues in Canada (namely VAW), beginning with the Mulroney era (1984-1993) and ending with an overview of Canada's current leadership under PM Justin Trudeau (2015-present). By contrasting policies and decisions regarding VAW as far back as federal leadership under former PM Mulroney, to present leadership under PM Trudeau, this section will argue that there is a palpable culture of systemic misogyny present within the GOC that allows for violent misogyny and misogynistic attitudes to go unchecked in Canada.

### **Brian Mulroney (1984-1993)**

Despite his reputation as a staunch conservative, former PM Mulroney was regarded as having a relatively strong awareness of women's issues, as demonstrated through his public debates and discussions surrounding the problems facing women in Canada in both his campaigns (Bashevkin, 1998). Unlike other conservative leaders (Harper, for instance, who will be discussed to follow) who sought to isolate women's groups and their allies to weaken them, frustrate them, and turn them into political outcasts, Mulroney was not ideologically opposed to basic feminist demands (Bashevkin, 1998).

Putting aside his positions on specific women's issues, Mulroney recognized and acknowledged women's issues as having a presence in Canadian society that required the attention of government. This was reflected towards the end of his time in office when he approved Statistics Canada to develop (in 1990) and perform (in 1993) the first National Prevalence Survey on Violence Against Women. While this survey marked progress for women in Canada during the Mulroney years, in other areas Mulroney's government caused lasting damage to the status of women in Canada.

Between 1987-1990, funding to community groups, women's shelters, and other targeted services for women were significantly cut back, and new funding – which was meager at best – was largely confined to the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women following significant outcry from the public regarding the “useless and ineffectual” government response to Montréal Massacre (Bashevkin, 1998; Brodie & Bakker, 2008). Eglin & Hester (2003) summarize Mulroney's work during these years as a statement on Canada's “evaporating social compassion” (p. 103), in which racialized women, single

mothers, and other marginalized groups of women were left behind in terms of social progress (Dobrowolsky, 2020). While 1993 saw a transition of power from a Conservative to Liberal federal governments with the election of PM Jean Chrétien, this change in leadership did not result in significant improvements to women's social status in Canada; according to Bashevkin (1998), during this time conditions for women in Canada only deteriorated further.

### **Jean Chrétien (1993-2003)**

According to Bashevkin (1998), "The situation in Canada after the Liberals returned to power in 1993 and again in June 1997 was, ironically, in many ways worse than during the Mulroney years" (p. 232). Bashevkin (1998) argues that because much of what former PM Jean Chrétien did to weaken federal social standards was discrete, few Canadians grasped the significance of what was happening until it had already happened.

While Chrétien was in power, Canadians initially saw a reinvestment in the federal government's family violence initiative, now with a better focus on the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous women as victims (Brodie & Bakker, 2008). Furthermore, in 1996, Chrétien's government established the Independent Policy Research Fund which supported gender-based policy research with the objective of developing equitable policy in Canada (Brodie & Bakker, 2008). During this time, rates of IPV against women were also decreasing across the country (Johnson, 2005). However, the overall number of women in Canada reporting violence and seeking emergency shelter actually increased, reflecting a desperate need for further government

intervention into the issue of VAW (Brodie & Bakker, 2008); this intervention did not come.

Only a year into his leadership, Chrétien closed down the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women as well as the Family Violence Initiative, which innovated the aforementioned National Prevalence Survey on Violence Against Women of 1993, undoing Mulroney's main accomplishment surrounding women's issues while he was leading Canada. In the absence of funding to repeat this survey, portions of the survey were incorporated into Statistics Canada's crime victimization survey, which occurs every five years (Johnson, 2005). However, in this transition from a comprehensive survey on VAW to a general victimization survey, some of the strengths of the 1993 survey were compromised. Namely, sexual assault was no longer addressed in the survey, and the five-year interval period of the survey limits the ability for researchers to detect year-over-year change and capture lifetime experiences of violence among victims (Johnson, 2005).

Ultimately, federal policy in these years conveyed the message that the pervasive social problem of VAW in Canada would be confined to the individual perpetrators of violence, not the systemic factors which contribute to the issue (Brodie & Bakker, 2008). Khan and colleagues (2019) note that cultural change tends to occur over roughly a 10-to-20-year period. Despite the passing of more than a decade since the Montréal Massacre by the time PM Chrétien left office, there was still no recognition by the GOC of the need to address VAW as a social problem at a policy level. As the twenty-year anniversary of the Massacre approached, the situation was not looking any more promising than before.

### **Stephen Harper (2006-2015)**

Shortly after being elected in 2006, former PM Harper's government made a bold statement on their concern for gender issues by consistently avoiding and outright attacking most political issues pertaining to "women" or "gender" related topics (Kingston, 2015). Harper's strategy, according to Wells (2013), was to make changes during his tenure as PM that would have lasting impacts on Canada which would extend far beyond his time in federal leadership: "That was the game. Lock in change that could not be ratcheted back even if he was defeated" (p. 23). What changes did Harper want to establish? As Brodie & Bakker (2008), Dobrowolsky (2020), and Porter (2015) describe, when the Harper administration came into power, they immediately stopped funding research into women's equality, significantly reduced funding to Status of Women Canada (SWC, now WAGE) offices, terminated SWC's Independent Policy Research Fund, removed the word "equality" from the federal mandate, and cut off feminist activist groups from lobbying. As Ashe (2020) summarizes, the Harper administration simply appeared to be "hostile to equity" (p. 71).

These actions were taken because, according to the Harper government at the time, the goal of gender equity had already been achieved; there was supposedly little need to allocate funds and resources to such a redundant division of the GOC as SWC (Brodie & Bakker, 2008). While, as Brodie & Bakker (2008) note, the de-gendering of social policy and erasure of gender equity goals in political processes began far earlier than with Harper's administration, Harper continued – and extended – the trend further than any of his recent predecessors.

In the months leading up to the 2015 federal election, former PM Harper demonstrated that his government's disinterest in women's issues would only continue should he be re-elected for a fourth term. By refusing to speak publicly on any "women's issues" including gender inequality, VAW, and law reform, Harper made it clear that his stance on these issues would be unchanged if were to be re-elected (Kingston, 2015). However, the 2015 federal election did not go in Harper's favor, and the incumbent PM was unseated by Canada's current leader, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

### **Justin Trudeau (2015-Present)**

From the start of his campaign, PM Trudeau and his Liberal government took a markedly different approach to women's issues and gender equality than most, if not all, preceding federal leaders. With a month remaining in his initial federal election campaign, Trudeau (2015) tweeted: "I am a feminist. I'm proud to be a feminist. #upfordebate", marking an explicit shift in attitude from his immediate predecessor. Dubbing themselves a "feminist government", the current leadership sought to make feminism a key organizing principle in areas of government previously shielded from feminist intervention, such as budgeting, trade, diplomacy, and security (Paterson & Scala, 2020). As Paterson & Scala (2020) explain, after decades of delegitimization and institutional erasure of gender politics in Canada, Trudeau's government has set out to reintegrate gender and diversity considerations through what they describe as a "whole of government" approach (more on that later).

As a purported feminist leader, Trudeau has made some significant and important changes to benefit women and gender equality efforts in Canada. These have included the

long-awaited launch of the National Inquiry into MMIWG, increased federal funding into initiatives to support 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual plus) communities, and the upgrading of the office of SWC to the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) (Dobrowolsky, 2020). Additionally, in 2017 Trudeau formulated Canada's first feminist budget which allocated \$86 million to a federal gender-based violence strategy (*The Strategy*, as it is commonly called, is an item of analysis for later in this thesis). Possibly Trudeau's biggest – and most highly publicized – move early in his federal leadership was appointing a cabinet of diverse individuals, exactly half of whom were women, thus attaining what was promoted as a “gender-balanced” cabinet (Ashe, 2020; Dobrowolsky, 2020; Kingston, 2016). This seemingly revolutionary move, however, was ultimately a failure.

Within months of the creation of the now infamous “gender-balanced cabinet”, several members of this cabinet came forward with reports of gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual assault in the workplace (Ashe, 2020; Smith, 2018). The Canadian Press (as cited in Smith, 2018) investigated these claims by conducting a survey of 38 sitting female Members of Parliament (MPs) to gain insight into the extent of this misconduct: the survey revealed that over half of the MPs surveyed had experienced sexual harassment while in office. The MPs reported being subjected to inappropriate sexual remarks, unwanted text messages of a sexual nature, and other forms of sexual misconduct from male colleagues in parliament (Smith, 2018). Additionally, three respondents to the survey reporting having been sexually *assaulted* by a colleague in parliament.

Ashe (2020) explains why this result may have occurred: even under a government which claims to be guided by feminist ideals, and despite an attempt at perfect gender equality in parliament, Canada's parliament is still a patriarchal institution, "with Trudeau's changes merely layered atop the very same structures that had excluded women and other marginalized groups under the Harper regime" (p. 69). Thus, only one year into his leadership after having campaigned on the promise to be a feminist leader for Canada, Trudeau was being accused in the media of being a "fake feminist" (Kingston, 2016; Smith, 2018). Trudeau has faced further criticism from feminist communities on other fronts, namely for his lack of understanding of the intersections that underlie gender inequality and various identities (racial, ethnic, class, etc.) that contribute to women's marginalization (Kingston, 2016).

Scholars argue that intersectionality is a vital concept in understanding and addressing the causes and consequences of VAW (Ashe, 2020; Dobrowolsky, 2020; Paterson & Scala, 2020), thus the PM's demonstrated lack of awareness of intersectionality is a concern. As chapter 2 outlined in greater detail, feminism and intersectionality are inherently intertwined. To declare oneself a feminist while disregarding the additional ways in which women are discriminated against is a dangerously limiting perspective. Summarizing this perspective, Ashe (2020) writes, "Trudeau's approach of equality rhetoric over substance might best be described as "Facebook feminism"—as opposed to his campaign slogan of "real change"—which superficially masks and leaves unchallenged deeper, masculinized power structures while at the same time dangerously dampening the urgency for greater gender transformation." (p. 69).

Ashe (2020), Dobrowolsky (2020), and others argue that even Trudeau's most pivotal "feminist" moves have crucially failed to create substantive gender-sensitive changes in government, instead maintaining existing power imbalances; this has prevented structural transformation which would bind future governments to feminist governance principles. Considering Harper's extensive work to de-gender social policy and erase gender equity goals from Canadian politics entirely, substantive, and transformative policies are necessary by Canada's current "feminist" leadership to undo the long-term effects of the Harper era and re-integrate feminism back into Canadian policy.

## **Conclusion**

Between the Trudeau government's feminist shortcomings and the positive changes that have been made in Canada in the near decade under this leadership, Paterson & Scala (2020) ultimately describe the current government as one which has simultaneously expanded and narrowed feminist knowledge: while feminist principles are now being incorporated into new areas of government such as budget and foreign policy, women continue to face major barriers in regard to their engagement and inclusion in politics.

In comparison to Harper, present leadership has made strides in terms of bringing gender back into politics: the (long overdue) launch of the National Inquiry into MMIWG, the upgrading SWC to WAGE, and the new federal gender-based-violence strategy are three of many monumental actions taken by this government towards acknowledging and addressing the pervasiveness of MMV in Canada. However, as the

following chapter will identify, the persistence of issues surrounding gender inequality and underlying misogyny remain within the GOC as a governing body, thus allowing for gender-based harassment and violence to occur on a systemic level within government.

I argue that this has, in turn, resulted in misogyny being normalized in Canadian society more broadly and, of course, the rising threat of MMV in Canada. In the following chapter, I further describe my method of content analysis of the grey literature materials and describe my results from this review, followed by an analysis and discussion of these findings.

## CHAPTER 5: Results and Analysis

### **Gender-Based Analysis Plus: An Analytical Tool**

This chapter presents my findings from my review of the grey literature on MMV in Canada, which I analyzed using Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+, or alternatively, GBA plus). WAGE (2022a) offers a course on GBA+ (hereby referred to as “the GBA+ course”) that is freely available to the public; I took this course in December 2023 to understand how WAGE (and in turn, the GOC) utilize and employ this gender mainstreaming strategy.

According to Status of Women Canada (SWC), the federal government has been conducting GBA since 1976, with the creation of SWC. In fact, SWC (1995) indicates that GBA was an inherent part of SWC’s creation, however, SWC fails to explain how, or in what capacity, GBA was employed by SWC at that time. Nonetheless, in *The 1995 Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, SWC stated that in the decades to follow, GBA would “change the way government looks at issues, designs programs, develops policies and enacts legislation” (p. 3).

According to WAGE (2022a), the GBA Plus course introduces the key concepts of GBA+, demonstrates how different social factors can influence different people’s experiences of federal government initiatives, and identifies how GBA+ works to “enhance the responsiveness, effectiveness and outcomes of federal government initiatives”. These objectives are centered on public servants gaining a better understanding of how Canadian citizens are impacted by the decisions public servants make in their work. As such, many members of the public service are encouraged – or in some cases, required – to take the training by their respective agencies and departments.

The course clearly states that “every public servant has a responsibility to complete GBA Plus on all their work” (WAGE, 2022a).

To understand who is most impacted by an issue, how initiatives can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of the people most impacted, and what potential barriers to these groups benefitting from initiatives may arise, GBA+ follows a basic 7-step process<sup>18</sup> (WAGE, 2022a):

1. Identify key issue(s)
2. Challenge assumptions
3. Gather the facts (i.e., research & consult)
4. Develop options & make recommendations
5. Monitor & evaluate
6. Communicate
7. Document

According to Statistics Canada (2013), using GBA+ to examine GBV can not only help inform policy, but also increase general awareness of the extent of GBV and gender inequality in Canada.

GBA+ is framed in this course as an ongoing process integral to *all* stages of the development, implementation, and monitoring of federal government initiatives (WAGE, 2022a). As such, the course offers some questions to consider when gathering information and using GBA+ in policy development, research, legal counsel, and elsewhere in the public service. These guiding questions include:

- What triggered the issue, and who identified it?

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<sup>18</sup> These steps and their full descriptions can be found in the “Demystifying GBA+ Job Aid” (SWC, n.d.).

- Is this issue important to a particular group? Have the experiences of impacted populations been considered in defining the issue?
- What is the broader social, political, and economic context of a policy issue; what is the larger objective?
- Have diverse perspectives been considered in developing an operational plan or a delivery model? Were diverse perspectives assessed and factored into the initial design?
- How can specific plans and proposals advance the overarching objective of promoting greater gender equality?
- What strategies and initiatives will provide the most positive impacts for all people?
- Have baseline indicators been established to measure the effectiveness of strategies and initiatives?
- Where are the information gaps in the research? How can these gaps be filled?

I used these questions to inform my analysis of the grey literature on MMV in Canada. These questions will be explored throughout this chapter, and again revisited further discussed in chapter 6, the discussion chapter of this thesis.

### **Overview of Results**

The results are organised by three central themes, each of which highlights key patterns and insights derived from the data:

Theme 1: Reducing violence in society, particularly violence against women (and children)

Theme 2: Incorporating women’s perspectives in government

Theme 3: Implementing gender-based analysis throughout federal departments and agencies.

These themes were taken from a list of eight total objectives outlined by SWC (1995) in *The 1995 Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, which was the earliest government document I reviewed for this thesis.

Spearheaded by SWC (1995), *The 1995 Federal Plan for Gender Equality* involved 24 additional federal departments and agencies, each of which offered unique contributions to the final plan<sup>19</sup>. SWC (1995) reports that this level of inter-government collaboration reflected the GOC’s collective objective to “resolve to progress toward gender equality” (p. 6). Therefore, according to SWC (1995) the plan is “both a statement of commitments and a framework for the future” (p. 6), with specific actions outlined for all federal government departments and agencies to consider in their respective efforts to improve gender equality in Canada. Government commitments which were derived from *The Federal Plan* centred on one the aforementioned eight objectives, such as reducing violence in society.

### **Theme 1: Reducing VAW in Society**

GBV is a pervasive social issue in Canada. According to WAGE (2022b) almost half (44%) of all women in Canada over the age of 15 have experienced some form of IPV, a number which climbs to 61% among Indigenous women. 2018 hate crime statistics in Canada indicate that gender is the primary motive in over a quarter (26%) of

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<sup>19</sup> See pp. 66-69 of *The Federal Plan* for full list of these departments and agencies

all hate crimes in Canada<sup>20</sup> (Gaudet, 2018). The prevalence of GBV (but specifically VAW) in Canada is, in part, what led to the initial federal plan for gender equality, created by SWC in 1995. SWC (1995) argues that through the actions laid out in *The Federal Plan*, women’s vulnerability to male violence would be greatly diminished, but has this been the case?

### *The National Action Plan to End GBV*

In June 2016, the federal government announced the development of the Advisory Council on the Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV (WAGE, 2018). This council was to develop and implement a “whole-of-government” GBV strategy, which was formally launched in 2017 (WAGE, 2018). *It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* – or simply “*The Strategy*” as it is often called by WAGE – was the first national action plan to address GBV in Canada. According to WAGE (2018; 2019), *The Strategy* would coordinate all existing federal efforts related to GBV and align them with those of each individual province and territory in order to fill gaps in knowledge and provide increased supports for victims of GBV across Canada (hence the “whole-of-government” approach).

In January 2021, four years after the initial launching of *The Strategy*, *The Joint Declaration for a Canada Free of Gender-Based Violence* was endorsed by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women. This declaration lay out the framework for joint FPT action against GBV, identifying the

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<sup>20</sup> Gaudet (2018) notes: “When a hate crime incident involves or appears to involve more than one motivation (e.g., religion and race or ethnicity), the incident is reported by the police *only once* according to the primary motivation determined by the circumstances of the incident” (p. 11). Therefore, gender-driven hate crimes may be more prevalent than reflected by this statistic.

vision, goals, pillars, and foundation for what would eventually become *The National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* (hereafter referred to as *The NAP to End GBV*). WAGE (2022b) states that *the NAP to End GBV* was built on existing FPT approaches and strategies to prevent and address GBV, including *the Strategy* and another action plan released in 2021 called the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People*, hereafter referred to as *The MMIWG NAP* (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), 2021b).

WAGE (2022b) describes *The Strategy*, *The NAP to End GBV* and *The MMIWG NAP* as “mutually reinforcing” documents, with both *The Strategy* and *The NAP to End GBV* specifically identifying an urgent need to address the multiple, complex and deeply rooted factors that contribute to GBV in order to create “a Canada free of GBV, where victims, survivors and their families are supported” (WAGE, 2022b). The objective of eventually establishing a Canada “free” of all GBV was a very prevalent theme among many of the WAGE publications reviewed, but particularly in *The Strategy* and *The NAP to End GBV*.

In terms of how this goal can be achieved, WAGE (2022b) puts forth ideas such as including ongoing stakeholder advice on the implementation of *The NAP to End GBV*, providing increased supports to victims, survivors, and their families, and equipping relevant professionals (such as law enforcement) with training and guidance on trauma-informed approaches to preventing and addressing GBV in the communities they serve. To monitor progress, WAGE (2022b) suggests developing data-based national indicators

at the national, provincial, and territorial levels, collecting data (through Statistics Canada) to assess the progress of *The NAP to End GBV*, and publishing annual reports on national progress towards ending GBV.

Ultimately, WAGE (2022b) is firm in its stance that “ending” GBV is everyone’s responsibility, and this is reflected throughout *The NAP to End GBV*. This includes “everyone” from healthcare workers to parents, to guidance counsellors and social workers, to your average Canadian citizen. Key in this effort to end GBV, however, is local police and the RCMP as the first line of defence against all GBV, but particularly gender-driven violent extremist threats, or MMV.

#### *Intercepting Individuals on the Path to Radicalization*

Nobody can anticipate precisely when a mass casualty event will happen. Similarly, the perpetrator of a mass casualty event often also goes unsuspected prior to such violence. Nevertheless, while the date, time, and manner of a violent attack cannot be predicted, many violent individuals (in this case, men) present indicators – or “red flags” – which can serve as warning signs of their imminent danger to women or to broader society. WAGE (2019; 2022b) thus advocates for primary prevention approaches that address the root causes of violence to prevent incidents from happening before they occur.

In *The Strategy*, WAGE (2019) states that “addressing root causes and understanding risk factors is the *most effective* way to end GBV and its devastating effects” (p. 14, emphasis added). Such an emphasis on early intervention in these federal strategies is supported by the Canada Centre For Community Engagement And

Prevention Of Violence (2018), which identify a key detail that could support potential intervention efforts. The “Canada Centre” (2018) reports that individuals in the early stages (or at risk) of radicalization to violence tend to interact with police on their pathways to violence. This means that police have the potential to serve as the first line of defence against potential acts of MMV by deescalating individuals who pose a potential risk before they have the opportunity to become a greater threat to the public. Evidently, however, police are not always productive in their attempts to identify and deradicalize individuals who present these red flags.

As Dale and colleagues (2021) describe, this is likely because police responses to violent incidents are almost always reactive (i.e. after violence has already occurred). This, according to the Joint Federal/Provincial Commission into the April 2020 Nova Scotia Mass Casualty (hereafter referred to as “the Mass Casualty Commission”, or the “MCC”), is merely one indication of systemic inadequacies in police responses to GBV in Canada. In fact, this was a central finding from the Mass Casualty Commission which found a bounty of red flags present in Gabriel Wortman’s life history prior to the April 2020 attack, as well as a dozen specific missed opportunities for intervention by the RCMP in this timeframe.

As phrased by the MCC (2023c), “the mass casualty took place on April 18 and 19, 2020, but the causes, circumstances, and context of the events have a longer trajectory” (p. 30). This trajectory goes back more than two decades: between 1996 and 2020, Gabriel Wortman had been reported to the RCMP regarding at least twelve separate incidents (MCC, 2023d). The MCC (2023d) found that many of these reports were of Wortman violently assaulting his long-time partner, Lisa Banfield.

Banfield recounted her relationship of 19 years with Wortman as one marked by “violence, coercion, and controlling behaviour” (MCC, 2023a, p. 41). Former neighbours of the couple shared with that MCC (2023d) that it was a well-known fact among the community that Wortman had repeatedly physically and emotionally abused Banfield throughout the years. On at least one confirmed occasion (in 2013) a neighbour had reported this to the RCMP, but this report went ignored. In fact, of the dozen times incidents involving Wortman were reported to police, only once did his actions result in a criminal charge<sup>21</sup> (MCC, 2023d, p. 151).

The MCC (2023d) found that in each of the recorded police interactions involving Gabriel Wortman and the RCMP over the two decades prior to the mass shooting, police consistently demonstrated an inclination “to either ignore complaints against [Wortman] or even be persuaded by his version of events” (p. 169). This is not uncommon in cases of VAW in Canada; Statistics Canada (2013) reports that roughly 25% of all violent incidents against women reported to the police go unsolved, and only 70% of those solved cases result in an eventual charge against the offender(s).

Due to his lengthy record of violence towards his spouse, his family, strangers, and even the police themselves in one instance, the MCC (2023d) concluded that Wortman’s escalation of violence could have and should have been addressed by police long before the April 2020 attack occurred. Community members’ concerns over Wortman’s violent behaviour were unquestionably known to the RCMP, and the MCC (2023d) maintains that the RCMP should have anticipated that Wortman would continue to harm people until his pattern of violence was interrupted in one way or another. Yet,

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<sup>21</sup> Wortman was charged for assaulting a teenage boy in 2002. He was granted conditional release for this crime and did not serve any time in a correctional facility.

due to a number of structural and systemic issues within the RCMP (as uncovered by the MCC), prior allegations against Wortman did not prompt an appropriate police response, and it was ultimately those in his community who paid the highest price

Outside of Wortman's case, the MCC (2023) found that up to 80% of men who perpetrate mass violence globally have unaddressed histories of family violence, IPV, or other forms of domestic violence. Wortman's attack was, unfortunately, just one of many mass casualty incidents within Canada and internationally which have begun within violence in the home.

Another notable example of this occurred in Ottawa in 1975, when 18-year-old Robert Poulin raped and killed a 17-year-old female neighbor in his family home before committing one of Canada's first recorded school shootings at St. Pius X High School (Van Brunt & Taylor, 2021). Poulin fired on his classmates with a shotgun, killing one and wounding five others before taking his own life. Prior to the attack Poulin had been a suspect in an attempted rape near his home, and following the attack, local police discovered that Poulin had an obsession with violence and sex, as evidenced by his indexed collection of hardcore pornography books and magazines which largely depicted rape and murder fantasies (Van Brunt & Taylor, 2021, p. 194).

The Canada Centre (2018) states that "the failure to identify an individual radicalizing to violence is a missed opportunity to intervene" (p. 25). This was a fact identified by SWC over two decades ago in their 2002 statistical profile of VAW. SWC (2002) writes that early intervention in cases of criminal harassment, specifically by men against women, is a viable strategy in preventing the escalation of violence. Furthermore, SWC (2002) writes that identifying risk factors is crucial for both intervention and

prevention efforts. The conclusion to be made here is not necessarily that mass casualty events and their perpetrators can be predicted or anticipated. Rather, through effective intervention efforts which target risk factors of radicalization to violence, some of these individuals may be intercepted before they reach that stage of their journey. A contemporary example of this is the IMVE threat of the incel community.

### *Incels and the Greater Threat of Misogyny-Motivated Violence*

Within the entire body of grey literature reviewed for this thesis, the focus on incels was rather limited. This was an expected finding due to the simple fact that as of writing this thesis, only six years have passed since Canada was first exposed to incel violence (through the Toronto Van Attack of 2018). Following the 2018 attack, a number of federal departments and agencies such as WAGE, CSIS, and DND were quick to respond to this emerging threat to public safety and national security.

As noted in Chapter 3, CSIS (2019) addressed the Toronto Van Attack and the broader threat of the incel community in their annual public report from the same year as the attack. While CSIS (2019) initially designated the attack an act of “right-wing extremism” (p. 25), the report from the following year (CSIS, 2020) corrected this generalization by more accurately referring to the attack as gender-driven violence (GDV), one of three types of IMVE. CSIS (2020) explained,

Given the diverse combination of motivations and personalized worldviews of recent mass-casualty attackers, the use of such terms as “right-wing” and “left-wing” is not only subjective, but inaccurate in describing the complexity of motivations of IMVE attacks in Canada and abroad. (p. 15)

This is a crucial acknowledgement by CSIS because terms such as “right-wing extremism” are often broadly (and frequently incorrectly) applied to nuanced groups such as the incel community. As Chapter 6 will discuss in greater detail, this is a highly contested practice in the literature on violent extremism and ideological violence therefore, CSIS’ recognition of the problematic use of this term is an indication of progress. However, the same cannot be said for all line departments and agencies within the GOC, as the following theme will demonstrate.

## **Theme 2: Incorporating Women’s Perspectives in Government**

Throughout the *1995 Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, SWC describes the federal government as concerned about the threat posed by attitudes leading to VAW in society, particularly when transferred to the workplace (p. 44). SWC (1995) identifies that this is a particular concern within the public service, stating “as one of the largest employers in the country, the federal government has a responsibility to respect and promote the principle of gender equity among its ranks” (p. 61).

For context, *The Federal Plan* came at a time when the federal government was in a period of transition. This transition was (in part) brought about by the shift from former PM Brian Mulroney’s leadership to the new PM Jean Chrétien in 1993, a time which SWC (1995) describes as having prompted “major government renewal” (p. 15). According to SWC (1995), this renewal was characterized by changes in the size and structure of certain departments and agencies and reviews of major social and economic policies. SWC (1995) recognized that this period of transition presented certain challenges for the implementation of *The Federal Plan*, however, “it also provides an

opportunity to introduce changes to the way government legislation and policies are analyzed — changes that will enhance the government’s ability to meet its commitment to gender equality” (p. 15).

To achieve gender equality in the federal public service, SWC (1995) argues that attaining “a fair and representative work force” and remedying “demonstrated inequality...resulting from systemic discrimination” must be considered priorities for the GOC (p. 54). *The Federal Plan*’s priority action points under this objective thus include the following:

- promote gender-sensitivity training for individuals in the public service in decision-making positions
- reinforcing realistic and positive portrayals of women as decision makers and leaders within the public and private sectors
- ensure that there is no gender discrimination inherent in the structures, policies and processes of public institutions
- increase the participation and representation of women on management boards of federal institutions in all sectors
- ensure that all departments and agencies seek to improve employment and career opportunities for women

These points (and others) have since structured the GOC’s approach to gender equality in the federal public service, but as the following analysis will demonstrate, these action points have yet to be met. Today, gender inequality still infects the federal public service, the federal government itself, and our military.

### *Gender Discrimination in the Public Service*

As described in Chapter 4, a major scandal in Trudeau's first few years as PM was the failing of the "gender-balanced cabinet", particularly the rampant gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual assault by men of their female colleagues within this cabinet, as well as the lack of appropriate and timely response to victims complaints regarding these offences (Ashe, 2020; Smith, 2018). As evidenced by this example, as well as other similar cases described in the grey literature, the federal government has continually failed to meet their self-described "responsibility" to respect and promote gender equity principles within its ranks. This is not an issue unique to those working in the public service, but also members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).

A 2019 report for Statistics Canada (Maxwell, 2020) on unwanted sexualized and discriminatory behaviours among students at Canadian Military Colleges (CMC) found an observable attitude of disregard for sexual violence among staff and students at CMC, particularly among male students and administrators (p. 7). More specifically, Maxwell (2020) describes female CMC students experiences of having their reports of violence doubted and disregarded by administrators and commanding officers. While this issue is not necessarily unique to Canadian *military* post-secondary institutions (see Khan et al., 2019), it is particularly concerning considering that CMC students – future members of the CAF – are expected to eventually be in positions of power in some capacity, oftentimes over individuals in precarious and vulnerable states. In recent years, the Canadian public has seen more than enough examples of exactly how this can play out.

Since 2021, the CAF has been involved in a widely publicized leadership crisis which has indicted many senior commanders in sexual misconduct<sup>22</sup> allegations. More specifically, two former Chiefs of Defence, an Army Commander, and the head of the Military Intelligence School have been implicated in allegations and charges of sexual misconduct (Connolly, 2021; Wong, 2022). According to Wong (2022), these recent cases are just some of the many highly publicized scandals involving gender-based violence and harassment within the CAF in the past several decades, which has ultimately culminated in a leadership crisis within the CAF and DND more broadly.

The publicity of this issue has put a spotlight on the culture of misogyny that exists within the CAF. In response to this increased scrutiny, there has been a marked shift in the language being used by CAF, DND, and adjunct federal agencies and departments in their recent documents and publications. Most notably, intersectionality has finally been introduced into recent reports, along with GBA+. Despite this, CIRNAC (2021b) notes that accountability is still lacking within the Canadian military, but also within our national police force, the RCMP. According to CIRNAC (2021a), this prevents women's full participation in government, especially "twice marginalized" women (Woloshyn, 2017), such as Indigenous women.

CIRNAC (2021a) concluded in *the MMIWG NAP* that the federal government would commit to "ensuring Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are represented and included in the Public Service workforce, including in senior positions" through targeted efforts towards avoiding biases and barriers in hiring and affirming the

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<sup>22</sup> Sexual misconduct is the DND's organizational term for sexual violence, harassment, and other sexualized conduct that causes harm to others (DND, 2021; Wong, 2022).

importance of a diverse and inclusive workforce (p. 17). Building on this commitment, WAGE (2022b) states that *the NAP to End GBV* will “[strengthen] protections that address workplace harassment and violence including supports that address ableism, sexism, colonialism, racism, misogyny, and discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression in workplaces”.

In accordance with the above points, SWC (1995) called for every federal department and agency to develop and implement their own harassment prevention policies in order to foster an improved workplace culture across government. Furthermore, SWC (1995) called for any existing and all future complaints of harassment and abuse of authority to be dealt with by relevant federal departments and agencies within an appropriate and timely manner. However, it is apparent from the grey literature that gender equity among public servants still remains a major issue across the federal government today.

### **Theme 3: Implementing GBA+ Throughout the Federal Government**

As noted in previous chapters, the GOC has long committed to incorporating GBA+ into the operations of each department and agency within the federal government. In the literature examined for this study, this commitment was present as early as *the 1995 Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, and has been consistently reiterated by a variety of different federal departments and agencies ever since. *The Federal Plan* describes how GBA is implemented within the GOC, with individual departments and agencies in the government assuming responsibility for undertaking GBA “as appropriate” within their operational spheres of activity (SWC, 1995, p. 20).

In terms of *The Federal Plan's* “priorities for action” under this objective, SWC (1995) relays the federal government’s commitments to the development and application of tools and methodologies for carrying out GBA, training on GBA for public servants, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the GBA process, among other points (p. 19). Ultimately, *The Federal Plan* and documents since have ascribed high priority to the systematic implementation of gender-based analysis across the federal government, however this has not always been reflected in practice.

### *GBA+ in Action*

Almost every single item reviewed for this thesis had sections or chapters dedicated to describing the authoring department or agency’s use of GBA/GBA+ in their realm of operations. For example, in their annual public reports, CSIS (2019; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023) describes how they have incorporated GBA+ into their operations by including diverse individuals with diverse backgrounds and areas of subject matter expertise in decision-making processes, delivering unconscious bias training to all new CSIS employees, and reducing bias in risk assessment of certain communities of Canadians. CIRNAC (2019a) has stated that its implementation of GBA+ includes working with Indigenous partners to develop culturally competent frameworks that ensure the inclusion of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people’s voices in the process toward reconciliation (p. 10). Within the RCMP (2021), GBA+ is being used to better understand how diverse groups of people may be affected by RCMP policies, programs, and initiatives.

Yet, within these documents the explanations of GBA+ and related concepts (such as intersectionality and feminism) were not always consistent or clear. For example, in *The MMIWG NAP* (CIRNAC, 2021a) the GOC claims to have applied a “feminist lens” (p. 4) to their work on the project but provide absolutely no explanation of what a “feminist lens” means in this context. Similarly, in *the NAP to End GBV*, WAGE (2022b) emphasizes the importance of addressing GBV through a “gender and intersectional lens”, again failing to elaborate on what that means exactly. This leads to questions regarding the effectiveness of GBA+ as an analytical tool in government if specific federal departments and agencies are not able to explain its use clearly and concisely (a point which will be discussed further in Chapter 6).

Another source of confusion and inconsistency in the grey literature was regarding the implementation of GBA+, particularly how and when this tool should be applied. For instance, despite claiming that GBA is an ongoing process, SWC (1995) writes in *the Federal Strategy* that they anticipate the full implementation of GBA across government to be complete within five years’ time. Apparently, this was the expected timeframe required for federal departments and agencies to “develop the expertise and capacity to carry out [GBA]” in their day-to-day operations (SWC, 1995, p. 20).

Similarly, CIRNAC (2021b) states that the priorities for action outlined in *the MMIWG NAP* (including the implementation of GBA+) focus on actions that can be practically taken in the short term – ideally, one to three years from the publication of the report (p. 26). Yet, the initial inquiry which promoted *the MMIWG NAP* advised against the proposal of short-term goals to achieve systemic change, stating that short-term

projects are unproductive in these types of efforts (National Inquiry into MMIWG, 2019, p. 628). Again, this will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

### *An Emphasis on Intersectionality*

Finally, the topic of intersectionality was discussed at length in many of the grey literature materials, most commonly among those materials addressing or discussing violence against Indigenous women and girls. As mentioned, the MMIWG crisis is a perfect example of an intersectional issue because the victims of this epidemic are targeted for not just one aspect of their identity, but several (i.e., victims are targeted for their race, gender, and in many cases, socioeconomic status). Therefore, the National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019) identifies that this issue cannot be understood without considering intersectionality because the multiple sources of marginalization facing Indigenous women and girls cannot be separated.

However, *the NAP to End GBV* (WAGE, 2022b) and *the MMIWG NAP* (CIRNAC, 2019a) identify that it is often difficult to apply an “intersectional lens” to this issue, in part because available data on GBV only highlights specific forms of GBV on individual populations. As one example, WAGE (2022b) describes how Statistics Canada collects data on violence against Indigenous Peoples *or* people with disabilities, but this does not necessarily capture the experiences of Indigenous people *with* disabilities, an area where there is limited data publicly available. As WAGE (2022b) explains, this highlights the need to collect and report on disaggregated data and to invest in research targeting specific populations in order to address these gaps in the data.

Khan and colleagues (2019) reached a similar conclusion, calling for the federal government to take a more trauma-informed, intersectional approach to GBV reduction among Indigenous women and girls, further noting the importance of considering settler-colonial perspective bias in policy making. Ultimately, Khan et al. (2019) call for centralized data collection, reporting, and public disclosure statistics on GBV in Canada, arguing that GBV policies and programs cannot be properly designed, implemented, and evaluated without adequate data forming the foundation of these changes.

Ultimately, however, the National Inquiry into the MMIWG crisis (2019) identifies a “lack of political will” in changing legislation, policies, and funding to end the crisis, stating, “an absolute paradigm shift is required to dismantle colonialism within Canadian society, and from all levels of government and public institutions. Ideologies and instruments of colonialism, racism, and misogyny, past and present, must be rejected” (p. 63). In terms of how these systems can be dismantled, *the MMIWG NAP* (CIRNAC, 2021a) proposes that GBA+ be taken one step further in order to become “Culturally-Competent Gender-Based Analysis”, or CCGBA+.

In theory, CCGBA+ would take a “decolonizing approach” to gender equality; according to CIRNAC (2021b) this entails using Indigenous worldviews and perspectives to challenge colonial influences and dismantle structures that perpetuate systemic racism and colonialism in government. CIRNAC (2021b) writes, “it is recognized that gender- and race-based violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people happen within a broad social context shaped by systemic racism and colonialism and that transformative change is required across governments and institutions, and by all

Canadians” (p. 17), also writing earlier in the document that *the MMIWG NAP* is “a first step” towards achieving this goal.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated findings which correspond to one of three objectives as outlined by SWC (1995) in *The Federal Plan for Gender Equality*. Theme 1, Reducing VAW in Society, highlighted *The NAP to End GBV* (WAGE, 2022b) as a key document among the grey literature reviewed. In terms of reducing VAW in Canada, WAGE (2022b) calls for more research and better data collection on Canadians’ experiences of GBV to enhance the GOC’s understanding of this issue. Understanding the root causes and risk factors of violence was also noted as essential in preventing radicalization to begin with.

Theme 2 outlined the GOC commitment to incorporating women’s perspectives in government, while also highlighting their failures to do so thus far. As this chapter has shown, gender discrimination is a prominent issue in the CAF as well as the public service, which ultimately limits women’s abilities to engage in their work as soldiers, public servants, and politicians.

The final theme explored how GBA+ is being implemented throughout the federal government. I found that most (if not all) documents included in my review contained some aspect of GBA+, which corresponds to the federal government’s commitment to implementing this tool throughout government (WAGE, 2022a), however, because the theoretical background of this analytical tool remains unclear, the application of this tool is imprecise. The following chapter discusses these findings in greater detail.

## CHAPTER 6: Discussion

### **Overview of Discussion**

Through my analysis of the grey literature on MMV in Canada in the previous chapter, three key themes emerged. From these themes I drew five key issues, each of which will be discussed in this chapter.

The first issue I identified in my findings is the GOC's current approach to reducing – or “ending” – GBV in Canada. Building on this, the second issue being discussed in this chapter focuses on where the topic of MMV fits within broader conversations surrounding GBV in Canada. I argue that intersectionality is often ignored by the GOC in these discussions, which becomes apparent when one considers the gendered nature of the MMIWG crisis.

The third issue focuses on the prominence of GBA+ in government despite questions regarding its effectiveness as a gender mainstreaming tool. This section will be critical in demonstrating how the GOC is responding to the growing threat of MMV in Canada and what strategies are being employed to produce better outcomes for women in the country.

The current federal leadership's claim of feminist governance is the fourth issue discussed in this chapter. I explore how feminism has been integrated into government policy and practice, and what exactly this means in terms of addressing MMV and GBV in Canada. Finally, this chapter concludes by revisiting transformative versus instrumentalist feminism, as outlined in Chapter 2, and evaluating which approach the GOC takes, and if this is the best option.

## The Current Approach

As discussed, the GBV epidemic is not a new issue in Canada. In the last thirty years alone, a bounty of suggestions and recommendations for GBV prevention efforts have been made to the GOC from a variety of sources to address this epidemic.

According to *the Roadmap for the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence* (Dale et al., 2021), the idea of a formal *NAP to End GBV* is the result of decades of calls for action from over 250 grassroots organizations. However, it is unclear how these recommendations are being utilized by the GOC, if at all.

The general consensus in the grey literature – even as far back as *The Federal Plan for Gender Equality* (SWC, 1995) – is that the Canadian government needs quality, consistently collected, and up-to-date data on GBV in order to make real progress on the issue, yet the grey literature indicates that these resources are *still* not available within the government (WAGE, 2023). As the final section of Chapter 5 described, a major issue across the federal government is the lack of data, particularly disaggregated data, that is both publicly available and accurately reflects the experiences of marginalized groups of Canadians (see Khan et al., 2019; MCC, 2023d; WAGE, 2022b). The MCC (2023d) attributes this shortcoming to a lack of applied research on the government’s part in investigating the key issues facing Canadians, and little consideration of women’s (particularly marginalized women’s) involvement in the development and implementation of research findings.

Of course, this is not helped by the fact that few resources are dedicated to monitoring and evaluating the implementation of existing recommendations (Khan et al., 2019; MCC, 2023d). Without adequate accountability measures to evaluate the federal

government's process for responding to recommendations of earlier reports, change is unlikely. As the MCC (2023d) states, "the extent of gender-based violence has been established over and over, in report after report...we do not need more laws, policies, or training, and certainly not more reports" (p. 316). What Canada does need, according to the MCC (2023d) is greater federal leadership and accountability in addressing GBV, namely when it comes to specific policies, programs, and recommendations required for change.

Indeed, *the NAP Roadmap* (Dale et al., 2021) similarly recommends that *the NAP to End GBV* have "clear targets and measurable outcomes" (p. 59), but WAGE has evidently not met this recommendation. In her preface to *The Strategy*, for instance, the former minister of WAGE, Maryam Monsef, states: "With the leadership and support of a feminist Prime Minister and Government, we have made concrete gains during the last two years to *end* GBV and protect those who are most vulnerable to it" (WAGE, 2019, p. 4, emphasis added). The exact nature of these "concrete gains" are not specified in *The Strategy* and are, therefore, not verifiable.

It is worth pointing out here that terms such as "ending GBV" or creating "a Canada free of GBV" were consistently used throughout *the Strategy*, *the NAP to End GBV* and other WAGE publications. This detail, while seemingly minor, has major ramifications, as WAGE (2022b) is quite literally projecting a timeline of just *ten years* to achieve the vision of "a Canada free of gender-based violence". One of the central conclusions of *The National Inquiry into MMIWG* (2019) was that any future NAP to end GBV/VAW proposed by the GOC must describe flexible and measurable goals which can be practically achieved. Yet *the NAP to End GBV* – which, as a reminder, WAGE

(2022b) describes as “reinforcing” to *the MMIWG NAP* – does not present flexible, measurable, or even practical goals. Simply put, many of WAGE’s (2022b) proposed methods to reduce and prevent GBV within *the NAP to End GBV* are impossible to measure.

While the goal of “ending” GBV in Canada was a pattern among WAGE materials, other sources were more realistic in their expectations. For example, a 2017 national scan of RCMP initiatives to reduce violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada (RCMP, 2017) specified their use of terms such as ‘reduce’ and ‘prevent’ rather than ‘end’ when discussing strategies to reduce VAW in Canada. In their national framework to prevent GBV at post-secondary institutions across Canada, Khan et al. (2019) similarly used terms such as ‘risk reduction’ in laying out their strategies.

Dale et al. (2021) explain that the GOC likely prefers to use terms such as “ending GBV” because more appropriate terms such as “prevention” or “reduction” can be difficult to measure; therefore, the goal of GBV *prevention* is often viewed as less “politically valuable”. However, as Dale et al. (2021) describe, without meaningful, long-term, and robust GBV prevention efforts, GBV reduction cannot occur because the underlying root causes of this violence are not addressed.

In addition to presenting infeasible targets in solving the issue of GBV in Canada, these approaches lack an informed understanding of feminist theory and intersectionality. As the following sections will show, this ultimately indicates that the GOC has both a shallow and narrow view of the realities of GBV (including MMV). This thesis makes the argument that the GOC must take a more transformative and attainable approach to

GBV prevention going forward in order to make real progress on MMV prevention in Canada.

### **Addressing the Issues at Hand**

The MMIWG epidemic is inarguably emblematic of generations of structural violence perpetrated by men and directed at Indigenous women due to their Indigeneity. As CIRNAC (2021a) describes, “despite only making up 4% of the Canadian population, Indigenous women and girls represent 28% of homicides perpetrated against women in 2019 and are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than non-Indigenous women in Canada” (p. 9). Yet while significant and alarming, these statistics do not reveal the gendered aspect of this issue, which is equally significant and alarming.

The MMIWG crisis is a clear demonstration of violence inflicted by violent men who share negative beliefs about women. A key observation from my analysis of the grey literature comes back to the claim from WAGE (2022b) that *the NAP to End GBV* and *the MMIWG NAP* are mutually reinforcing documents which must work in tandem with each other. However, I observed that among the materials pertaining to the MMIWG crisis, and violence against Indigenous women more broadly, that few connections were made by CIRNAC, WAGE, and other relevant branches of the GOC in contextualizing the MMIWG crisis within broader discussions surrounding systemic misogyny and MMV in Canada.

This thesis argues that it is essential for the GOC to consider how the MMIWG epidemic fits within broader discussions of GBV in Canada, and more specifically in the context of this thesis, where this epidemic fits within conversations surrounding GBV,

which I argue has not been fully explored. This is a critical flaw in the GOC's understanding of VAW in Canada, which I have included here as an example of the GOC's failure to comprehensively analyze key issues surrounding MMV from all perspectives to understand their full range of causes and consequences of this violence.

The MMIWG epidemic – while obviously intensified by the added factor of structural racism perpetuated by the state and directed towards all Indigenous people of Canada – is still a gender issue. CIRNAC (2021a; 2021b) identifies the discrepancies in the rates and severity of violence experienced by Indigenous women compared to non-Indigenous women; however, what CIRNAC crucially fails to identify in these materials is the fact that Indigenous women *also* experience violence at rates significantly higher than those of Indigenous men (Statistics Canada, 2022). This point is not being made to diminish the significance of racism as it pertains to this issue – quite the opposite. What this thesis suggests is that it is necessary to also carefully examine the *gendered* factors of the MMIWG crisis in attempting to gain an understanding of this issue, hence the importance of intersectional analysis in this context.

The MMIWG epidemic is undoubtedly an intersectional issue, and as such, this issue must be considered through an intersectional lens. WAGE (2021) proposes that the GBA+ framework can equip individuals with the tools and knowledge to develop policies, programs and legislation which consider the intersectional impacts of violence on diverse groups of women and men, but evidently the mere adoption of GBA+ into government frameworks has not been enough to fix the overarching issues which disadvantage, subordinate, or oppress women (including Indigenous women) under Canadian governance.

As the following section will describe, GBA+ as an “analytical tool” was not designed to be adopted as a curative treatment to gender inequality or discrimination within these line agencies and departments, yet, it is often presented by the GOC as such. As a result, GBA+ and gender mainstreaming as a strategy is both “everywhere and nowhere” (Brodie & Bakker, 2008, p. 71) within the GOC, but crucially when it comes to definitively intersectional issues such as the MMIWG crisis. This “everywhere and nowhere” presence of GBA+ within GOC strategy and policy documents will be further discussed in the following section.

### **GBA+: Everywhere and Nowhere**

As the previous chapter identified, the GOC is reliant on GBA+ and gender mainstreaming as the foundation of their strategy for achieving gender equality in Canada. This thesis concludes that while GBA+ does have some positive attributes, namely the acknowledgement of how various identities including race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical ability can shape experience (i.e., intersectionality), the framework itself is lacking in other areas (namely in its application of these concepts, as the previous section identified). This was evidenced by the grey literature review for this thesis, but also aligns with other scholarly literature on the topic.

In their study on GBA+ implementation in DND and CAF, Johnstone & Momani (2022) identified a lack of precision and guidance in the application of GBA+ by those in power; I have arrived at a similar conclusion in my research. Johnstone & Momani (2022) illustrate the problematic way in which GBA+ is framed and presented to administrators within DND and CAF, identifying that GBA+ was rolled out within DND

and CAF “very quickly” (p. 258); therefore, the goals of the initiative were unclear to those expected to implement and understand the framework. The authors go on to explain that this has resulted in an observed disconnect between “the attitudes people avowed and their revealed attitudes” surrounding the framework, which ultimately resulted in DND and CAF members “ticking the boxes of GBA+ without making substantive changes” to their departments’ operations (Johnstone & Momani, 2022, pp. 263-264).

As Khan et al. (2019) explain, mandatory training is not the same as meaningful education simply because employees tend to view mandatory training activities as a form of punishment when the *option* to participate does not exist. Furthermore, as Dale et al. (2021) explain,

Education without accompanying anti-oppression work, positive and identifiable outcomes, and a commitment to meaningful accountability is inherently limited and will have only limited success in achieving the desired goals. Education and training can be bottomless pits without results-based attention to institutional change. (p. 121)

By requiring all staff to participate in GBA+ training in many parts of the federal government (including DND and CAF), the expectation is that the values of GBA+ will be internalized by staff and its significance automatically understood. However, as Johnstone & Momani (2022) have identified, confusion over the goals and implications of GBA+ among those *expected* to understand it has contributed to resistance towards the strategy.

I attribute this disconnect to miscommunication on behalf of WAGE (2022a), who suggests that GBA+ as an analytical tool was not designed to be implemented as a

curative treatment to gender inequality and discrimination, yet present GBA+ as such, nonetheless. For example, in the GBA+ course WAGE (2022a) states, “GBA Plus is a tool that will prompt you to consider the full impact of government initiatives from the perspectives of diverse people, and to identify potential challenges at an early stage”, which aligns with the 7-step process of the tool as described in Chapter 5. However, the course simultaneously reaches beyond its means, promising outcomes which it cannot guarantee: “GBA Plus *ensures that all aspects of diversity are considered* when an initiative is analyzed and aligns initiatives with the Government’s commitment to inclusivity” (emphasis added). These sorts of statements indicate the application of GBA+ under the GOC’s training will result in gender-based analysis as an analytical process naturally following suit, but as the grey literature has identified, involuntary participation without meaningful education has resulted in a half-hearted, incomplete application of GBA+ across the GOC.

Hankivsky (2012), Mason (2019), and others have argued that this disconnect occurs because a major flaw with gender mainstreaming strategies, such as GBA+, is their inability to change discourse. As Brodie & Bakker (2008) identified, gender mainstreaming strategies were successful in introducing gender-based incentives *into* the GOC; however, they have done little to change discourse, values, and power relations *within* government since that is not what they are designed to do. Consequently, GBA+ is incapable of altering the structures that prevent women in Canada from engaging in social, economic, and political processes from within because *it does not seek to do this*. Instead, GBA+ provides options for integrating women *into* the existing structure that is

the GOC as it stands, which, as I identified in Chapter 2, is ultimately a patriarchal entity founded on inequality.

This thesis ultimately argues that the adoption of GBA+ by the GOC – while *potentially* beneficial to improving *some* aspects of the operations of these entities – is not an effective endpoint strategy as it stands to combating the GOC’s overarching problem with systemic misogyny. More significantly, it is an ineffective way to ensure women’s participation in government and possibly break down gender barriers in the public service. As noted, the tool does have the potential to provide meaningful education and positive change, however, without challenging the structures which have historically impeded gender equality efforts, GBA+ cannot create transformative feminist change.

### **A Feminist Government?**

Ferguson (1984), Tiessen (2019), and others have argued that in order to alter the terms of political discourse which limit women’s ability to engage in political processes, our institutions must be totally transformed. As the second theme under Chapter 5 revealed, the presence of women in Canadian parliament, military, and the public service can generate the potential to transform masculine government institutions into more gender-sensitive environments, however, there is no guarantee of this outcome.

Who is to say that a woman in government is necessarily interested in feminist issues? This was a major political conversation in the 1990s when Canadian politics saw a sharp rise in women’s political participation, with Canada having an unprecedented number of women campaigning as major party candidates in the 1993 federal election, and briefly having its first and only female Prime Minister (Kim Campbell), while

“virtually no feminist issue content” was being discussed on the political stage in those same elections (Bashevkin, 1998, p. 222). This outcome may have occurred due to the simple fact that not all women align themselves with the feminist movement; as Bashevkin (1998) notes, identities do not define values. Bearing this in mind, let me return to a question posed in chapter 2: what exactly is “feminist” about this current “feminist” government?

The answer provided by PM Trudeau when first asked this exact question towards the start of his tenure as PM was that all the members of his cabinet reportedly self-identified as “feminists” (Kingston, 2016), but this response merely prompts more questions. Trudeau may have been correct in saying that each member of his cabinet identified as a feminist, but feminists are not a monolithic category of individuals sharing a singular set of beliefs. As Chapter 2 described, an *instrumentalist* feminist approach, for instance, would be concerned with ensuring women’s greater participation in political and economic processes, while a *transformative* feminist approach would instead be concerned with the power relations that perpetuate gender inequality, individually and institutionally (Tiessen, 2019). These two approaches both reflect feminist theories, but they cannot necessarily be lumped together and labeled “feminism”.

Initiatives such as the gender-balanced cabinet, despite being promoted as transformative, have not produced transformational results, thus align more with an instrumentalist feminist approach. Women were being appointed to positions within Trudeau’s cabinet as mere tokens of inclusivity – a term used by Acker (1990) – in order to achieve the goal of perfect gender equality in numbers, with seemingly no reflection taking place on the circumstances which that have limited women’s meaningful

participation in government to begin with. As ostensibly meant to be a transformational feminist approach, this move did not turn out to be very transformative at all.

This is not to say that the current administration has done nothing to advance Canada's gender equity goals. Present leadership has made strides in bringing gender back into politics by launching *the National Inquiry into MMIWG* and upgrading SWC to WAGE, as some examples. Particularly when contrasted the administration of former PM Harper, the Trudeau era has signalled a turning point for gender equity. Unfortunately, these gains are diminished by the persistence of misogynistic attitudes and behaviour within the government, as demonstrated through the continual erasure of women from politics, the public service, and the CAF through rampant sexual misconduct, as described in Chapter 5.

Current leadership has ultimately failed to make the substantive changes necessary for transformation within the federal government on an institutional and cultural level. Social investment preoccupations in the feminist budget reflect what Dobrowolsky (2020) calls "middle-class feminism": instead of critically examining equality of opportunity among the broader population of Canadian women, hierarchies split along lines of privilege remain intact. All in all, Trudeau's most pivotal "feminist" moves have only benefitted "a particular stratum of already privileged women" (p. 31), while neglecting to create substantive gender-equitable changes which would bind future governments to feminist governance principles (Ashe, 2020). What this means is that while it is great to have feminists in government, without a plan for systemic change or the groundwork in place to allow feminists' diverse voices to be heard, the federal government will be unable to achieve true gender equality.

## **Transforming the Institution**

As Acker (1999), Mastracci & Bowman (2015), and others have explained, bureaucracies have the capacity to decide who is “in” and who is “out” within an institution; therefore, women who enter male-dominated bureaucratic spaces, like the GOC, have traditionally been placed at the bottom of the structural hierarchy that exists within this institution and/or put in positions of relative power as tokens of inclusivity.

As the results section identified, this has been a highly publicized issue within DND and CAF – “gender-neutral” workplace environments on paper, but where true gender equality beyond just the formal sense of the term has not been realized. According to Wong (2022), “Since the legal integration of women into the CAF in 1989, all initiatives aimed at increasing inclusivity and preventing sexual misconduct have adopted an instrumentalist logic relative to the organization’s operational goals” (p. 30), therefore failing to challenge the systemic barriers within the CAF that have existed for generations.

This comes back to an issue raised throughout this thesis with regard to gender mainstreaming strategies and instrumentalist feminism: no organization is magically transformed into a gender equitable setting simply by merely recruiting women into positions of power. While, as Wong (2022) describes, there is something to be said for women being included at the most senior levels of government “as it signals to women at the bottom the possibility of assuming the senior positions men have always been able to identify with” (pp. 21-22), placing women in these roles is not the solution to achieving systemic change. While women working in the public service, military, and elsewhere within the Canadian government are now found in a range of occupations within

organizations in which they were almost totally absent until only recently in history, these changes have not significantly altered the fundamental gendered nature of these organizations.

Dale et al. (2021) state, “in order to be gender transformative, [GBV] prevention work must actively challenge and change (rather than inadvertently reinforce or perpetuate) those harmful gendered social norms, structures, and practices” (p. 50). If women’s voices are being erased from parliament due to fear of harassment and violence from their peers, in what space can transformative feminist politics occur? Even under a government which claims to be guided by feminist ideals, the GOC as an organizing body is still a patriarchal institution. Modest changes merely layered atop the very same structures that exclude women and other marginalized groups to begin have proven ineffective for decades, yet our strategies have not evolved over time (Ashe, 2020).

Ultimately, the foremost goal of a bureaucracy is to keep the institution running at all costs (Ferguson, 1984), or as phrased in the National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019), “the state works to ensure its own survival” above all else (p. 510). As Côté (1991) wrote over three decades ago in response to the Montréal Massacre, “Although our statesmen are inclined...to make speeches filled with rhetoric about official equality, they refuse to admit that the subordination of women by men is the social substratum upon which the present system rests” (p. 68). In the 30 years since, it appears as though little has changed in that regard.

## **Conclusion**

Following this discussion, one question has been left unanswered: if bureaucracies are instruments of discipline that work to maintain the status quo (Eyben, 2010), does this mean that bureaucracy is not fit to support the transformation feminism seeks? Although perhaps not an ideal solution for many feminists, I believe that the path to achieving transformational change in the GOC lies within – as opposed to without – the bureaucratic system that is the Canadian government.

This thesis has advocated for a systemic shift in power relations, the structure itself, and the operations of the GOC to create long-term change. However, collaborative engagement with bureaucracy can mean having a bigger role in discussions surrounding strategies and tools that are being used by the GOC to address pertinent gender issues, such as MMV. Ultimately, I propose that a more transformative feminist approach must be taken in looking at solutions to the epidemic of MMV in Canada. This would necessitate recognizing the underlying causes of gender inequality in relation to masculinity and patriarchy, but also how other sources of discrimination cross-cut gender relations, ultimately enhancing inequalities for certain groups of Canadians (Tiessen, 2019).

Where does this leave Canadians? Anti-feminist ideals and values remain dominant in Canadian society and communities founded on anti-feminism like the incel community are growing at a rapid pace. In order to produce better outcomes for women in Canada, these ideologies cannot be discounted or ignored by the GOC any longer. CSIS's incorporations of IMVE language and terminology in classifying these crimes has indicated progress on this front. The very acknowledgement from the DND and CSIS that

gender-driven violence (GDV) can be ideological is another major step in appropriately addressing MMV on a political level, but as this thesis has demonstrated, recognition alone is not enough to combat this violence.

## CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

### **Thesis Summary**

Misogyny-motivated violence (MMV), although a growing issue internationally, is of particular concern in the Canadian context. In recent years, groups like the incel community have become a major source of MMV in Canada, with at least two incel attacks having occurred in the country in the last five years alone (Carmichael, 2020; Nasser, 2022; Van Brunt & Taylor, 2021). To address this problem, this thesis has explored the following research question: how has the Canadian government responded to the rise of violent misogyny in Canada, and what strategies are being employed by the Canadian government to reduce MMV in Canada and ultimately produce better outcomes for women in the country?

To answer this question, I first provided an overview of MMV in Canada and explained the significance of this issue in a modern context. I highlighted some of the most significant MMV attacks which have occurred in Canada to date, as well as some of the actions that have been taken by the Canadian government thus far to address this violence, such as CSIS' designation of GDV as ideological. I also identified some of the many opportunities the federal government has had to demonstrate their commitment to women's safety and security concerns, yet have failed to do so. I argue that the Montréal Massacre, the Toronto Van Attack, and similar events have forced Canadians to reflect on the social conditions of women in Canada, but unfortunately, these types of events have become so routine that MMV has become an accepted, normalized aspect of society.

By contrasting policies and decisions regarding VAW and GBV prevention efforts which were made by different leaders within the GOC over time, I have shown that in different ways and to varying extents, Canada's most recent and current governments have demonstrated disinterested and/or superficial concern towards women's safety in Canada, thus contributing to the perpetuation of gender inequality in the federal government.

The results from my analysis of the grey literature identified that the strategies which have been proposed by the GOC to date to prevent and reduce GBV (but more specifically, MMV) in Canada are not working. I argue that these problems have stemmed from incomplete knowledge, due to lack of statistics and comprehensive research by government bodies of the issues, and lack of understanding of feminist and intersectional concepts with regard to policy and operations across the GOC.

### **Contributions to Scholarship**

There is a growing body of research being produced related to the topics discussed in this thesis; however, there is far less research dedicated to examining these issues conjointly. Many connections have been made between specific acts of violence undertaken in Canada by male perpetrators with alleged or proven histories of VAW (see Halpin et al., 2024 and Van Brunt & Taylor, 2021, for some examples), but all of these events have yet to be comprehensively compared and contrasted together. My research is by no means exhaustive, but I have yet to find scholarship making connections between the systemic misogyny involved in the reaction and response to the MMIWG crisis and incel violence, for example.

Additionally, Gentry (2021), Morris & Ratajczak (2019), Tonso (2009) and many others have established the connection between male perpetrated mass violence and these men's histories involving VAW, but this thesis seeks to draw attention to the greater phenomenon that is *misogyny-motivated* violence against women. Differing from the focus of the above noted studies, I have argued that a deeper ideology of misogyny exists not just among individuals who seek to harm women, but also the society which fosters these individuals.

### **Limitations**

While this thesis provides valuable insights through the analysis of grey literature, there are some limitations to this method of analysis which impact the results of this study. As noted in Chapter 1, grey literature encompasses documents that are not subject to the same rigorous peer review process as scholarly articles from academic sources. As a result, grey literature often reflects the perspectives or priorities of the institutions that produce it, which may lead to an overrepresentation of certain viewpoints or themes and underreporting of others. Simply put, some of the reports included in this study may have been published due to institutional or organizational interests, and may not present a comprehensive view of the respective department or agency's perspective. I attempted to compensate for this limitation by including a range of sources in my grey literature review. However, this remains a potential factor that could influence the findings of this study and must be acknowledged as such.

Additionally, the scope of the grey literature reviewed may have been limited by the research design of this study – certain reports and documents may have been excluded

in my collection of materials due to language barriers (i.e., French language publications), or other access limitations. Another limitation of this study was the absence of direct engagement with the populations particularly affected by GBV. While the grey literature review method provides valuable insight directly from policymakers, government officials, and researchers, the perspectives of the survivors and communities most affected by this issue are underrepresented.

### **The Way Forward for Canada**

All forms of GBV, but particularly VAW and MMV, remain pervasive issues in Canada, affecting individuals across all demographics, across all communities in every part of the country, every day. Despite significant progress in policymaking and general attitudes in government surrounding the pervasiveness of this issue, the challenge persists, underscoring the need for a renewed approach to GBV prevention.

Historically, the GOC has appeared ambivalent – if not outright hostile – towards the safety and security concerns of women in Canada. Thinking back to the state of gender equality efforts in Canada in the mid-late 2000s, we may remember the Harper government’s firm stance on the issue: there was no need to implement or continue gender equality measures in Canada because, according to the Prime Minister, the goal of gender equality in Canada had *already been achieved* (Brodie & Bakker, 2008). The Trudeau era signalled a clear turning point, but overall this progress has been curtailed by the persistence of misogyny and other forms of gender discrimination elsewhere within the federal government as demonstrated through the continual erasure of women from politics and leadership positions.

The current “feminist” government as lead by PM Trudeau, for example, while positive in many ways, has thus far failed to make the substantive changes necessary for gendered transformation on an institutional and cultural level within the GOC. The grey literature review highlights the federal government’s repeated failures to address intersectional factors in GBV prevention strategies, with many documents failing to adequately engage with these complexities, yet focusing on a fantastical mission to “end” all GBV in Canada.

This is not to say that we should not aim for a world without GBV. As WAGE (2021b) aptly notes, the idea that GBV is inevitable can serve to weaken efforts to combat GBV because this attitude can be seen as a form of resignation to gender inequality. However, as this thesis has emphasized, GBV is deeply entrenched in Canadian society, therefore the journey toward achieving a Canada free from all GBV will be long and complex. This thesis therefore concludes that the GOC must take a more grounded approach to GBV prevention efforts in order to make real progress on the issue of MMV.

Without establishing practical and attainable goals and taking a more transformative approach to GBV reduction, the federal government will never be able to achieve even their most modest GBV reduction objectives. Presently, domestic policies, strategies, and political positions on GBV in Canada that are described as “feminist” are not transformative. Transformative change must first come from rejecting the normalization of GBV in Canadian society and striving to create a social and cultural environment where women are safe and free from abuse. As Cadesky (2020) argues, this

requires challenging the patriarchal structures and misogynistic attitudes that allow this violence to continue.

To transform existing patriarchal structures and avoid reinforcing the status quo within government, dominant narratives must be challenged by those in positions of power. The adoption of GBA+, and other gender mainstreaming strategies by the GOC, while potentially beneficial to improving day-to-day operations of the public service, is not an effective strategy to combat the GOC's overarching problem with gender inequality. Imprecision in how GBA+ is taught and applied has, consequentially, led to misinterpretations among those expected to understand and implement the framework into their workplaces and the work these government agencies do. By addressing the root causes of violence, dismantling systemic inequalities, and fostering a culture of respect and accountability in government (and by extension, Canadian society), Canada can move towards a future where the threat of GBV is minimized .

Furthermore, by avoiding the uncomfortable (but necessary) task of tackling the patriarchal structures that underwrite gender inequality, the GOC presents a weak and incomplete style of feminism. This is not sufficient considering the prevalence of MMV, and GBV more broadly, in Canada. Only through collective and comprehensive action and total commitment can we hope to curb GBV in Canada and create a society that is truly gender equitable.

It is essential that people of all genders are actively involved in the solution to the GBV epidemic in Canada, but men and boys in particular have a critical role to play in fostering change (Statistics Canada, 2006). While typically designated a "women's issue", men and boys actually play a vital role in MMV prevention efforts because of

their unique opportunity to drive collective, systemic change by leveraging their structural and institutional power. As such, any comprehensive strategy to combat MMV (or any GBV for that matter) must include initiatives aimed at deconstructing these outdated ideas of masculinity and promoting healthy, respectful models of male behavior. This may be a strong avenue for future study, both within government and externally.

Ultimately it is crucial to remember that MMV prevention requires more than just reactive measures; it demands proactive, systemic changes that involves a deep examination of societal attitudes towards women and notions of gender equality. If we are to create a world where MMV and GBV are no longer tolerated, we must embrace innovative solutions that involve education, community-based interventions, and cultural transformation to address the root causes of misogyny and lead to lasting change in societal attitudes towards women in Canada.

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