The Voices Behind Change: Women’s Liberation During the 1970s at the University of Guelph

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ABSTRACT

THE VOICES BEHIND CHANGE: WOMEN’S LIBERATION DURING THE 1970s AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

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The purpose of this thesis is to highlight a student narrative from the perspective of female undergraduates at the University of Guelph from the 1970s, but also to add to the canon of Canadian women’s history. This thesis will argue that female undergraduates at the University of Guelph took part in the Women’s Liberation movement of the 1970s and helped to make Guelph a more liberated and equal opportunity institution. This will be indicated by various examples of the collective action and activism of female undergraduates as they fought to make changes on campus. Using the campus student newspaper, The Ontarion, as the primary source was vital because the newspaper is where the voice of the women students could be heard. The Ontarion is an untapped primary resource providing a wealth of information for assessing and analyzing the emergence of feminism at Guelph. The Ontarion has helped to put a spotlight on feminism and the role of female undergraduates as they organized to make changes at Guelph. Taking on this role included using opinions of feminist role models, notably ideas pertaining to personal and political issues. These issues included organizing to request access to birth control and relevant information, abortion counselling, and a new educational curriculum that included women writers and philosophers. Newly attracted members to women’s clubs and participants in feminist activities were able to take part in the local and national liberation movement of the 1970s. These undergraduates were learning from the previous generation of women about how to be feminist, and in what ways their own campus needed to be liberated. Through the assessment of the collected articles from The Ontarion, this thesis will elucidate that as women students combined their newly raised consciousness with other women, they realized that they could be active participants in social change, ultimately initiating the process of liberation on their own campus.
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I first came to this campus with my mother, Maxine McBride, when she enrolled as a student of Psychology. Without seeing the academic successes of my mother, and the way in which engaging in university life allowed her to open herself up to the highly intelligent academic within, I may never have thought it possible to undertake a university career. My mom has supported me throughout my education, and I hope that with the success of completing my thesis she can see how much she has inspired me to go above and beyond even my own expectations. My mom, and my sister, Cassandra McBride, have provided me with the model for what inspirational and independent women look like. My sister has always excelled in academia and has used it to empower herself, a young woman akin to those that I have written about in this thesis.

Thank you to my dad, Patrick McBride, for always checking in on me and making sure my project was on-track, and for being supportive of my endeavors. My dad instilled in me a drive to succeed, because he has always worked hard to reach his goals and is constantly aspiring to new ones.

I cannot properly express what it means to have my fiancé, Josh Bowen by my side. He has never failed to amaze me with his capacity to patiently support me, even when I was lost in the midst of research and writing. He has always made me feel proud to be a well-educated and passionate woman, inside and outside of our home.

I must say a very special thank you to the women in my extended family, and those who I am privileged to have as friends, because they inspire me every day with the work they do in their home and work lives to make the world a better place for all women.

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Introduction

The Dawn of Women’s Liberation and the Passion it Instilled in Female Undergraduates

We read there of the grotesque discrepancy between the image of men in our society – men as revolutionaries and space travellers and physicists and mystics – and the image of women, of *us* – as childish, frivolous, empty-headed house-keepers whose cultural task was to beautify ourselves; our social responsibility, to have babies; and economic function, to consume household goods. We were cheated, wrote Betty Friedan, of our self-esteem, disallowed our development as intellectual and moral beings and forfeited of our personhood. We had swallowed the lie of inferiority and obliterated the genetic memory within us of women who had been mighty with the truth about women.¹

When Myrna Kostash penned this in 1963, as a nineteen-year-old undergraduate at the University of Alberta, she was expressing how many Canadian women in university, most in their early twenties felt about their place in the world. The conversation between older and younger women across Canadian campuses would continue to take place into and throughout the 1970s. It was due to feminists, like Betty Friedan, that this conversation and the awakening of the consciousness of women began. In *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963, forty-two year old Friedan called upon a new generation of women to sabotage the “feminine mystique” which had suffocated them for so long.² As Friedan explained “the feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity.”³ She went on to argue that this was no longer the case, and that women could be feminine at the same time as leading fulfilling lives beyond the realm of domesticity.⁴

In *The Feminine Mystique* Friedan claimed that in the 1960s American women, especially housewives and young mothers were feeling at a loss with their lives and wanted more; not only did they feel disenchanted they knew that there was something missing.⁵ As Friedan described, “Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could

³Friedan, 43.
⁴Friedan, 43, 61, 68.
⁵Friedan, 20-21.
desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity.” However, women were beginning to rebel against this societally prescribed ‘destiny,’ by desiring instead to lead fulfilling lives, with aspirations and the ability to achieve them. They no longer wanted to be inferior to men; to be treated with little respect if they endeavored to be a part of the male-dominated areas of life; or to feel guilty whether they chose to stay at home and raise children or to balance a home and work life. The women who became conscious of their desire for changes to be made in their lives, tried to foster that same yearning for change in other women. What many women wanted was a change in the way that society saw and treated them, a change in the way women thought of themselves, and a change in the social and traditional expectations placed on women. It was Friedan’s book, among others, that inspired women across North America to reassess their lives, and as women discovered that their individual problems were actually a part of a collective experience they began to join together. This culminated in the rise of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, and the formation of the women’s liberation movement in 1967.

Betty Freidan’s voice was only one of many in the late-twentieth century speaking to North American women about feminism and liberation. Throughout the 1960s a conversation had been taking place between the members of various social movement organizations who were moved to political activism because of the fervent civil rights movement. These organizations called for racial equality, Red and Black Power, gay rights, and women’s liberation, which instilled in youth on university campuses an eagerness to take part. By the late 1960s and early 1970s young Canadian women were being told by feminists, such as Betty Friedan, Kate Millet, Shulamith

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6Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, 15.
10The second wave of feminism and women’s liberation will be more thoroughly defined in the section ‘Evoking the Fight for Women’s Liberation,’ later in the Introduction.
Firestone, and Germaine Greer that women’s equality was not just the dream of their grandmother’s ‘suffragette’ generation.\textsuperscript{13} Many of these active feminists believed that achieving equality for all women would have to be an endeavor tackled by all women. Meaning that each woman first needed to identify how and in what ways they experienced inequality. As many young women began to recognize and openly discuss the pervasive inequality they experienced the “battle of the sexes” became increasingly relevant. The fight for liberation was observable and accessible because it was being fought in the media, provincial and federal legislatures, and most visibly on university campuses. So, as young women enrolled in university in the 1970s they discovered the opportunity to join recently formed college clubs, protest groups and student led consciousness-raising groups, whose mandate was the fight for women’s rights on university campuses and ultimately society at large, but first this meant learning what it meant to be a feminist.

Journalist Myrna Kostash was a graduate student at the University of Toronto in the late 1960s. She recalls her delight after reading Betty Friedan’s \textit{The Feminine Mystique} (1963), Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman” (1851), and Simone de Beauvoir’s \textit{The Second Sex} (1949) with the other members of her women’s liberation group.\textsuperscript{14} Kostash and her friends, “giggled and chitchatted over a bottle of wine, debatin the pros and cons of using deodorant and shaving your legs and wearing make-up – the hilarity of it as the ribald and preposterous confessions came out…”\textsuperscript{15} None of them believed they would end up like Friedan’s “defeated women in the suburbs.”\textsuperscript{16} They wanted an education, careers, adventures, and travel experiences before they made babies and peanut-butter sandwiches, sentiments that were being expressed by women across Canada within their liberation groups.\textsuperscript{17} Just as Kostash and her peers began experimenting with feminism in the 1960s, so too did the female undergraduates in the 1970s. Ultimately these women were reinventing their personhood and challenging the university to become a bastion of women’s liberation. This is something that female students on Canadian campuses still do today.

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\textsuperscript{13}Miriam E. David, \textit{Feminism, Gender and Universities: Politics, Passion and Pedagogies} (Burlington: Ashgate Pub., 2014), 96.
\textsuperscript{14}Kostash, \textit{Long Way from Home}, 170.
\textsuperscript{15}Kostash, 170.
\textsuperscript{16}Friedan, \textit{The Feminine Mystique}, 20.
\textsuperscript{17}Kostash, \textit{Long Way from Home}, 166.
\end{small}
\end{flushright}
The Purpose of this Research

Due to the transformations in the lives of women in Canada during the late 1960s and carrying on into the 1970s, the goal of this thesis is to analyze the women’s liberation movement from the point of view of young women at a Canadian university. An assessment of the female point of view provides a unique narrative when identifying what liberation and feminism meant to undergraduate participants (recruits to the cause) as they navigated a co-educational environment and endeavoured to achieve liberation at their university. Therefore, the following thesis will examine the lives of women students during the second wave of feminism, the liberation movement, by drawing on the content analysis of 80 published articles from the University of Guelph student newspaper, The Ontarion. By focusing on a timeline between 1966 and 1976 a descriptive micro-history of the lives of women students at Guelph will be presented. This thesis will illustrate how women students at Guelph encountered the wider Canadian women’s movement by taking part in creating an identifiable and active female space on campus as described in articles published in The Ontarion. Female students used The Ontarion, which was created in 1951 as part of the Ontario Agricultural College,18 to develop a new feminist language. Through this medium, they tried to open a campus-wide dialogue to debate the issues that were at the forefront of their role as students and women liberationists. Evidently, not all female undergraduates joined feminist groups and clubs, but arguably all readers of The Ontarion were exposed to feminist ideas in articles published between 1966 and 1976.

Evoking the Fight for Women’s Liberation

To provide a clear examination of the role of female students from the University of Guelph in the women’s liberation movement, second wave feminism and women’s liberation must be defined. The second wave of feminism in North America is given various starting dates, depending on the scholar and the research they rely on, but most seem to agree that it began in the 1960s and

18The Ontarion, The Ontarion University of Guelph’s Independent Student Newspaper, https://www.theontarion.com/.
continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As Naomi Black explains, “In Canada, the second wave of feminism made its first appearance, unrecognized, with the establishment in 1960 of the Voice of Women...” but it was “the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) in 1967, [that] was the first success of the second wave of Canadian feminism.”

The RCSW is credited as such because its establishment was the direct result of the pressure placed on the government, by some of the Voice of Women members as well as Doris Anderson and Laura Sabia, to address the status of Canadian women. Anderson, the editor of the popular women’s magazine, Chatelaine, had been publishing feminist content throughout the 1960s, and was a fervent supporter of the need for the status of women to be studied. Anderson publicly supported Sabia, President of the Canadian Federation of University Women, as she spearheaded a Committee on Equality for Women.

This committee represented the majority of the organized women’s groups in Canada, and with Sabia as their leader, they successfully pressured the Pearson government to establish the RCSW. Sabia is enthusiastically quoted by Judy Rebick and Naomi Black, as having said, “We’re tired of being nice about trying to get an official inquiry into women’s rights in Canada...” and, “If we don’t get a royal commission by the end of this month, [January 1967] we’ll use every tactic we can. And if we have to use violence, damn it, we will.” Sabia is one of the many important second wave feminists who tirelessly and passionately campaigned for women’s liberation, and successfully brought together women from across the country to partake in organizations dedicated to seeing that the status of women would be assessed, and that the commission would implement the subsequent recommendations. The RCSW will be more

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20Black, 83-84; The Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) 1967 will be explained in Chapter 2.
21Black, 85-86.
22Black, 86.
23Black, 86-87.
24Black, 87.
25Black, 87.
27Black, 86-87.
thoroughly explored in chapter two, and the significance of the commission to university women will also be addressed.

It is during the second wave, as Canadian women formed new organizations to assess and resolve the many issues related to women’s inequality, that women’s liberation developed.\textsuperscript{27} Black identifies the growth of these new organizations in two groups, “those which grew out of the student movement and also liberal-feminist groups which were organized specifically to pressure for government action in relation to the status of women.”\textsuperscript{28} She explains that feminism and women’s groups were not a new phenomenon in Canada in the 1960s, and that many of the newly formed groups were off-shoots from the first wave interwar and postwar groups.\textsuperscript{29} Black also identifies the slogan of women’s liberation groups, “the personal is political” as being closely tied “to views of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century social feminists who thought politics should be cleaned up the way houses were.”\textsuperscript{30} The Canadian women’s liberation movement, Black argues, was stimulated by the actions of the student movement in the United States, which had been radicalized as students took part in the civil rights movement and called for women to be liberated too.\textsuperscript{31} It was the revival of feminism that spurred many Canadian women to activism because they began to recognize that even if women were doing a lot of the same things as men, they were still being treated differently.\textsuperscript{32}

It was the girls that had come of age in the 1960s who had shared experiences in the home, the workplace, and within society that enabled them to band together under the banner of women’s liberation. As the liberation movement took shape, “[W]omen chose to organize separately from men because of their bonds with women and because of the commonality of their experience as women, as second-class workers, as sex objects, as bearers (and rearers) of children, and so on.”\textsuperscript{33}

Men were slowly included in the movement as women began to make it very clear that it was the

\textsuperscript{27}Black, “The Canadian Women’s Movement,” 83.
\textsuperscript{28}Black, 83.
\textsuperscript{29}Black, 82.
\textsuperscript{30}Black, 83.
\textsuperscript{31}Black, 80.
\textsuperscript{32}Black, 80-81.
responsibility of all people to ensure equality between the sexes was achieved. Liberty, individual rights and a just society were important to women, and they were questioning why women in Canada were experiencing such high levels of inequality. The number of women entering the workforce increased during this period, and so, the more women that were working, the more women began to realize in what ways they were being oppressed while at work.\textsuperscript{34} Working women were dealing with sexual harassment, inequality in the workplace, and the possibility of getting laid off due to pregnancy or age. At the same time, many women were struggling with the societal expectation that they balance taking care of children and running a household with work life, if they chose to do both.\textsuperscript{35} This double duty of work had been experienced by many women in the 1960s and became a common occurrence in the 1970s, leaving women to wonder about the patriarchal structures that were pressuring them to live these lives, and what they could do to change the outdated societal expectations placed on them.\textsuperscript{36}

Joan Sangster, a Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies at Trent University, explains in “Creating Popular Histories: Re-Interpreting “Second Wave” Canadian Feminism,” rejects the view that scholars such as, Janine Brodie and Jill Vickers use when they describe the women of the second wave “as predominantly white, middle class, and, to some extent, liberal in political outlook, shaped by similar social origins and advocating a homogenous or “universalist” view of womanhood.”\textsuperscript{37} She believes that due to this restrictive definition, found in much of the existing scholarship, it becomes problematic to define second wave feminism as a wave that included all Canadian women. However, Sangster argues that there are studies of the second wave which challenge this dominant interpretation. These include research on working-class women, Third World feminism in Quebec, and Aboriginal women’s struggles, as well as identifying the shifts throughout the second wave as women moved from early New Left “liberationist” ideas into radical, liberal and other forms of feminism.\textsuperscript{38} Based on her own research of theories surrounding the second wave, Sangster describes how the “wave metaphor simplistically presupposes that

\textsuperscript{34} Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 37.
\textsuperscript{35} Adamson et al., 6, 103.
\textsuperscript{36} Black, “The Canadian Women’s Movement,” 82.
\textsuperscript{38} Sangster, “Creating Popular Histories,” 384; New Left will be defined in Chapter 1.
feminism is primarily “peer driven,” and almost deterministically assumes an “inevitable” practice of intellectual “matricide” between waves.”\textsuperscript{39} The research used throughout this thesis will demonstrate that some women actually remained connected to the previous generation of feminists and were inspired by their work to participate in liberation. It will also identify that many Canadian women, especially young women at universities, relied on peer support and networking while they worked on achieving liberation for all women.

**The Feminist Fervour Behind Liberation**

Miriam E. David relied on a sisterhood of her peers and colleagues to describe in her book, *Feminism, Gender and Universities: Politics, Passion and Pedagogies* (2014), that feminism was not only a political project but an educational one.\textsuperscript{40} Using a compilation of oral histories given by 66 women, David revisits the moments from the 1960s and 1970s when these women entered university to determine in what ways they encountered feminism and how they began to define themselves as feminists. Whether a woman called herself a feminist before, during, or after her time at university varied, and some suggested they had always been feminist due to the early education they received from their mothers.\textsuperscript{41} Some had either been made aware of how important equality was for women by their mothers, or they turned to feminism as a reaction to the role their mothers played within the home.\textsuperscript{42} David argued, “Whilst they all mentioned personal aspects of their biographies, such as their cultural and social class backgrounds, and relationships to their parents or partners, above all, interestingly, a number of key texts came up as influences on their budding consciousness, and desires to change women’s situation, wherever they found themselves.”\textsuperscript{43} Many of David’s participants did not indicate that course related material was the reason they learned about feminism, rather it was due to the texts and information provided from outside of the university. It was the women’s liberation movement, which David identifies as “the political project” that drew young women to feminism, and it was the texts of well-known second-

\textsuperscript{39}Sangster, “Creating Popular Histories,” 384.  
\textsuperscript{40}David, *Feminism, Gender and Universities*, ix.  
\textsuperscript{41}David, 96.  
\textsuperscript{42}David, 95.  
\textsuperscript{43}David, 95.
wave feminists such as Greer, Friedan, Millet, Juliet Mitchell, Ann Oakley and Adrienne Rich, that educated aspiring women’s liberationists on how to be feminist.\textsuperscript{44}

It would be the combination of women joining together and discussing their experiences, the relief they felt in doing so, and the power it gave them, to fully appreciate that liberation for all women needed to happen, and sooner rather than later.\textsuperscript{45} Some women came to the realization that being unequal and living in positions of subservience, as well as being treated unfairly and coming second to the men in their lives, was no longer acceptable.\textsuperscript{46} What was unique was that university enrolment rose in the 1960s, “In the five years between 1963 and 1968, Canadian university enrolment increased as much as it had in the previous fifty!”\textsuperscript{47} The increase in enrolment was due to the baby boom, and as many young people began their university careers they turned campuses into bastions of political activism.\textsuperscript{48} Owram argued that the baby boomers were now wanting to enter “a world of higher education that both reinforced their sense of identity and encouraged them to challenge the received wisdom.”\textsuperscript{49} He also describes the scramble that ensued across Canada as governments worked to establish new universities to fulfill the educational needs of such a large population of young people reaching adulthood.\textsuperscript{50} The rise in female enrolment at university was especially significant, as Douglas Owram states, “In 1950 approximately 3,700 women graduated from university. By 1963 that number had tripled, and by 1970 it had gone up sevenfold.”\textsuperscript{51} This was largely a response to the prevailing problem facing women, that they were still being relegated to traditional roles, and so, women thought that to subvert these roles they could use their education as a tool to implement changes. It is appropriate that the process of women’s liberation took place on university campuses, because young women believed that

\textsuperscript{44}David, \textit{Feminism, Gender and Universities}, 96.
\textsuperscript{45}Dixon, \textit{The Future of Women}, 60.
\textsuperscript{47}Owram, 181.
\textsuperscript{48}Sethna, “Clandestine Operations,” 466.
\textsuperscript{49}Owram, \textit{Born at the Right Time}, 184.
\textsuperscript{50}Owram, 181.
\textsuperscript{51}Owram, 274.
the university should be at the forefront of societal change and act as a role model for the rest of society.\textsuperscript{52}

Paul Grayson, a sociology professor at York University, states that the majority of female students who entered post-secondary education in the early 1960s were middle-class.\textsuperscript{53} In his article, “The Experiences and Expectations of Canadian Female University Students at the ‘Dawn of the Age of Aquarius,’” Grayson argues that even if women pursued a higher education and were successful, their aspirations of a career “would be subordinated to the careers of their husbands and the needs of their children.”\textsuperscript{54} It was due to the reality women faced of one day having to fulfill the role of wife and mother that deterred many women from enrolling in university. Grayson explains that in 1963, “Approximately 13 percent of Canadians between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four were undergraduates in Canadian universities. Only a third of this number, 4 percent, were female.”\textsuperscript{55} Female participation in university education was slowly rising, but as Owram described it would not be until the 1970s that the number of women students drastically increased.

Grayson suggests that it was the limited prospects after graduating that also deterred women, because in 1966 and 1967 if women were seeking work, “they would have joined the mere 37 percent of Canadian women working full- and part-time in the labour force.”\textsuperscript{56} The women that secured full-time jobs after graduating in 1967 would only earn “58 percent of the average male wage.”\textsuperscript{57} The lack of work available to educated women, beyond teaching and service jobs, and the lower pay given to working women, as well as the fact that married women were less likely to be hired, did not provide women in the 1960s with many options besides maintaining a home and caring for children while their husbands worked.\textsuperscript{58} This mentality began to shift in the early 1970s as more young women enrolled in university and began to raise their voices, calling for a societal change. Marlene Dixon suggests that as women began to discover and learn what the oppression

\textsuperscript{53}Grayson, “The Experiences and Expectations of Canadian Female University Students,” 268.
\textsuperscript{54}Grayson, 268.
\textsuperscript{55}Grayson, 269.
\textsuperscript{56}Grayson, 269.
\textsuperscript{57}Grayson, 269.
\textsuperscript{58}Grayson, 269.
of women really meant, the fear that women had about losing their identities as women disintegrated, leaving women to pursue their dreams, all while attempting to dismantle male privilege.\textsuperscript{59} Owram and Cyril Levitt argue that this shift was also occurring for women from working-class backgrounds and immigrant families, who were presented with new ideas about race and class oppression, and began challenging the values of mainstream society by going to university.\textsuperscript{60}

Neil Guppy (et al.) calculated that between 1970 and 1971 101,352 women enrolled as full-time undergraduates and between 1975 to 1976 this number rose to 140,127.\textsuperscript{61} The women who enrolled at universities nationwide during the 1970s would go on to create a new identity for Canadian women, that of the active and conscious intellectual. This change in mentality enabled many young women to set their goals high and begin to develop their lives in whatever way they saw fit. Due to the success of women in post-secondary education and their fight against oppressive societal expectations, the number of women in the workforce also rose throughout the sixties and seventies. As Owram points out, “In the mid-1950s only 23 per cent of women aged twenty-five to forty-four, prime child-rearing age, worked outside the home. By the mid-1960s, the figure was about one-third and by the mid-1970s nearly one half.”\textsuperscript{62} There was an undeniable atmosphere of change burgeoning in the 1960s, which encouraged young women to explore options outside of the home, whether at school or in the workplace.

Douglas Owram argues that universities had always been places of controversy, and “this was not surprising, for universities shape fundamental values and train the elite of the next generation.”\textsuperscript{63} The young women of the 1960s, at least those that became active on university campuses across North America, set the stage for the undergraduates entering university in the next decade. It was on campuses, such as the University of Guelph, that female undergraduates

\textsuperscript{59}Dixon, \textit{The Future of Women}, 60.
\textsuperscript{60}Owram, \textit{Born at the Right Time}, 66.
\textsuperscript{62}Owram, \textit{Born at the Right Time}, 276.
\textsuperscript{63}Owram, 175.
took part in liberation, and ensured that the university made the necessary changes needed to become a liberated space. The changes that were made, and the success of the women students who helped the university become a liberated space will be elaborated on and clarified in the thesis.

**The Place of Canadian Women in University**

There was always a place for female scholars interested in pursuing higher education in Guelph, Ontario. Mary Dickieson stated in the *Guelph Alumnus* that it was in 1893 that the first women students came to Guelph, at that time there were five women enrolled as Ontario Agricultural College students. More women began to enrol in post-secondary education in Guelph when the MacDonald Institute was established in 1903. In the beginning the Institute was a place where “under-educated women in rural Canadian society…” could partake in an education that would benefit them in their domestic pursuits, or in the workplace. Over time the Institute provided a way for “young and middle-aged women to advance themselves…” and women from suburban and urban backgrounds started enrolling. From 1903 to 1963 Macdonald Institute became Canada’s largest college for the education of women in home economics, which led to female students, or “Mac” girls, actively taking part in university life while studying home economics. By 1964 it became possible for women to enrol as University of Guelph students, because the Ontario Agricultural College, the Veterinary College and Macdonald Institute amalgamated so that a more integrated and “complete education…” could be provided for prospective students. As “Mac’ girls made the transition into a shared campus they recognized

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65Mary Lalonde, “Genesis,” in University of Guelph, *Finding Feminism and Women's Studies @ Guelph: A 25-year Celebration*, ed. by the Women’s Studies Department (Guelph, ON: University of Guelph, 2004), 4.
67Snell, 11.
68Snell, 11, 157.
that there was much work to be done if they wanted to create a liberated and equal opportunity campus.71

Even with the amalgamation of the three colleges, it was still possible for women to major in home economics; however, in 1969 Macdonald Institute dissolved.72 By that time undergraduates at Guelph could take courses through the College of Family and Consumer Studies.73 It would not be until 1998 that this College would merge with the College of Social Science and become the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences.74 It was not obvious upon analyzing The Ontarion that students in home economics engaged with women’s liberation, if they did, the student contributors did not denote what college they belonged to when they submitted articles. The emphasis here is not on which college female undergraduates were a part of, but rather how they used The Ontarion as a platform to discuss liberation. Due to the action of administrators, faculty and students, a significant change was made in the early 1970s as the creation of women’s courses commenced, however, it would not be until 1979 that a Women’s Studies Program and Department was established.75

Women had been present in educational institutions in Canada since the 1800s, and they often challenged traditional ideals and fought for things they believed should be different.76 Attending university was not a new endeavour for Canadian women but fighting for changes within educational institutions was. By the late 1960s some Canadian women had been challenging traditional gender roles in universities for more than a decade, and young women were ready to fight for more changes to be made in the realm of academia.77 For female students at Guelph, the

73Snell, Macdonald Institute, 178.
74Snell, 209.
76Paul Axelrod, Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada during the Thirties (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 7.
transition to becoming “liberated” undergraduates began in 1964 and the “all women” female space that had been formed by generations of “Mac girls” needed to be adjusted to become a space that included more women scholars within the co-educational environment.\textsuperscript{78}

Various explanations had been offered for years to keep women out of gaining autonomy and power through education. In the beginning of the nineteenth century men, and some women, argued that a woman’s mind and body were intended by “nature” not to grapple with educational endeavors.\textsuperscript{79} Once the baby boom generation joined co-educational university life as Guelph students, they wanted to invent new traditions that challenged gender and sex-role stereotypes because they were inspired by feminism to reinvent themselves. However, there were some women who still felt helpless to do so because of how pervasive female inequality was, within and outside of the university. In 1974 a female student wrote a satirical article in \textit{The Ontarion} stating, “It doesn’t really matter that women do not go on to graduate school. They will find that they do not need an education to carry out their ascribed social role. Woman’s ascribed social role is that of mother and caretaker.”\textsuperscript{80} She was pointing out how firmly entrenched sexist thinking was on campus, that this was the sentiment of society and the university, and that it would not be easy to eradicate it.

Pursuing formal education enabled students to experiment with and create new feminist identities, thus redefining the societal expectations thrust on them by the previous generation.\textsuperscript{81} Nevertheless, many women in the 1970s, especially those from working-class backgrounds, were


\textsuperscript{80}“She Walks! She Talks! She Thinks! (Does She?),” \textit{The Ontarion}, Guelph, Tuesday June 11, 1974, 4.

still being told that their place was in the home and not at university. Regardless of traditional expectations, young women at Guelph aspired to take part in women’s liberation, they held festivals and parades for women, and took part in the 1970 Abortion Caravan from Vancouver when it made its way to Ottawa. They joined an Abortion March in 1971, and the Cross-Country Conference on Abortion in 1973. Positive action was taken when the United Nations declared 1975 International Women’s Year, as “traditionally March 8 had been set aside as International Women’s Day.” Women at Guelph held the only parade in the country for Women’s Year, proving that as a collective force they would and could be heard. They participated in any and all events relevant to women’s liberation, and they used The Ontarion to reach the campus populace and raise awareness about feminism.

Setting the Stage for Liberation: The Creation of a Female Space on Campus

Douglas Owram argues that in the 1960s girls were being socialized to believe they were as able as boys to do whatever they wanted to do. These post World War Two, or baby-boom generation women came of age in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They had watched their mothers deal with the stress of being relegated to domestic life in the 1950s and 1960s and heard stories of their grandmothers’ and great-grandmothers’ lives in the preceding decades. Feminists like Betty Friedan argued that without a protest movement the doors would continue to be closed to young women. Friedan had explained: “the feminine mystique permits, even encourages, women to

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84“Abortion March,” The Ontarion, Guelph, February 18, 1971, 7; “Conference on Abortion,” The Ontarion, Guelph, Thursday March 8, 1973, 2; Saskatoon Women's Calendar Collective.
87Owram, Born at the Right Time, 161.
88Owram, 251.
ignore the question of their identity. The mystique says they can answer the question ‘Who am I?’ by saying ‘Tom’s wife…Mary’s mother.’" What Friedan sought of women in the sixties, was that they reclaim their personal image of identity and define themselves as they saw fit. Which is what young women aspired to do while at university in the seventies, but first they would have to identify and break down all of the repressive barriers, and then create a liberated space for women on campus.

Statistics from the post-Second World War period reveal that there was a gender disparity in education and labour force participation for women. Neil Guppy (et al.) explained that the number of female professors at Canadian universities in 1970 to 1971 was only 166, but male professors numbered 4,677. By 1975 the number of female professors only rose to 302, whereas there were 7013 male professors. As is pointed out by Guppy (et al.), “since higher education both shapes and reflects larger social trends, the position of women in higher education is an important signal to students about the current situation of women in society, especially in professional employment.” Dixon argues that regardless of a woman’s educational level they are still seen to work in large numbers at lower paying jobs. She goes on to say that in the 1960s, “most women are forced to work at clerical jobs, for which they are paid, on the average, $1,600 less per year than men doing the same work.” A situation encountered by many women in North America, and one that was not drastically altered by 1970. As women recognized the seriousness of what was happening to them, feminism and the need for liberation became more important, and female undergraduates knew they needed to act if they were to succeed within, and outside of university.

**Historiography: Defining the Feminist Consciousness**

Defining oneself as a feminist meant putting theory into practice. First, one needed to come to the realization that one was oppressed. As Toni Williams, a Professor at the University of Kent

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91Guppy et al., 184.
in England, expressed in her 1990 publication, “Re-Forming “Women’s Truth: A Critique of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada,” anyone that advocates for feminism cannot overlook the significance of the joining together of women. Discussing how important the understanding shared by these women that their “oppression is not natural but man-made—clearly, it was and remains important for women to know and to name experiences as oppressive.” Williams goes on to suggest that identifying the collective problem that is women’s oppression and naming it as such, is only a start. What defines feminists and their newly awakened consciousness is that they do something with this knowledge and fight for change.

Nancy Adamson (et al.), described consciousness-raising groups as a “powerful tool for grass-roots organizing,” where the success of a group is in its ability to focus on “the reality of each woman’s life” and so “to reach, and, ultimately, activate women in a way that more abstract calls to organize around an issue would not have done.” As young female undergraduates grappled with the inequality they felt within academia, they became conscious of this unequal and oppressive treatment and banded together to address how they should go about liberating themselves on campus. The awakening of a feminist consciousness allowed women at Guelph to remodel traditional gender roles and the early conservative ideas of female education. In her essay, Political Ideology and Patriarchal Education, Mary O’Brien suggests that “the goal of a feminist education is not equality in knowledge, power and wealth, but the abolition of gender as an oppressive cultural reality.” Women had to move themselves, and society as a whole, past the oppressive societal definition of women as being solely beholden to their feminine identities and biological abilities.

This sentiment is echoed in Unfolding Power: Documents in 20th Century Canadian Women’s History, when it is explained how crucial it is that women participate in issues pertaining

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94Williams, "Re-forming "women's" Truth,” 731.
95Williams, 731.
96Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 44-45.
97Mary O’Brien, “Political Ideology and Patriarchal Education,” in Feminism and Education: A Canadian Perspective, ed. Frieda Forman et al. (Toronto: Centre for Women’s Studies in Education, 1990), 23.
to the wider movement. It became a rite of passage and a way to embrace their newly discovered feminism, “For many women, to be young and female in the 1970s meant being a part of the very vocal Women’s Liberation Movement.”\textsuperscript{98} Being vocal was an integral part of consciousness-raising, without making their voices heard women would not be able to address the various issues relegating them to second-class citizenship, nor would students have a reason to rally together and bring about change.\textsuperscript{99} Betty Friedan, Kate Millet and Robin Morgan, as well as other notable feminists who openly championed women’s rights and took on leadership roles within the liberation movement became role models for younger women, and together they were a catalyst for the new feminist consciousness that was developing across Canada.\textsuperscript{100} Undergraduate women who joined the feminist movement at Guelph (in various capacities) emulated them, because they wanted equality within the institution of the university.

Cyril Levitt explains in his book, \textit{Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties}, that as women became more involved in the New Left while at university there was a rise in their feminist activism.\textsuperscript{101} This led to a revolutionary shift in the minds of women as they realized that they were capable of leadership positions and no longer wanted to be inferior to their male counterparts within the New Left.\textsuperscript{102} As young female undergraduates moved away from the New Left, they began to define their own feminist movement, ultimately redefining their place within post-secondary education as well. Newly radicalized young women, empowered by their choice to leave the New Left, went on to strengthen female spaces on university campuses. The

\textsuperscript{100}“Consciousness Raising: Backbone of Women’s Liberation Movement,” 19.
\textsuperscript{101}Cyril Levitt, \textit{Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties: A Study of Student Movements in Canada, the United States, and West Germany} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 108.
\textsuperscript{102}Levitt, 106.
heightened and more active presence of the collective female student voice went hand-in-hand with the educational reform of the 1960s, and the liberation of women in the 1970s.103

**Feminist Theories in Action, circa 1970**

In order to clearly structure this thesis a brief explanation of contemporary feminist theory is required. However, the focus of this thesis is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of feminist theory in the late 1960s, or to provide a criticism of 1970s feminism. Rather the central task is to try to understand the liberation movement as it was understood by baby boom generation students at the time. There were various definitions of feminism available in the 1970s. An all-encompassing example used by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada was:

A woman’s freedom to decide her own destiny; freedom from sex determined roles, freedom from society’s oppressive restrictions; freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely to action...Feminism demands the acceptance of woman’s right to individual conscience and judgment. It postulates that woman’s essential worth stems from her common humanity and does not depend on the other relationships of her life.104

For Canadian women feminism was more than a term, it was a recognizable symbol to society that they were fighting for their rights as equal citizens. Toni Williams argues that the insistence of dominant feminisms and gendered oppression, “[which] is unique and discrete, can be understood in terms of the transformation of small-group consciousness-raising from its original political function into a method for discovery of feminist truth.”105 Many women were emboldened “via the consciousness of their common oppression,” which was based on their identification as women, “and within small groups these women created a sense of individual and collective strength and agency to bring about change.”106 Explaining dominant forms of feminism, such as Marxist, liberal and radical feminism as they were understood in the 1970s, will help to clarify in what ways the actions of female students were feminist.

104Williams, "Re-forming "women's" Truth,” 729-730.
105Williams, 730.
106Williams, 730-731.
These forms of feminism were applicable to women across Canada throughout the 1970s and so understanding the various ways women differentiated themselves as feminist is important. Female undergraduates learned how to be either a Marxist, radical, or liberal feminist, or possibly a mixture of all three, from the generation of women before them and expanded their view of and belief in feminism as they partook in a post-secondary education. While analyzing articles from *The Ontarion*, the term feminism was rarely used to describe women on campus, more often than not the word liberation was used. Therefore, this thesis focuses on women’s liberation and the changes made by students who were eager to participate in the creation of a female liberated space at Guelph.

**Marxist Feminism: Equality for Women by the Reformation of Society**

In a popular undergraduate textbook from 1978, *Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations between Women and Men*, early baby boom generation feminist philosophers, Alison Jaggar and Paula Rothenberg provided young women with essential feminist theory. Jaggar (born 1942), is currently a Professor of Philosophy and Women and Gender Studies at the University of Colorado; she completed her doctorate in philosophy by 1970 at State University of New York. Rothenberg (born 1943) is a Senior Fellow at the Murphy Institute, CUNY, and was a graduate student from New York University who began teaching women’s studies in the early 1970s. Together they edited an anthology that incorporated scholarship by some of the most controversial young American and British feminist academics of the post-Second World War era. Their goal was to create a “feminist” alternative to traditional male dominated philosophical theory. The text was crucial to anyone studying sex and gender roles and provided a comparative analysis of contemporary forms of feminism enabling students to critically engage with feminist theory.

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109 Gould, 447.
Jaggar and Rothenberg argued Marxist feminists believed that the oppression of women is just a symptom of oppression within a society structured around class demarcation. Marxists would argue that women will only be liberated if society becomes classless. Marxists are against the idea that human nature is biologically determined, suggesting that women are not oppressed due to their biological makeup but because of their place in the social organization of society. Women’s oppression began with the advent of private property because it was at this point that men established a hierarchy of class based on private ownership, and the means of production was no longer in the hands of women. Marxists would argue that the cause of women’s oppression and the pervasive inequality throughout society, is due to corporate capitalism and imperialism. Taking into consideration the unrest between classes demarcated by economic status is an important step for Marxists when understanding how to address social change. To traditional Marxists the role of sexism within society is only a secondary outcome stemming from the initial form of oppression, that of class. Marxists believe that the only way to eradicate the oppression of women and to successfully liberate them would be to instigate a socialist revolution to place the means of production back in the hands of every person in society.

Evelyn Reed (1905-1979) was a socialist, author, Marxist feminist, and was very active in the women’s liberation movement, becoming one of the founding members of the Women’s National Abortion Action Coalition in 1971. In her article, *Women: Caste, Class or Oppressed Sex?* she argued that the basis of Marxist feminism, which enabled future Marxists to explain the oppression of women, can be identified in a few propositions. By using an analysis of prehistory, women were not oppressed or thought of as the “second” sex, they were actually equal to men.

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111 Jaggar, *Feminist Frameworks*, 70.
112 Jaggar, 70-71.
113 Jaggar, 70-71.
114 Jaggar, 71.
within tribal collectivism. Reed explained that it was with the end of the matriarchal clan that women lost their equal status. As clans divided amongst themselves, and the patriarchal family was formed, women fell to a second-class status and were relegated to serving their husbands within the home and taking care of the children. Stemming from the formation of the patriarchal family structure is the establishment of private property, and societies formed that were organized hierarchically based on class. Reed argued that, “It was the result of the revolutionary social changes which destroyed the equalitarian society of the matriarchal gens or clan and replaced it with a patriarchal class society, from its birth, was stamped with discriminations and inequalities of many kinds, including the inequality of the sexes.” So, as a traditional Marxist would explain, women did not become oppressed due to their biology, but rather the subordination of women came about because of a change in the structure of society.

**Liberal Feminism: Fighting a Pervasive Sexism**

In contrast, liberal feminists relied on the doctrine of choice that was central to the liberal democratic theory. Jaggar and Rothenberg argued that to liberals, Friedan for example, without equal access to education and chances to advance within the professional world, women will not be liberated. The focus of liberal feminism is to alter the lack of civil rights women have and increase their access to education, as these are at the root of the oppression of women. Unlike Marxist feminists, liberal feminists believe that discrimination based on sex is where the fight for liberation must begin, and only once sexist discrimination is eradicated from society will women be liberated. For liberal feminists, the liberation of women, and of all people, is linked to equal opportunity, because without it the ability of women is left unstimulated. Excluding women from obtaining an education and a career, equal to that of men, ensures that society continues to miss out on valuable resources. As long as women’s talents and potential remain untapped, or women

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117Reed, “Women, Caste, Class or Oppressed Sex?” 108.
118Reed, 108.
119Jaggar, Feminist Frameworks, xii.
120Jaggar, 70.
continue to be put in inferior roles, then society cannot benefit from the work and ideas of women.\textsuperscript{121} As will be described in the following chapters, women students understood how important it was that their education be equal to that of their male peers, and that the university provide a supportive atmosphere. Women knew that it was one thing to be at university, but entirely another to be on a liberated campus, where they would be taken seriously and given the support needed to succeed outside of university.

\textbf{Radical Feminism: Reclaiming Women’s Bodies and Obliterating Oppression}

To radical feminists the oppression of women can exist within any economic system, and that for women to be liberated the social institution of gender must be abolished.\textsuperscript{122} The distinguishing factor which defines radical feminism apart from other forms of feminism is that radical feminists believe the oppression of women is fundamental. This is based on a number of things, including that women are thought to be the first oppressed group, and that women’s oppression is pandemic and widespread. Radical feminists argue that women’s oppression is so deeply ingrained in society that it cannot be eradicated by mere social changes, such as the abolition of class, as Marxist feminists would suggest.\textsuperscript{123} The radical theory also suggests that because of sexism, of both the victims and the oppressors, the suffering due to the oppression of women can go unrecognized. Most importantly, it is the oppression of women, and the understanding of it, that clarifies many other forms of oppression.\textsuperscript{124}

Shulamith Firestone (1945-2012), an ardent radical feminist and founding member of the New York Radical Women, Redstockings, and New York Radical Feminists, authored \textit{The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution} in 1970.\textsuperscript{125} She believed that women’s oppression originates in biological child-rearing function, an idea not all radical feminists agreed with.\textsuperscript{126} Firestone explained that this was the root cause of women’s oppression because it made

\begin{itemize}
\item[]{121Jaggar, \textit{Feminist Frameworks}, 159.}
\item[]{122Jaggar, xii.}
\item[]{123Jaggar, 71.}
\item[]{124Jaggar, 72.}
\item[]{125Susan Faludi, "Death of a Revolutionary," \textit{The New Yorker} 89, no. 9 (2013): 52.}
\item[]{126Faludi, 52; Jaggar, \textit{Feminist Frameworks}, 72.}
\end{itemize}
women dependent on men for survival, and she called for a biological revolution to liberate women from this biological oppression.\textsuperscript{127} Charlotte Bunch (born 1944), moves the situation of women’s oppression beyond Firestone’s focus on biology, and instead echoes some of the other components of radical feminist theory. Bunch was an undergraduate at Duke University in the mid-1960s and a member of the Methodist Student Movement, until she took a step back due to the homophobic stance within the Christian Church, and later established herself as a lesbian activist (1970).\textsuperscript{128} Her first engagement with political activism was when the integrated Methodist student group held a pray-in at one of the local churches near Duke, which was segregated.\textsuperscript{129} She graduated in 1966 and felt that because a social revolution was taking place she did not want to spend her time in graduate school.\textsuperscript{130} In 1968 she joined a women’s group and realized that women’s liberation was going to be her priority.\textsuperscript{131} She became the first woman Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, 1969, which is where she embraced feminism as she was largely overlooked when speaking in male-dominated groups.\textsuperscript{132}

Since the early 1970s, Bunch has become a world-renowned leader in the fight for women’s rights, who learned at an early age that activism meant engaging.\textsuperscript{133} She was one of the radical lesbian women in the 1970s who helped to create the political agenda for lesbian women so that they would be taken seriously within women’s liberation.\textsuperscript{134} To Bunch, women’s rights and equal rights meant ensuring that eliminating sexism and homophobia were a part of the liberation platform. As a champion of human rights, Bunch has lived a life of activism and continues to spread awareness and to connect women across the globe.\textsuperscript{135} She believes that women’s subjugation was the first form of women’s oppression and so, it remains the deepest.\textsuperscript{136} This

\textsuperscript{127}Jaggar, 	extit{Feminist Frameworks}, 72.
\textsuperscript{129}Gold, 	extit{Passionate Politics}.
\textsuperscript{130}Gold.
\textsuperscript{131}Gold.
\textsuperscript{132}Gold.
\textsuperscript{133}Gold.
\textsuperscript{134}Gold.
\textsuperscript{135}Gold.
\textsuperscript{136}Jaggar, 	extit{Feminist Frameworks}, 72.
oppression was initially based on sexism, and then becomes linked to racism and the issues stemming from class society. Akin to liberal feminism, Bunch suggests that the means to liberation lies in the eradication of sexism.\textsuperscript{137} Jaggar and Rothenberg suggest that the majority of radical feminists identify the sexual division within society as the catalyst for women’s oppression, and that it goes beyond the presence of a hierarchical class structure. If women want to liberate themselves, they must act and change the cultural institutions and relationships that have kept them in the position of second-class.\textsuperscript{138}

**Methodology and Chapter Outline**

The primary research relied on for this thesis is an analysis of over 80 articles collected from the student newspaper, *The Ontarion*, from 1966 to 1976. This is a valuable source because the newspaper is where the ideas of contemporary women students can be read and understood. James Pitsula calls student newspapers “personal documents” that exemplify “the coming of age story of a generational cohort,” making them important historical databases.\textsuperscript{139} A few of the collected articles were shared with *The Ontarion* by the Canadian University Press (CUP). Linking student newspapers across Canada, the CUP, which was founded in 1938, enabled Canadian student journalists from all backgrounds to distribute their stories to local campus newspapers, and to connect with one another.\textsuperscript{140} The CUP supported the dissemination of information between young people at university, and in their “charter called on student newspapers to act as agents of change.”\textsuperscript{141} Michiel Horn argues that over the last 75 years there is no “controversial cultural subject that has not been written about in a student newspaper,” which makes *The Ontarion* a significant resource when analyzing the women’s movement.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{137}Jaggar, *Feminist Frameworks*, 72.
\textsuperscript{138}Jaggar, 160.
\textsuperscript{139}James Pitsula, and University of Regina, Canadian Plains Research Center, *New World Dawning: The Sixties at Regina Campus* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2008), 81.
\textsuperscript{141}Pitsula, *New World Dawning*, 81.
leaders, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) monitored student newspapers for information about campus events, student opinions, and the names of political activists, as the newspapers were windows to student activism.  

The Ontarion has not yet been digitized, therefore, it is a largely untapped resource providing a wealth of information for assessing the emergence of the women’s liberation movement. The Ontarion has helped to put a spotlight on feminism and the role of female undergraduates as they organized to make changes at Guelph. Due to its integral role in unearthing the history of the university, and its capacity to help create a visual of the lives of women on campus, it will be utilized throughout the following chapters. Evidence from The Ontarion will show how female students at Guelph took part in liberation on their own campus, what this action looked like, and how their work helped to make Guelph what it is today.

It should be noted that the word “feminism” was seldom used by students at Guelph when writing to The Ontarion in the 1970s. Therefore, articles were selected for content analysis if they used the term “women’s liberation,” if they pertained to the life of women students on campus, were submitted by the women’s liberation group and the Federation of Women Students, included information about women’s issues, or provided reviews of work by feminist authors. The term feminism presents itself in The Ontarion when articles are discussing or reviewing feminist literature, such as Evelyn Reed, Betty Friedan, or Germaine Greer, but it is not used overtly throughout the primary sources. It is, however, important to distinguish the forms of feminism (as was done above), that were recognisable to women students in the 1970s, because it will help to identify in what ways their activism and the changes they made on campus fit into the popular feminist theories from that time. Without focusing on a single definition of feminism throughout this thesis, but by using the feminist theories defined above as a guideline to feminism, the reader will be able to identify how active and fluid feminism was on the university of Guelph campus during the 1970s.

Chapter One will define consciousness-raising and the women’s liberation movement. It will focus on the way in which consciousness-raising helped Canadian women to become passionate about and supportive of liberation, and it will clarify what consciousness-raising and liberation meant to female undergraduates. Chapter Two will highlight the importance of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) and what it meant for Canadian women and explains how the commission was perceived and built upon at the University of Guelph. It will also speak to the changes that female undergraduates helped to bring about in the 1970s, such as the inclusion of women’s studies courses and the establishment of a day care centre. Chapter Three focuses on some of the more radical issues of the women’s liberation movement, such as abortion, birth control, gender and sexuality. It will discuss in what ways the female students at Guelph endeavored to tackle these issues while at university.
Chapter 1
Reclaiming the Voices of Women: Embracing Liberation

Although university women continued to be the support base of the women’s liberation groups, it was not unusual when their meetings included young working women, high school students, middle-aged housewives, single mothers, women from old left groups. And it was here, at such meetings that two things happened. One was the formation of consciousness-raising groups and the other the organizing of action projects around the related issues of sexuality.144

In the evocative, Long Way from Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada, Myrna Kostash reflected on the awakening of her own feminist consciousness, and that of her friends attending university on other Canadian campuses in the 1960s. Consciousness-raising and access to a post-secondary education saw the coming together of women as they redefined their lives; as an article from the Federation of Women Students conveyed, “Women’s liberation is...women working together to shape the world.”145 A new consciousness, or way of thinking radicalized many young women like Kostash, and motivated them to tackle causes of inequality, by encouraging other young women to join the women’s movement.146 Older feminists and professional scholars told young women that “consciousness-raising” would be the first step to becoming a feminist. Consciousness-raising was an integral component of Marxist feminist theory, but it was supported by radical and liberal feminists as well. This is because all forms of feminism required women to protest against inequality in every area of their lives including, in the home, the workplace, and more generally, within the dominant culture. The collective assessment of the inequality rampant in women’s lives was the beginning of consciousness-raising, and it had an immediate effect on many women.147

Just as women throughout the country were being drawn to the liberation movement, female students at the University of Guelph were also heading the call. This chapter will focus on consciousness-raising and the way in which it helped Canadian women to become passionate about

144Kostash, Long Way from Home, 167.
145"Women’s Liberation Is..." The Ontarion, Guelph, March 4, 1971, 12.
147Kostash, Long Way from Home, 170.
and supportive of liberation, and it will clarify what consciousness-raising and liberation meant to female undergraduates. By combining forces, the women who were active in the liberation movement at the University of Guelph used *The Ontarion* to passionately address the main political issues pertinent to liberation. The political issues they tackled included; ridding the campus of sexism, demanding birth control and information pertaining to contraceptives, and arguing for legalized abortion.\(^{148}\) It was through the newspaper that female undergraduates who were passionate about liberation clearly voiced their opinions on the issues that mattered most to them, while fostering a women’s culture and creating a liberated space for women. Female students wanted to see more women within the faculty so that they would be better supported throughout their university careers. They also requested more female-centered content in the existing curriculum and for a minor in Women’s Studies to be offered. Through the lens of *The Ontarion,* it is evident that women were taking control of and liberating their academic lives, and that they were successful at promoting the herstory of women at Guelph. It was important that they collectively fight gendered oppression, create a welcoming space on campus, and be active participants in the process of liberation.

**Liberation in a Canadian Context**

In 1988, Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail wrote *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada,* which was an important text for women students in Canada.\(^{149}\) The authors argued that what made the movement significant to Canadian women was that it was relevant to them and it was accessible. Importantly, women could choose how to participate due to its fluidity, as is explained by Nancy Adamson et al.:

> The women’s movement has a shifting, amoeba-like character; it is, and has always been, politically, ideologically, and strategically diverse. It is not, and has never been, represented by a single organizational entity; it has no head office, no single leaders, no

148\footnote{“Sexual Objectification,” *The Ontarion,* Guelph, March 4, 1971, 2; Arthur Hope, “Breakthrough in Birth Control,” *The Ontarion:* 37, Guelph, November 8, 1968, 4; These topics will be examined in Chapter Three.}

149\footnote{Adamson et al., *Feminist Organizing for Change,* 37.}
membership cards to sign. Indeed, much of the widespread support for women’s liberation has had no organizational identification at all.  

By 1967, second wave feminism evolved and became known as the women’s liberation movement. Its evolution into a movement was attributed to the fact that a new generation of women had grown up and connected with one another, while other women were joining as they left previously existing New Left groups. It was also because women realized that the social changes necessary to achieve liberation had not yet been implemented, just talking about their collective issues was not enough. The lack of a structured organization or defined hierarchy is what made the movement accessible to Canadian women. This fluidity enabled women to form their own groups and join the movement in any way that was possible for them, as a result various feminist organizations and women’s groups were being established across Canada as women banded together to battle inequality.

This fluidity led to the formation of a variety of groups as there were different factions under the feminist umbrella that women could align themselves with. Judy Rebick, a Canadian feminist, was a socialist activist in the 1970s and a member of the Revolutionary Marxist Group. In 2005 her book, Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution, was published, in which she passionately and concisely covers North American feminist movements from the 1960s to the 1990s. Rebick identifies the beginning of Anglo-Canadian women’s liberation as starting in 1967 with the establishment of the Toronto Women’s Liberation Movement. This led to the birth of the Feminine Action League at Simon Fraser University, and the creation of the Women’s Caucus in Vancouver.

Women’s liberation was taking hold across Canada as individual women, and groups of women, began determining what kind of feminism they would be defined by, which included but

150 Adamson et al., 7.
151 Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 42; Kostash, Long Way from Home, 169.
152 Kostash, 185.
153 Kostash, 169.
155 Rebick, 8; Rebick would later become President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in 1990 to 1993.
was not limited to; Marxist, liberal, and radical feminism.\textsuperscript{156} Some feminist factions were pre-existing and became larger as the movement grew, some were newly formed. The movement was also diversified because the definition of feminism was defined differently by each group. However, it was the shared ideas about feminism that kept the movement going, as Nancy Adamson (et al.) explain, “At the core of all feminisms are certain commonalities in political perspective: all believe in equal rights and opportunities for women; all recognize that women are oppressed and exploited by virtue of being women; and all feminists organize to make change.”\textsuperscript{157} However varied the movement, it became a rallying point for women throughout Canada, because it gave them a way to fight for liberation and participate in effecting necessary change.

**The Call to Liberation on a University Campus**

Young women at Guelph were drawn to liberation because it was a new and interesting movement. The feminist platform spoke to female undergraduates because it gave them something to rally around, it was personal but also relevant to all women. Many of these women wanted to share their excitement, and they did so by writing articles to *The Ontarion*, from 1966 to 1976, spreading awareness about liberation and calling other women on campus to this cause. A College of Arts student, Jane Owens, was quoted in the newspaper, “Equality for women is eminent because of the changes in our educational system.”\textsuperscript{158} Another comment mentioned, “It is commonplace in the Women’s Movement to tell men that if they really want to understand what we mean by our total oppression, they should “pass” for women for a day and see what happens.”\textsuperscript{159} Liberation meant that women would no longer be identified as solely “sex object and child producer, [nor would they continue] to relegate [their] mind[s] to second place.”\textsuperscript{160} The importance of taking part in liberating women on campus, and within society, was being openly and excitedly discussed by female students. Those who wrote to *The Ontarion* were hoping to engage the student body with this momentous fight against inequality. At this time female students

\textsuperscript{156}Adamson et al., *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 9-11.

\textsuperscript{157}Adamson et al., *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 9.

\textsuperscript{158}“Campus Comment: Concept of Women’s Liberation,” *The Ontarion*: 38, no. 8, Guelph, February 27, 1969.

\textsuperscript{159}Wesstein, “I Can’t Hear You,” 20.

\textsuperscript{160}“Women and Insanity,” *The Ontarion*, Guelph, Thursday January 18, 1973, 12.
were new to the liberation movement, but they quickly realized that it was a brave new world where sisterly support, compassion and female camaraderie thrived.

Consciousness-raising was the result of women making connections with one another and it was the key to driving the process of liberation forward.\textsuperscript{161} Canadian women began to connect with one another on a casual and personal basis in their own neighbourhoods before they started organizing with other groups of women to form community-based, and eventually, cross-country women’s liberation groups. As women joined together of their own accord, they were also being informed about liberation by what Joan Sangster explains as the proliferation of new feminist scholarship that emerged in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{162} Women were subscribing to, as well as writing for and establishing their own magazines, newspapers, and journal articles. Sangster argues that these publications effectively crossed disciplinary boundaries, because they were “interrogating existing paradigms, and arguing for attention to women, gender relations, and the dynamics of power, exploitation, and subordination.”\textsuperscript{163} Having access to mixed forms of media, and sharing these publications with other women, enabled community and nationwide women’s groups to engage more effectively in consciousness-raising. Women across Canada came to the realization that they had been oppressed in myriad ways for too long and decided that they no longer wanted to be confined to a quiet domestic life, or to feel the guilt associated with attempting to balance home and work life.

Consciousness-raising was an integral part of the movement, and it involved being aware of the changes that needed to be made, while also taking part in creating change. In 1973, thirty-four-year-old Adrienne Clarkson, a producer and broadcaster for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as well as a journalist and role-model to Canadian women, was invited to speak at Guelph. Clarkson said that “changes will come by each individual living his or her life with a conscious awareness of the deeply ingrained, outdated attitudes and trying to change them through their daily living.”\textsuperscript{164} She described women as living in “an age of guilt,” that they had a “lack of

\textsuperscript{161} Kostash, \textit{Long Way from Home}, 170.
\textsuperscript{162} Sangster, “Creating Popular Histories,” 381.
\textsuperscript{163} Sangster, 381.
confidence,” and that they needed to move beyond identifying as a husband’s wife and create an independent self-identity. While more radical feminists might disagree, Clarkson affirmed the liberal feminist doctrine of choice: It was important for women to feel independent and proud of themselves, whether they chose to remain in the home and look after children, to focus on a career, or to forgo having children. Clarkson did not agree with the continuation of women living as second-class citizens, and was asking women at Guelph, and across Canada, to stand together and fight collectively for their liberation.

Throughout the 1970s the editors of The Ontarion published articles written by a number of female undergraduates who submitted their work, including Barbara Sawyers, who was very active in the newspaper, as were the female students in the Federation of Women Students. Quite often the author of the article is not noted, but throughout the collected articles it is obvious that women students were taking part in liberation and voicing their opinions. Consciousness-raising is addressed by women in quite a few articles throughout the 1970s, and the campus newspaper provided the perfect place for them to meet and air their grievances. This was because the female space had adapted to the co-educational environment, enabling female undergraduates to tackle feminist issues on the Guelph campus. Articles published in The Ontarion were available to the campus populace and so feminism and ideas pertaining to liberation were spread across campus.

The female students involved with the Federation of Women used The Ontarion to tell readers about what went on during meetings, to raise questions about what was lacking from their daily lives and what the existing barriers were to their liberation. For example, a 1973 article called, “Consciousness Raising: Backbone of Women’s Liberation Movement,” said “Through talking we begin to understand ourselves and other women by looking at situations like this in our own lives.” Personal problems became no longer personal, but collective, and women began to understand that their collective problems were actually political problems. The same article said,

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165 Adrienne Clarkson Speaks on Women,” 5.
“consciousness-raising groups are the backbone of the Women’s Liberation movement.”\textsuperscript{168} Consciousness-raising is what rallied women together, they began by meeting in small groups and progressively these groups got larger. This was no small endeavor as “All over the country, women are meeting regularly to share experiences, each always thought were ‘my own problems.’”\textsuperscript{169} It was easy to see how through consciousness-raising girls at Guelph could come together and share their thoughts about what it meant to be a woman.

Women also realized that understanding their problems was the first step towards dealing with them collectively, which led female students and faculty to act, such as forming a day care centre. Women students hoped that they could use the collective force of women on campus to make changes, and acquiring a day care center on campus was one of these important changes.\textsuperscript{170} Women students had a few resources off campus that they were welcome to, such as the Women’s Centre on Priory Street and the Crisis Centre, which was the second shelter to be established in Ontario, in 1973.\textsuperscript{171} The article mentioned above also informed women students that they could go to the Women’s Centre to further discuss ideas pertaining to women’s issues in Guelph. The importance of togetherness was expressed in the article as it ended with, “Sisterhood is a warm feeling!”\textsuperscript{172} This sentiment is one that women students shared, and it gave the liberation movement its fuel, on and off campus.

As Judy Stanleigh explains in an article for “Rise Up! A Digital Archive for Feminist Activism,” there was a small group of feminists that banded together in the 1970s, known only as ‘the group.’\textsuperscript{173} The group included women from the university as well as women from within the Guelph community. Their purpose was to help with facilitating community-based support for

\textsuperscript{168}“Consciousness Raising,” 19.
\textsuperscript{169}“Consciousness Raising,” 19.
\textsuperscript{170}Palmer, Canada’s 1960s, 303; the establishment of the day care will be addressed in Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{171}“Consciousness Raising,” 19; Judy Stanleigh, “A Snapshot of Some Feminist Initiatives in Guelph, Ontario Early 1970s,” Rise Up: Digital Archive of Feminist Activism, July 2018, http://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/organizations/a-snapshot-of-some-feminist-initiatives-in-guelph-ontario-early-1970s/; tried to find an exact date when the Women’s Centre was established but cannot find one, they were publishing Virago in the early 1970s.
\textsuperscript{172}“Consciousness Raising,” 19.
\textsuperscript{173}Stanleigh, “A Snapshot of Some Feminist Initiatives in Guelph.”
women such as providing access to the Crisis Center, which first opened in June 1973 and was called the Fourteen Day House, because women were provided with shelter and support for fourteen days. In 1974 Stanleigh became the first paid staff member when Big Sisters of Guelph was added to the Big Brothers and YM-YWCA programming, a program that had been requested by women in Guelph since 1972. The Guelph Women’s Centre also published a feminist newspaper, *Virago*, which provided the community with the voice of feminist women. The fact that women were working together and sharing the responsibility of enacting change within the Guelph community is what made women a force to be reckoned with. Not only were young women on campus working to redefine themselves, they were successfully encouraging changes in society as well.

**Awakening the Feminist Consciousness and Defeating Biology is Destiny**

Once the feminist consciousness was awakened, there could be no going back. Marlene Dixon argues that “for the liberation of women to become a reality it is necessary to destroy the ideology of male supremacy which asserts the biological and social inferiority of women in order to justify massive institutionalized oppression.” A brief restatement of the way Marxist, radical and liberal feminist theories define gender oppression is necessary to clearly link these feminist theories to the liberation of the female body. Marxists felt that without the abolition of the class-based society, and the reformation of capitalism and the patriarchy, then women would continue to be oppressed. For a Marxist feminist, women were not oppressed due to their biology, but because they were second-class citizens and did not control the means of production. Liberal feminists would argue that without dismantling the sexism rampant in society, then women could not hope to become liberated. Akin to this, radical feminists believed that oppression could not end unless the social institution of gender was completely eradicated from society.

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174 Stanleigh, “A Snapshot of Some Feminist Initiatives in Guelph.”
175 Stanleigh.
176 Stanleigh.
178 Jaggar, *Feminist Frameworks*, 70-71
179 Jaggar, 70.
180 Jaggar, xii.
all three feminist theories spoke to the necessity of inducing a societal revolution, which would see the lives of women re-defined as significant and worthy, and remove the expectation held of women to be domestic servants and bearers of children.

Women would no longer be beholden to the belief that their biology determined their destiny. Thus far, women students had been battling a society that had relegated them to an inferior status, and they knew they needed to work on redefining themselves. Female students identified that it was due to the anti-feminist conservative creed, which held fast to the belief that women should remain in the domestic sphere, that they continued to be defined by such a pervasive societal expectation. Marxist feminists suggested that relegating women to an inferior status was implemented by the patriarchy, and it was overtly oppressive because it disempowered all women. This is why self-awareness and defining oneself were important because, “We, as women, are oppressed because our self-definition, as well as society’s definition of us, is directed by men.” The consciousness-raising experienced by North American women enabled them to see that they were not in a position of second-class citizenship due to their choosing so, but because they were put there by the predominant patriarchal social system.

Through consciousness-raising, women were recognizing that their oppression was due to the lack of control they had over their own lives. The anti-feminist view was that the oppressive treatment of women and their relegation to the domestic sphere, or to unequal places at university or at work, was due to their ability to conceive. It was their womanly bodies which made them weaker and less able to meet the challenges of life outside of wifely and motherly duties. In retaliation to this outdated and nonsensical belief, women used the liberation movement and collective action to assert themselves. They did so in outright defiance of the previously held notion that they were “not expected to have a mind and not listened to when we have something to say.” Women had been socialized to remain inferior and to partake in their second-class status without issue for too long, but now women were rebelling.

181 Jaggar, Feminist Frameworks, 207.
182 Jaggar, 210-211.
184 “Women Chained,” 19.
According to a young Guelph feminist and author of the article, “Women Chained,” the first step to awakening one’s feminist consciousness was recognizing that they were oppressed. Without recognizing that they were fundamentally oppressed, and why it was women were oppressed, there would be no way to rectify the situation and encourage mass action to liberate all women. While at university, young women had to grapple with these feminist theories and determine in what ways they would go about tackling their fundamental oppression, and if they would define themselves as a particular kind of feminist. As female students continued to connect with one another they began to relate to one another as human beings, moving beyond the societally prescribed identity as feminine beings. Women had to work with and support one another as they remodelled themselves as burgeoning feminists. The road to liberation was not a smooth one and working as a collective force ensured that they had a sisterhood to rely on while they made liberation possible on campus.

Along this road they would have to tackle a variety of obstacles implemented by society which were meant to keep women in a state of oppression. Female undergraduates quickly became aware of this fact and recognized that they:

…must learn to identify and understand the roles we play and begin to reject the stereotypes, roles and values that are thrust upon us. We who are women must learn that our position of relative powerlessness is not an individual failure. We must learn how and why our socialization is determined by the same society that fosters poverty and racism. It is never easy—this breaking out of old roles—but it is necessary if women’s Liberation, human liberation, is to become a reality.

Articles published in *The Ontarion* by liberationists told non-liberationists that to be liberated they needed to re-evaluate the way in which society thought about them. Taking part in liberation was a choice all women had to make, and it involved embracing the liberal form of feminism, regardless of whether a woman’s definition of her feminist-self went beyond liberal ideals. The newly liberated sisterhood would help other students to reach out and embrace each other, so that they could move beyond the societal stereotype of woman that had been projected onto them. “We must

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185 “Women Chained,” 19.
186 “Women Chained,” 19.
learn to relate to our sisters as human beings.”¹⁸⁸ Female students had to use their position within university to help society do this. By proving that they were worthy of an education and that they could use it to better not only themselves, but society as a whole, they would eliminate the notion that women were powerless.

**Challenging the Status Quo and Forming a Feminist Sisterhood**

Feminist theory raised questions as well as consciousness and some women knew they were not conservative and wondered if they were radical or liberal? Liberal feminists claimed that the feminist lifestyle was the embodiment of choice, that choice and control went hand in hand. Feminism promised women that changes would enable women to engage in meaningful action, to take control and change the conditions of their lives. A political science professor at the University of Waterloo, Fern Miller, told students, “Changing women’s attitudes won’t change a thing. Women need a political strategy as well.”¹⁸⁹ Miller was “not putting down consciousness-raising. It is a first step. But the fact is, women don’t have the organizational backup they need to really change their situation.”¹⁹⁰ Miller felt the same as other feminists, such as Evelyn Reed, that women would need a form of revolution, because it was not only women and their attitudes that needed changing, but the attitudes of society at large.

By the mid 1970s, it was clear that women faced more challenges than just organizing among themselves. In 1976, the author of “Consciousness Raising Not Enough Says Feminist,” told *The Ontarion* readers, “There are enormous barriers to women becoming professionals in any field, or to women assuming leadership roles in business or government or assuming any other traditionally men’s roles.”¹⁹¹ Students were informed that female professors faced obstacles too, and that gender equity would be demonstrated by seeing more women faculty on campus. Gender equity meant ensuring that women faculty were paid the same wage as their male colleagues, that there was not a “glass ceiling” that kept women from rising in the hierarchy of the workplace, and

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¹⁸⁸ “Women Chained,” 19.
¹⁹⁰ Waterloo CUP, 15.
¹⁹¹ Waterloo CUP, 15.
that women would be considered for roles in departments that were more often dominated by men. The formation of a feminist sisterhood would help female students throughout their university career by ensuring there was access to counselling if needed, and that supportive role models were available. Going beyond consciousness-raising was the next obvious step, “a liberation strategy Fern Miller recommends is that women learn to act together. We have to stop playing the male, competitive game and start promoting and supporting each other.”

Women at Guelph formed groups to do just this and realized the importance of being a collective team in the face of their oppression. Miller, like Reed, argued that it was the “structures of society” that needed to be changed, but women needed to start by creating women-centered support networks, so they could better understand the needs of women, and then tackle resolving them.

The Rising of Women out of the “New Left”: In Retaliation Against Oppression

To make change is to challenge women’s powerlessness and social inertia; to make change is to create a new set of possibilities.

Christabelle Sethna and Steve Hewitt define the New Left of the late 1960s as having a more eclectic agenda than the Old Left, which had focused on class struggle. The New Left recognized the importance of students as being a force of change, “It spawned a culture of protest that rejected authority in favour of participatory democracy, non-conformity, and direct action.”

Female students who were a part of New Left groups came to the realization that their feminist ideals were being exploited by the male members, and they were experiencing oppression within their radical organizations. Due to this, women began actively breaking away from these groups and formed women only caucuses, taking their politics into an autonomous female movement. Judy Rebick describes that, “When they got tired of walking three steps behind their men, they too revolted. They called their movement, ‘women’s liberation.’” By doing this they defined their

194 Waterloo CUP, 15.
195 Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 7.
197 Sethna, 466.
198 Kostash, Long Way from Home, 169.
199 Rebick, Ten Thousand Roses, 8.
own movement, one that would be free from the male chauvinism of the radical groups they had belonged to.\textsuperscript{200}

In groups such as the Toronto based Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) and the Canadian Union of Students, women had been relegated to performing traditional gender roles, like the day-to-day organizing, grass-roots work, or the cooking and cleaning for the group.\textsuperscript{201} Male members of these groups took on the leadership positions and assigned the more inferior tasks to the women, and some even felt that the sexual revolution would greatly benefit them in more personal ways. The sexual revolution of the 1960s had not actually supported women’s quest for liberation, and “It was the women’s liberation movement that exposed the fallacy of the sexual liberation movement: that real sexual liberation could take place without upsetting the social superiority of men.”\textsuperscript{202} Women understood that the sexual revolution could be radical for women in terms of birth control and abortion if dealt with properly. However, the male side of the sexual revolution was not interested in dealing with children, or the sexual health and well-being of women. It was women’s experiences more than the radical politics which caused women to move into activist roles and create their own movement.\textsuperscript{203} In many ways it was a reaction against women’s experiences within New Left radical movements, as the misogyny was not just anti-feminist but often violent. During the 1970s many women were radicalized due to their experiences, even outside of pre-existing groups.

As women shared their home and workplace experiences with one another, and as women moved into their own groups due to the unequal treatment they experienced within radical movements, feminism grew. Feminism diversified as some advocates of liberation used the movement to focus on more radical feminist issues such as, arranging rape crisis centers and organizing talks and services to spread awareness across a larger pool of women, and men.\textsuperscript{204} Grass-roots organizing was integral to the women’s movement and to the women of Canada,

\textsuperscript{200} Kostash, \textit{Long Way from Home}, 169.
\textsuperscript{202}Kostash, \textit{Long Way from Home},185.
\textsuperscript{203}Palmer, \textit{Canada’s 1960s}, 302-303.
\textsuperscript{204}Adamson et al., \textit{Feminist Organizing for Change}, 5, 56.
because it “was activist, optimistic, and externally focused.”\textsuperscript{205} It was also important to young women at colleges and universities because it provided them with options when choosing their feminist beliefs. For many women, the rise of a more accessible and relatable feminism enabled them to give a voice to what they had been experiencing, and to connect with one another due to these issues. Nancy Adamson et al. stated that Canadian women, including students were encouraged by the movement because, “Feminists talked about, wrote about, made speeches about, demonstrated about, [and] had meetings about everything.”\textsuperscript{206} As women across Canada realized that they shared so many of the same experiences and felt downtrodden due to daily inequality, they were moved to activism. Regardless of the factional divisions created by disagreements on some of the issues and the conflicting ideas concerning the societal and patriarchal structures, which were hampering women’s liberation, women continued to join the movement.

\section*{The Personal is Political! Women’s Liberation at the University of Guelph}

A Women’s Liberation group was established on campus by 1971 and the group met on Monday’s in Bursar’s Hall.\textsuperscript{207} The group posted advertisements in \textit{The Ontarion} so that other students knew they were welcome to join. The group leaders promised that women’s liberation would be addressed on campus by writing articles for \textit{The Ontarion} and creating cartoons to explain what women’s liberation entailed. To the liberation group, and the wider women’s movement, “Women’s liberation is…learning what you want to learn.”\textsuperscript{208} They requested that the university administration begin to include courses in the curriculum that covered content relevant to women. Even into the 1970s the curriculum had remained androcentric, which left many female students feeling as if women-centered material was being purposely excluded from courses.\textsuperscript{209} Joan Sangster argues that, “‘Second wave’ feminists of the 1970s were especially aware of the need to expand boundaries, themes, and aims of historical knowledge, creating a new ‘herstory’ in place of existing ‘malestream’ knowledge.”\textsuperscript{210} It was pertinent to female students of the 1970s that

\textsuperscript{205} Adamson et al., \textit{Feminist Organizing for Change}, 42.
\textsuperscript{206} Adamson et al., 42.
\textsuperscript{207} “Women’s Liberation Meeting,” \textit{The Ontarion}, Guelph, February 18, 1971, 3.
\textsuperscript{208} “Women’s Liberation Is…” \textit{The Ontarion}, Guelph, March 4, 1971, 12.
\textsuperscript{209} Grayson, “The Experiences and Expectations,” 268.
\textsuperscript{210} Sangster, “Creating Popular Histories,” 382.
they help the university become a place in which the knowledge of women be included so that the place of women within education was not omitted.

Women students understood that if women were going to be fully liberated they not only needed to have access to equal education, they also had to control their own bodies. The idea that women were unable to access birth control or services pertaining to family planning was an example of the history of the oppression of women. A 1971 article called, “Women’s Liberation Is…” said, “Women’s oppression is…worrying about getting pregnant.” Female students at Guelph began to demand that the administration provide birth control and health services on campus that were easily accessible and treated women fairly. If women were unable to access birth control and claim ownership over their own sexual lives, then they were not able to focus their energy on school. Access to these important services and having the freedom to choose whether or not to use them was essential, “Women’s liberation is…being able to take care of this beforehand.” Women wanted access to an education that went beyond home economics because they wanted to make a difference in their lives and the lives of other women. Having an equal education to men would give women the tools they need to express themselves more fully, “Women’s oppression is…women having to stay quiet while men run the world.” Women students knew that they needed to be included in all areas of campus life, and that they should work with other women to make sure campus became and remained a liberated space.

**Informing the Campus about Liberation**

As women began to more fully assert themselves as freethinking and capable individuals, and the women’s movement raged on, men started to complain that the movement was seemingly chauvinistic. Many young women learned a powerful lesson while at university, how to think like a feminist and how to engage in liberation on campus. It was these female students that created a liberation movement on the Guelph campus as they learned how to be feminists. In “The Women’s Section” of a January 1974 issue of *The Ontarion* two articles spoke to women students about the

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changes that were occurring due to the liberation movement.\textsuperscript{214} One of the articles asked women, “Did you ever wish you were a boy? Have you ever felt that your chances for a career were less than those of men?”\textsuperscript{215} This was an important question because female students were still pondering what post-graduation opportunities would be available to them. They were frustrated because while in university they were met with adversity due to being women and many of the obstacles hindering their success after graduation were still in place. Societal conceptions about women and their capabilities in the workforce were being contested, but not quickly enough for some women. The information provided to them in this section was meant to alleviate some of the difficulty they faced and to provide women students with support.\textsuperscript{216}

The idea behind “The Women’s Section” was to inform women students and “to create a cooperative effort by having close communication with women on campus.”\textsuperscript{217} It was pedagogical, teaching female students how to be feminist and providing a space where feminists could share and espouse ideas. It was important to women students that they be connected with one another on campus. This would ensure that as a group they would know what was being done to change “their roles - socially, politically and culturally.”\textsuperscript{218} Female students wanted information about what was changing on campus, and what services they had access to, to ensure their success while at university. The women in charge of this section for The Ontarion “decided that all work on this feature should be done by women.”\textsuperscript{219} It was one of the ways in which women students were able to voice their opinions to the campus populace using the main form of media available to them. They hoped that this would be a “successful, lively, enlightening section for women- so, women, speak out.”\textsuperscript{220} By way of writing for and interacting with one another via the campus newspaper women students formed support systems. They were also actively taking part in the process of liberation throughout the 1970s by taking the time to add their voices to the movement on campus.

\textsuperscript{214}“A Message for Women” for “The Women’s Section,” The Ontarion, Guelph, Tuesday January 22, 1974, 13.
\textsuperscript{215}“A Message for Women,” 13.
\textsuperscript{216}“A Message for Women,” 13.
\textsuperscript{217}“A Message for Women,” 13.
\textsuperscript{218}“A Message for Women,” 13.
\textsuperscript{219}“A Message for Women,” 13.
\textsuperscript{220}“A Message for Women,” 13.
An article in *The Ontarion* shared by the Canadian University Press, by a feminist nun, Catherine Wallace, from Halifax, urged women to keep fighting for liberation and to not be deterred by the changes that had yet to be made.\(^{221}\) Sister Catherine Wallace became the fourth President of Mount Saint Vincent College in 1965, and she developed a team-taught women’s studies course, “Perspectives on Women,” one of the first in Canada.\(^{222}\) Wallace said, “Women have always been forced to accept the idea that they are second-class citizens…and they must struggle to have their right[s] respected.”\(^{223}\) Engaging in the struggle to have their rights respected is what female students were endeavoring to do by using the platform of *The Ontarion* to address issues pertinent to the movement. Wallace wondered “if the suffragettes expected that by 1973, in a House of Parliament of 264 members, we would have 132 women instead of 5.”\(^{224}\) She was concerned with the fact that society was not changing at the same rate as the women who were liberating themselves needed it to. Wallace thought it was farcical that Nellie McClung had been honored by the government with a stamp, instead of with an increased number of women entering parliament.\(^{225}\)

The article included a quote from Aristotle, a biological reductionist observation, “a female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities. We should regard the female as affected with a natural defectiveness.”\(^{226}\) Wallace explained this was a lasting problem for all women, because men had situated women in an oppressive state for decades. She went on to say “that this seems to be the haunting fear of mankind that the advancement of women will sometime, someway, someplace, interfere with some man’s comfort. The whole race is suffering from masculinity and men and women are alike to blame for tolerating it.”\(^{227}\) Women had for so long been relegated to second-class citizenship that by the 1970s they were instilled with enough frustration that they

\(^{224}\)Wallace, 13.
\(^{225}\)Wallace, 13.
\(^{226}\)Wallace, 13.
\(^{227}\)Wallace, 13.
began to tackle this head-on. Women students joined the movement because they wanted to know that by obtaining a degree they were adding to the liberation of all women, and that they could actively take part in effecting the myriad of changes that were needed to release women from their oppressive state.

“The Women’s Section” was important for women students because it provided them with information from outside of their own campus community. Being privy to what was happening for women across Canada ensured that Guelph students were updated on the wider movement. It also encouraged young women to maintain connections with other groups of women outside of their immediate friend or class groups. Women students knew they were stronger and more effective at making changes when they worked together. Collective action and group work were significant to the Canadian women’s movement, because “women in Canada are particularly vulnerable to the effects of discrimination and poverty.” Wallace explained, “Discrimination makes a woman seem powerless in a society which respects power.” Women needed to combine their strengths and re-evaluate their place within society as a connected force, so that Canadian women would no longer be powerless.

With success came some backlash and attacks from chauvinistic male students and professors. For example, in 1975, two philosophy professors were invited to debate the question: “Is the Women’s Movement Male Chauvinistic?” Professor of Philosophy John McMurty from Guelph, and University of Toronto Philosophy Professor Lorel Clark engaged in the debate. Clark, an avid feminist, who later published work on Rape, Women’s Rights and Feminism, was also passionate about the women’s movement. Whereas McMurty was inclined to negative commentary in relation to the movement and its place on campus. McMurty argued “The women’s movement has adopted the same destructive values as the male dominated society which oppresses both women and men.” To which Clark replied, “the accusation itself was based on a misunderstanding of what the movement stood for, and on men’s fear of those women who are

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229 Wallace, 13.
231 O’Malley, 5.
beginning to become angry about their social inferiority, and who are beginning to assert themselves as equals.”

Not only were women on campus misunderstood, the liberation movement they were taking part in was also largely misunderstood. Some men on campus, professors and students alike, took the movement to be counterproductive, because they were threatened by women’s liberation.

McMurty went on to describe what it was that came across as male chauvinism within the women’s liberation movement. Explaining “the chauvinistic values of ‘hardness of heart,’ and of ‘being tough,’” were terms being used by women. When he felt that, “what would be more appropriate would be a feminist alternative to hardness of heart.” Which could be the sentiment of “opening compassion,” because this was “a more suitable human and a truly feminist value.” Clark argued that the terms McMurty listed “were widely discussed and dealt with in movement literature not because women accepted those values, but because those male values were usually given as a defense for inequality between men and women.” A glaring issue that women were constantly dealing with was that men were unaware of how “the differences between the sexes gets translated into inequality, and is used to justify unequal treatment.” Inequality went mostly unnoticed by males on campus, as the environment of post-secondary education is one they have inhabited for a long time and did not have to fight for a place at. Women, on the other hand, had to earn the right to enter post-secondary education and fight to move beyond a home economics degree; at the same time as still having to fight with the language of sexism every day.

On the topic of toughness Clark went on to say, “The issue of strength and physical competence was something which women had to pay attention to, because the socialization process results in women having very little confidence in their own physical ability. ‘Women’ need to be in physical control and confident in their own ability to handle themselves.” Unfortunately

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233 O’Malley, 5.
234 O’Malley, 5.
235 O’Malley, 5.
236 O’Malley, 5.
237 O’Malley, 5.
238 O’Malley, 5.
women were at risk of sexual harassment and assault due to their sex, so, Clark suggested, “it is necessary for women to learn ‘when to tell someone to fuck off.’”239 She said she was “all for compassion,” but that women needed to develop “a certain kind of toughness, the ability to draw the lines on reasonable grounds.”240 Most importantly women in the liberation movement needed to work on discarding outdated and sexist notions imparted on them by society and previous generations.

Clark suggested that female students would do well to unlearn the societally prescribed lesson that women should not say upsetting things to men, which was important to the generation of young women storming university campuses as they needed to know that they could speak their mind. The women’s movement was not about making women become more like men; rather it was about encouraging them to leave behind the private sphere and investigate the possibilities available to them in the public sphere. Women students were working on disassociating themselves from the confines of domesticity and challenging traditional gender roles. Without leaving behind the societal expectations dictated to them then women would not be able to break free of the oppressive inequality they found themselves in. Clark went on to say, “The whole nature of society has to be changed to accommodate true sexual inequality. Women realize […] that if they do not try to change the nature of society and just try to ‘fit in’ then they will have the same problems as men.”241 Clark knew that women needed to use the public area on campus, like The Ontarion, to address inequality and to help eradicate it, so that women students could focus on achieving success within higher education.

At the end of the debate it was decided by the mostly female audience, that McMurty misunderstood the purpose and platform of the movement, and that Clark needed to reign in her anger towards men.242 The debate was facilitated by the Federation of Women Students and was deemed a success as it highlighted for students what the movement was about for women. The debate made it obvious to students on campus that inequality was also a part of the language being

240 O’Malley, 5.
241 O’Malley, 5.
242 O’Malley, 5.
used, and that everyone could work on supporting women’s liberation by being more aware of their words and their actions. This would also ensure that the campus populace was helping, not hindering, the liberation of women at Guelph. Open debates between professors and students were positive and effective ways for sharing ideas and addressing the many issues which were pertinent to women’s liberation on campus. They generated discussion and enabled the student populace to engage with one another in relation to liberation, making an inclusive atmosphere possible.

Conclusion

Ultimately, women students struggled with the university itself being a barrier to their liberation, and many women felt that the university needed to be at the forefront of change and of women’s liberation. Female undergraduates worked to liberate themselves and their campus, and the changes that were made by these women can be found throughout the pages of The Ontarion, and on the campus itself. Liberation is a theme that purposely and continually appears in The Ontarion, in the late 1960s the “Woman’s Page” is created to cover all things pertinent to liberation. In 1974 this page transitions into the “Women’s Section,” and by 1975 women had a “Women’s Hour” in which they covered noon-hour lectures dedicated to women’s issues. The contributors of these sections used this platform to make the student populace aware that the fight for women’s liberation was happening, and that all women should take part. The movement became vastly important to many women because liberation had moved into the realm of political lobbying, ensuring that equal pay, birth control and safe abortions, squashing sexism, and the right to feel safe were all on the agenda.

Women established The Federation of Women Students and a Women’s Liberation group in the early 1970s to address these issues. Both groups wanted to ensure that the campus was aware of the needs of women, and that women had access to necessary services. The Liberation group felt, “A major concern was the education of women as to what their positions and rights are in society. Too often women are burdened because of misinformation or lack of information.”

Women wanted information on birth control and abortion, they requested women’s studies, and more women faculty; they also fought for equal pay for equal work, as it was still not a reality at the university. The President’s Task Force on the Status of Women at Guelph was established after the Report on the Status of Women was released in 1970, and they began addressing these issues with the help of women students.

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Chapter 2
Redefining Our Status: Guelph Women and the Royal Commission

In Canada [1975], the decade began with the two monumental events for women: the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the abortion caravan. In its three years of operation, the Royal Commission had gathered research, held public meetings throughout the country and received briefs from 480 individuals and organizations.251

In the mid 1960s, Judy Rebick was a socialist activist and an undergraduate at McGill University, in Quebec, where she wrote for the McGill Daily sharing her support of the radicalism within the New Left.252 In the 1970s Rebick was a member of the Revolutionary Marxist Group, and later became the President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.253 In her book Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution (2005), she claimed the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) and the Abortion Caravan were the most monumental achievements for women’s rights in Canada.254 As we shall see, they were monumental on Canadian campuses too. Female students at the University of Guelph were openly voicing their opinions and assessing their lives and overall status on campus.255 The focus of this chapter is to highlight the importance of the RCSW and what it meant for Canadian women, and to explain how it was perceived and built upon at the University of Guelph. It will also speak to the changes that female undergraduates helped to bring about in the 1970s, such as the inclusion of women’s studies courses and the establishment of a day care centre.

251 Rebick, Ten Thousand Roses, 19.
253 Fraser, “Judy Rebick’s Life Story.”
254 Rebick, Ten Thousand Roses, 23, 36.
Women Organizing for Change

By 1967 women in Canada had been openly expressing their opinions to one another and to the government for over a year calling for a commission, leading to a Canadian-wide assessment of women’s lives and their overall status in Canada. In response the government established the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) on February 3, 1967, which would be responsible for determining what it was Canadian women needed so that they would be liberated from their second-class citizenship. The advent of this commission and the formation of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) led to a massive explosion of women across Canada organizing to help other women. For example, in British Columbia 76 local feminist activist groups were formed, and within the first 6 years of the 1970s, 46 women’s shelters had been created. Rape crisis centers that did not exist in the early 1960s were being opened, as well as Planned Parenthood centers. The final establishment of the commission was a major catalyst for this intense growth of feminist activism because women knew that they would have to go beyond just explaining the problems they faced. It would be the women’s committees, established across the country, that would empower women to go on to work “at the national, provincial and local levels to achieve political change.” Without the collective action of women, many of whom took part in the liberation movement on university campuses, the status of Canadian women would not be altered.

Significantly, the RCSW was the first Canadian commission to be chaired by a woman, Florence Bird; however, it “supported a liberal-feminist or piecemeal approach to equality, not a structural change to all institutions in society, as the means to generate substantive equality between men and women.” Unfortunately, this approach would hinder the overall success of the RCSW and the application of the recommendations suggested by the commissioners. Importantly though, “the decision by women’s groups to take their demands to the federal government set a

257 Speers, 253.
258 Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 5.
259 Rebick, Ten Thousand Roses, 23.
260 Rebick, 23.
process in motion that was to fundamentally shape the Canadian women’s movement as it emerged in the 1970s and the 1980s.\textsuperscript{262} The RCSW and the successive report marked the beginning of a long and unstable relationship between the women of Canada and the government. This was because so many women had vociferously declared their grievances about their second-class status and called to the government to be an advocate of women by helping to make the nation one that viewed its female citizens as equals.

**The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada**

During the information-gathering phase, the established committee traveled across Canada for ten months holding hearings in fourteen different cities.\textsuperscript{263} The commissioners were to focus on the issues outlined by the government, which included: The political rights of women, married women in the work-place, training programs and education, federal labor laws and regulations, women’s employment in federal agencies, federal taxation, marriage and divorce, the position of women under the criminal law, immigration and citizenship laws, and other matters in relation to the status of women in Canada.\textsuperscript{264} The commissioners listened to Canadian women speak about their experiences relating to inequality, hearing 468 briefs from individuals and organizations across Canada, they also received over a thousand letters from ordinary women about their everyday lives.\textsuperscript{265} Out of this cross-country trip came the report which was published by the commission on December 7, 1970.\textsuperscript{266} The report became one of the first official documents that, line by line, stated the ways that women were treated unequally in Canada, ultimately it legitimized the feminist cause as a pressing national issue.\textsuperscript{267}

\textsuperscript{265}Speers, 253.
\textsuperscript{266}Speers, 253.
\textsuperscript{267}Vickers et al., *Politics as If Women Mattered*, 26.
The report included 167 recommendations that were very specific, but evocative, revolving around the accessibility of birth control and issues with equal pay.\textsuperscript{268} It recommended abortion on demand for any woman pregnant for under 12 weeks, rather than a woman having to get permission from a therapeutic abortion committee. During the 1970s there were jobs available to women that were traditionally for men, but women were generally given the lower paid and lower status positions within the workforce, and so the status of women within the workplace required reform. The Canadian Pension Plan did not apply to most women, and there was a gender gap in income in many businesses. The report galvanized women around the injustices they faced in Canadian society and brought attention to the many areas in need of reform to ensure the equality of women was being realized.\textsuperscript{269} Women increasingly had less access to social services based on their amount of work and pay, and working women required access to day care for their children. Unlike men in Canada, women’s rights and reproductive organs were specified by the government, and there were issues with how rape was dealt with within communities, by the police, and by the government. There was also an immense lack of access for many Canadian women to contraceptives, abortion clinics, and family planning centers.\textsuperscript{270} Due to the commission and the subsequent report, the NAC was founded in 1972 to make sure the recommendations were implemented.\textsuperscript{271} In 1973 the federal government established the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, which prompted a few of the provincial governments to do the same.\textsuperscript{272} However, many of the recommendations were never properly dealt with by the end of the 1970s, and today women are still struggling against gender pay gaps, institutionalized sexism, and issues with accessible and affordable day care.

Women’s groups watched the Royal Commission hearings closely and reported them in campus newspapers. James Pitsula describes the RCSW as giving the women of the movement its agenda, and on the University of Regina campus, the student newspaper, \textit{Carillon}, actively updated the campus populace on the RCSW.\textsuperscript{273} The women who wrote to \textit{The Ontarion} were doing the

\textsuperscript{268}Vickers et al., \textit{Politics as If Women Mattered}, 26.
\textsuperscript{269}Speers, “The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada,” 255.
\textsuperscript{270}Palmer, \textit{Canada’s 1960s}, 303.
\textsuperscript{271}Vickers et al., \textit{Politics as If Women Mattered}, 26-27.
\textsuperscript{272}Vickers et al., 62.
\textsuperscript{273}Pitsula, \textit{New World Dawning}, 158-159.
same as they wanted to keep the campus informed of the feminist activism occurring throughout the nation due to the RCSW. Sister Catherine Wallace, who was introduced in chapter one, had her own opinions on the RCSW and shared them with the student newspaper in Halifax. Wallace disagreed that the government had gone about assessing women’s issues in relation to the Royal Commission in the best way possible, and expressed that the advisory council, which had been set up to deal with these important recommendations, did not properly reflect the needs of all Canadian women.\textsuperscript{274} It was a council of “26 women and 2 men, who speak through one man, John Munro, Minister of Labour, in the name of 10, 772, 924 women in Canada.”\textsuperscript{275} It seemed ill-equipped to the task of organizing and dealing with the all of the problems faced by Canadian women. Wallace felt that the council poorly represented the presence of women in governing bodies throughout Canada. The fact that women were largely under or completely unrepresented throughout the Canadian government was frustrating to Wallace. She strongly believed that there would be no “major changes in the status of women as long as women are merely asking for decision[s] [to be made] or accepting them instead of making them.”\textsuperscript{276} Women students understood this and knew that it would take more than rising together and voicing their opinions about change. They needed to use their education and become a part of the groups that were making the changes, whether in government, or in businesses across Canada.

\textbf{What the RCSW Meant to Female Students: Determining their Status on Campus}

From the outset in 1967 the RCSW was met with some condescension on and off campus, and even in \textit{The Ontarion} an advertisement was published which vocalized the sentiment that time spent on improving the lives of women was wasted.\textsuperscript{277} The advertisement called, “The Liberal Government’s Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada is a bloody waste of the taxpayer’s money.”\textsuperscript{278} This angered female students who were advocates of liberation and they

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{274}Wallace, “Women must fight for themselves,” 13.
\textsuperscript{275}Wallace, 13.
\textsuperscript{276}Wallace, 13.
\textsuperscript{278}“The Liberal Government’s Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada,” 4.
\end{footnotesize}
demanded that the university administration assess the status of women on campus. In November 1972 the President of the university, Dr. W.C. Winegard, acquiesced and assembled a Task Force to assess the status of women on campus, and to show support for the Royal Commission.\textsuperscript{279} The Task Force took three years to finalize their report on the status of women and it released their findings to the students in the fall semester of 1975.\textsuperscript{280} The report had adhered to terms of reference that dealt with “areas of discrimination based on sex and recommends suitable guidelines for prevention and elimination depending on its existence.”\textsuperscript{281} Any policies at the university that concerned students, faculty, and staff were assessed and recommendations were included in the report. The Task Force was able to cover a lot of ground in their assessment of the lives of women at university, because they were not only focused on women students, but all women on campus.

Much of the report was focused on how women students were faring at university, and what it was they needed to succeed. It was determined that “Female applicants have better academic qualifications (grade 13) than male applicants, but, once enrolled, they drop out at a higher rate than male students in the BA and BSc programs.”\textsuperscript{282} Women students wanted the university to discover why this was the case, and to provide more support to female applicants throughout their university career. Even if women students had been successful in obtaining an undergraduate degree there were less women applying to graduate work “at the master[‘]s level, and still fewer apply for the doctoral degree.”\textsuperscript{283} Women students needed encouragement and female role models during their time as undergraduates, to make applying to higher levels of study more appealing.

When comparing their roles and salaries, the report highlighted many discrepancies between the men and women faculty and staff. One of the main areas where the difference was glaringly obvious was their salaries. Female staff were at a disadvantage, “The average starting

\textsuperscript{279} Sawyers, “Forster Interviewed on the Status of Women,” 10; this article is being cited before the 1975 article which follows because it provides information about the university President that actually assembled the Task Force to begin with.
\textsuperscript{281} The Federation of Women Students, 6.
\textsuperscript{282} The Federation of Women Students, 6.
\textsuperscript{283} The Federation of Women Students, 6.
salaries for female lecturers were much lower than the average starting salaries for male lecturers.” This was the case even if the female lecturer had the same degree and experience as a male lecturer. It was determined that beyond salary, women seemed to be found in “traditionally female sex-typed,” and lower-paying roles. What the Task Force was noticing, was that instead of the university supporting and elevating women in its role as an employer, it was mirroring “the practices of society at large.” This was unacceptable at a university where women had been working hard to be a part of campus, and where they wanted to see women succeed beyond their university education.

To students it seemed that the Task Force did an adequate job of assessing the lives of women on campus, and they provided their recommendations to the President of the University, now President D. Forster. The Federation of Women Students commented on the report and made sure that the students knew they had access to it. The report concluded that while the university “gives male and female applicants equal opportunity to enroll in its undergraduate and graduate programs…” it is missing the support systems needed to ensure women complete their programs and go on to higher levels of study. The Task Force recommended “that the entire subject of the Status of Women at the University of Guelph be monitored and kept under continual review.” It was important to women students that they were actively included in the changing roles of women on campus, and that they had the information and support necessary to succeed in their programs. They also needed to see that the university was an institution in which their rights as women were being protected and advanced. After the report was released in 1975, it was still being discussed in 1976, as not all of the recommendations had been dealt with.

Women students were aware that even in 1976 a sexual bias still existed, and that they had to continue working to eradicate this from their own campus. In an article entitled, “U of G Status of Women Report: Sex Bias Still Exists,” Barbara Sawyers said the report had been openly

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285 The Federation of Women Students, 6.
286 The Federation of Women Students, 6.
287 The Federation of Women Students, 6.
288 The Federation of Women Students, 6.
discussed during a “Women’s Hour” lecture. The associate Professor of Psychology and a Chairperson for the report, Norma Bowen, led the lecture. The Task Force had focused on statistics “from studies of the university between 1966 and 1975.” The report had been published last June and now students were meeting to hear about the findings and to discuss what the report meant for the university. As mentioned above, the report “examined the status of women and questioned whether the university’s policies and practices were discriminatory as an employer and an educator.” What students, faculty, and staff expected from the university was equal opportunity for male and female applicants, to the programs and careers on campus. Women students also wanted to know that they were part of an institution that was not going to foster or tolerate sexism. They also expected that the university would be at the forefront of change in society.

Bowen discussed with the assembled audience that more women were needed within faculty and staff, as female undergraduates needed the encouragement of women faculty during their university careers. There was a lack of support throughout the university for women students, and this needed to change. Women students stressed that some students were still focused on conforming to outdated ideals pertaining to their feminine role and finding a husband, rather than pursuing a career. This was due to the fact that women were not generally supported by society if they chose to embrace life outside of traditional female roles. The hope of women students in the 1970s was that the changing atmosphere at university would embolden women and help them to revalue their positions in society. The process of socialization began at birth and it was hard for some women to leave behind traditional roles, especially if the educational institutions they entered did not meet the needs of women. Women students knew that “appropriate counseling for girls and women of all ages must be supplied if attitudes are to change.” Without a re-evaluation of the societal expectations placed on women from a young age, those that entered university would still struggle with determining what it was their independent and liberated role would be.

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290 Sawyers, 15.  
291 Sawyers, 15.  
292 Sawyers, 15.  
293 Sawyers, 15.
If women students were not being encouraged while at university then it would be harder for them to feel that pursuing a post-secondary education was worth it. It was up to the institution to create and maintain support systems for women students and not be an obstacle in the way of their success. One of the ways the university could ensure this would become a normal practice, was to provide women with positions throughout campus. Women had been in teaching positions in primary and elementary schools for many years, but the world of higher education was still “largely the domain of men.” This could only be changed if women were supported and enthusiastic about entering graduate studies. Sawyers agreed with Bowen that it was up to the women, they “must be re educated to appreciate, not depreciate, their abilities and to push harder in their demands.” The report had shown that women were underrepresented and underpaid across campus, but it was obvious that women “were conditioned to play a minimal role and often saw their job as lacking in importance.” Women expected and deserved more from the university, especially when they had worked so hard to obtain a degree within a male-dominated environment. Although it took three years for the Task Force to finalize their report and it would take more time to deal with each recommendation, it was significant to women on campus that their status had been addressed. Women now knew what areas needed to be changed within their own university so that women students, faculty and staff would be studying and working on a liberated campus.

Even though Forster had ensured the status of women on campus continued to be reviewed, his attitude towards including women’s studies was quite close-minded. Bowen explained that Forster, “feels that women’s studies create an ‘educational ghetto.’ He sees them as rap sessions rather than academic studies.” Forster was concerned that students would get off track during lecture and turn to debates focused solely on women’s issues. Whereas women students argued that “If women are deprived of the opportunity of learning their history, literature, biology, psychology and how their position has evolved in society, progress in the attitudes towards

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295 Sawyers, 15.
296 Sawyers, 15.
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298 Sawyers, 15.
299 Sawyers, 15.
[women] will be difficult.” Including women’s studies in existing courses would be a start and would encourage women students to continue with their education. The fight for women’s studies to be included within existing courses as well as for it to become a course, or to be offered as a minor, would continue until 1979. Even after a women’s studies program was created at Guelph, it continued to be a contested area of study, and one that faculty and staff worked hard to maintain.

Where are the Women? The Birth of Women’s Studies at the University of Guelph

One recommendation that was adopted was the idea that the oppression of women could be studied as a university course. The theory of gender oppression could be put into the curriculum as the need for women’s studies had been addressed by women students quite a few years prior to the release of the report by the President’s Task Force in 1975. In a “Letter to the Editor” in September 1973, undergraduate Mary Ellen Marcus explained her frustration at the absence of women’s courses. Marcus did not understand why it was that the university offered nothing pertaining to women’s issues, especially after the Royal Commission was released. She explained that it was because of the commission “that women are demanding greater opportunity to develop themselves as individuals.” Women wanted their collective history to be included in the material studied, as well as be able to study it. Due to the RCSW, “All institutions are urged to seek and prepare informed individuals to identify some of the obstacles – political, social, cultural, legal, economical and psychological – that prevent women from taking their rightful place in society.” The university had followed this recommendation by assembling a Task Force in 1972, but a year later women’s studies were still not an option for all students. Including women’s studies would provide an incentive for women students, it would also show that women’s history and women’s lives were of significance.

301 University of Guelph, Women’s Studies Department, Finding Feminism and Women’s Studies @ Guelph: A 25-year Celebration, (Guelph, ON: University of Guelph, 2004), 4.
303 Marcus, 18.
304 Marcus, 18.
Marcus explained that there was a women’s studies course offered but it was only accessible to women students in advanced psychology. Marcus was adamant “that the university has a responsibility to the women in the university and Guelph communities to explore the status of women today.” The university could then show their support of women by adding women’s studies to a wider range of courses. Women students were proud to be a part of the university, but information about women was lacking throughout the courses they were taking. Asking for the addition of women’s studies was a way in which women students were showing that their personal issues were also political. Having access to and being included in university life was a personal choice, but it also increased the chances that these women would use their education to better their lives. Obtaining an education and asking for women’s voices to be included in the information was a political expression.

Women students in the 1970s knew that more was still needed and that by asserting themselves on campus they would enhance their lives and encourage other women to liberate themselves. This is why when Norma Bowen, chairperson of the Task Force, spoke she stressed that if women wanted to see changes made on campus then, “[W]omen must take action in demanding that these anomalies be corrected.” Bowen went on to say that women “must enter professional programs or be prepared to continue their studies past the undergraduate level.” This way the university would be made aware of the needs of women and implement the necessary changes to accommodate women students. Support systems created by the institution would also need to be put in place to further women’s careers after graduation. Ultimately Bowen was trying to stress to the women students that it was up to them to move across the boundaries that society had placed on them. If women fought for a place at university, then they could continue to fight for changes to be made beyond university. The university needed to be part of the changing status quo, “If there is strong support for improving the status of women the cycle of sexism may be

306 Marcus, 18.
307 Marcus, 18.
309 Sawyers, 15.
310 Sawyers, 15.
broken.” This was the hope that women students had after the report on their status at the university was released. They knew what steps needed to be taken to ensure that the university became a place of equal opportunity, and what was needed to further their liberation.

A Zine was created by various contributors via the Women’s Studies Department and published in 2004, which gave a brief history of the birth of women’s studies at Guelph. It was in 1979 that the women’s studies program came to fruition after years of women at Guelph asking for an academic curriculum that included women’s history and information pertaining to women. As Mary Lalonde suggested it was the feminists who had taken part in the women’s liberation movement and who had pushed “forward their agenda to transform education and institutes of higher learning to allow for a more balanced representation of men and women.” Lalonde expressed that due to the Royal Commission it was made clear that women were feeling discriminated against and that this was the case even within academic institutions and the curriculum being taught. It was because of the many requests made by students at Guelph that courses pertaining to women materialized. The first courses offered in the early 1970s included the Psychology of Women taught by professor Joanna Boehnert, and the History of Women, led by History professors Mary Rogers and Terry Crowley. The commitment of professors at Guelph to add women’s content into the already established curriculum, and to create women-centered courses was a significant turning point in the history of women’s studies at Guelph.

After the President’s Task Force had released their findings by 1975 it was obvious that women’s studies would be an important addition to the existing curriculum. The idea of a women-centered program had been addressed in 1970 but was never initiated. After a few more years of women students, and some faculty, expressing their concern about the lack of content in relation to women within courses, the Task Force’s recommendations opened up the discussion once more about a women’s studies program. It was in 1975 that a group of faculty members came together and wrote a proposal to have a women’s studies program established at Guelph.

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312 University of Guelph, Women’s Studies Department, Finding Feminism, 4.
313 University of Guelph, 6.
314 University of Guelph, 6.
315 University of Guelph, 7.
professors Joanna Boehnert and Norma Bowen, along with English professor Lois Gottlieb, Donna Lero from Family Studies and professor of Sociology Nora Cebotarev knew that for women to gain equality on campus there would need to be something more substantial than a few courses.

However, it would not be until November 30, 1978 that the women’s studies program was officially approved, and it would be offered as a general major or an honours minor. This was a triumph for women at Guelph and one that was hard-earned. Attitudinal changes and an overhaul of the traditional male-centric university was what women students had wanted throughout the 1970s. Without such a change being made the female students would continue to feel as if they were not worthy of, or able to partake in an equal and inclusive learning environment. The addition of women-centered courses was a step in the right direction, which resulted in the establishment of women’s studies as a program. This was evidence to women students that not only was their fight for liberation on their own campus successful, but they were winning.

We Get What We Fight For! Women Students Improve the University

In March of 1976, two months after the “Women’s Hour” lecture was held, Barbara Sawyers interviewed President of the University, Donald Forster (1934-1983), a Harvard graduate and specialist in economics. The purpose of the interview was to ask President Forster about the Task Force’s recommendations that had not yet been dealt with. It had been six months since the findings of the report were released to the President and to the wider campus. By this point the women students were beginning to wonder what effect it had made or would make on their lives. Pam Archibald also added her thoughts to some points during the interview. Archibald was instrumental in getting the day care opened on campus, which will be discussed later in the chapter, and she wanted to see more women involved in bringing about changes at the university. In the Task Force’s report on the status of women at the University of Guelph, some of the recommendations, such as items 6 to 11 stated:

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316 University of Guelph, Women’s Studies Department, *Finding Feminism*, 8.
317 Sawyers, “Forster Interviewed on the Status of Women,” 10; Pam Archibald and her work on campus will be discussed later in the chapter, she just happened to be a part of this interview with Forster.
318 Sawyers, 10; the day care center will be discussed later in this chapter.
6. Positive steps be taken to increase the proportion of females in administrative positions within the University; 7. The University develop an education and promotional program that is aimed at senior high school students and high school guidance counselors, and which is designed to achieve the following objectives: (i) to increase the number of applicants by women, regardless of program or discipline…, (ii) to educate women, and to encourage them to enter traditionally male dominated programs (since no objective rationale exists for the tradition); to educate and encourage men to enter traditionally female dominated programs, such as the B.A. Sc. (which is no longer female oriented in its content); 8. The University develop an educational counseling service for in-course students, […] which would be designed to alleviate unusually high attrition rate for women students in some programs, and the high attrition rate of both men and women in others; 11. 319

As was explained in the paragraphs above the statement of these recommendations, women students knew what was needed so that changes would be made. However, they lacked the power to implement the changes, they could only ask for and fight for them to be made. This is why Sawyers felt it was necessary to meet with President Forster and see what had been done by this time in relation to the recommendations. Sawyers bluntly asked, “Have any of the recommendations been followed up?” 320 Forster was adamant that all had been dealt with but decided it would be best to go through the list of the recommendations with Sawyers, so he could explain how they had been addressed.

Forster expressed that pensions had already been added for women, and the discrepancies between salaries had “been brought to the attention of the chairmen of the departments and the deans.” 321 Forster told Sawyers that he had been informed that, “the vice president academic does not believe that there have been any discrepancies in the past five years.” 322 Throughout the interview Forster maintained that things would not change overnight and that changes would be implemented as they were reviewed. He said, “You can’t expect the university to immediately drop everything it’s doing and say we’ll review everything.” 323 Sawyers understood that all of these changes could not be made without going through the proper channels within the hierarchy.

320 Sawyers, 11.
321 Sawyers, 11.
322 Sawyers, 11.
323 Sawyers, 11.
of the institution. It seemed to women students, and to many faculty and staff members, that it was just taking longer than it should.

Forster was adamant that sex discrimination was non-existent on campus, especially within the hiring process and the maintenance of staff. Sawyers argued that the recommendations had also addressed that there was an issue “with the way we value certain jobs. The typically female jobs, secretaries or kitchen workers, are at the low level of the pay scale.”324 To Sawyers, it was the category of jobs being offered to women, and the lack of incentive to stay within these low paying jobs that thwarted an increased female presence on campus. Forster blamed the continued gap between male and female jobs, and the pay they received, “…on years and years of history. It is very hard to correct over a few years.”325 This is why it would take time to properly implement all of the recommendations and see a change on campus. He went on to suggest that maybe women at Guelph were in low paying jobs because they had not expressed interest in permanent employment. To Sawyers it seemed that Forster wholly misunderstood why it was these women were not permanent employees.

Forster did highlight some obvious changes that had been made within the agricultural and veterinary schools. Female applicants to both programs had increased, “OAC is close to a third female. Vet school is forty five percent.”326 Progress was definitely being made at Guelph and the presence of women had been increasing across campus. Forster agreed with the report, and women on campus, that it was important for women to be encouraged to participate and to go forward with more professional course work. It was necessary for the university to include support systems for women applicants and encourage them to enter male-dominated areas like engineering. The engineering school had also seen a rise in female applicants, but it was happening more slowly than in the other schools.

325 Sawyers, 11.
326 Sawyers, 11.
Pam Archibald jumps in to the discussion here, asking Forster “Are more females being involved in high school recruiting?” To which Forster replied a resounding yes, adding that there were awards for students too. Archibald and Sawyers articulated that it was important for girls to have female role models. Which was an important issue that needed to be addressed at Guelph, and Forster agreed that the lack of female counselors and role models was a problem. Archibald and Sawyers expressed that if there were many qualified women graduating then the job market had no choice but to change. The university needed to be at the forefront of change in relation to women and jobs, because there was work on campus that could be made available to women once they graduated.

For the benefit of the female readers, Sawyers went on to question Forster about the possibility of increasing the incentives for women so that they would be more likely to enter graduate programs. She conveyed her worry about women not having much of the positive social reinforcement that male students did. Forster concluded that it was the problem of that individual woman, and not up to him, if they wanted to take part in graduate studies or not. Sawyers moved on to examine his stance on women’s studies, as mentioned previously, he was concerned that women’s studies would get students off topic. He fully supported “having first class courses and first-class research on women’s issues done within the context of a specific field.” It was just important that courses stay on track and not get derailed by focusing solely on arguments surrounding women’s issues.

Sawyers wondered if Forster had actually attended any of the women’s courses. He had not, and he stated, “I am just expressing my bias and prejudice. Interdisciplinary courses that turn into simple rap sessions with limited intellectual input I don’t like.” He wanted to be sure that by including women’s studies only legitimate content would be covered. Sawyers inquired about the possibility of creating a minor in women’s studies, as this had not yet been implemented, which he seemed inclined to support. She explained that the courses that have been offered so far are always full, and that he should not be concerned about the quality of the intellectual content.

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328 Sawyers, 12.
329 Sawyers, 12.
Ultimately Forster was concerned with the university being deemed free of sexual discrimination. He explained that its report was “by far the most favorable report of any university in Canada, which shows that the university recognized the problem and took steps to eliminate overt discrimination.”330 This favorable report speaks to the success of the female students because they helped the environment at Guelph to become one that reflected equality, it also shows that the administration was careful to ensure that any lingering issues with the status of women on campus were actively being dealt with. What was important to him was that through his administration the university was reviewing the recommendations and working to maintain the momentum of change.331

Women on campus had been worried about the legitimacy of the content and in what ways all course content affected women well before Forster voiced his opinion on women’s studies. Earlier in March 1976, prior to this interview, a ‘Women’s Hour” lecture was held to discuss women’s studies and course texts.332 Dr. Margaret Anderson, chairperson of the Department of Languages, had shared with students the prevalence of sexist language within university and high school text books. If women’s studies were to be included, it would also be significant for all students to be reading material that was devoid of oppressive and sexist language. Certain texts continued to hamper women’s liberation and negatively reinforced traditional stereotypes. Anderson suggested, “Pressure from students to ban sexist text books could lead to professors dropping these books from their courses.”333 If women were to be liberated, then at the very least, the literature provided in places of higher education should speak to the liberated woman, and to the liberation of all people.

The idea that the university needed to move away from showcasing social attitudes, comes up again here, the university, and educational institutions needed to be at the forefront of change.334 The Federation of Women Students let students know that they could take their complaints about

331 Sawyers, 12.
333 The Federation of Women Students, 2.
334 The Federation of Women Students, 2.
any course content or text to them, and that without the support of students it would be more difficult to ensure change in course material. This revaluing of women and their roles within society could be achieved if society helped with facilitating this change. Women’s studies and examining the texts available to all students, would ensure that a culture of women was fostered within academia. Anderson expected of university texts that, “[T]he women presented in these books must not reinforce the picture of women as servile automatons, but must portray women as active, whole human beings.” The inclusion of texts that cultivated and reinforced the liberation of women would embolden women students and help society to revalue women’s lives. A culture of women needed to be created so that the liberation of women would be realized, and this re-fabrication of society needed to be undertaken by women.

**Student as Mother: The Establishment of a Day Care Centre at Guelph**

Many issues threatened to split the women’s movement in the 1970s. Few were as controversial for liberal, Marxist and radical feminists as child birth and child care. It was generally agreed that women’s child-care responsibilities were at the center of their gender and class oppression. More practically, and in regard to female undergraduates, a day care center would help to alleviate some of the stress for any student that was also a parent. As Sandra L. Bem and Daryl J. Bem explain, “This is why virtually every woman’s group in the country, no matter how conservative or how radical, is in agreement on this one issue.” It would provide care for the children of the academic community, which would greatly benefit the women studying and working on campus. Accessible and affordable child-care was a service that all women wanted to see established. As it would enable mothers to continue working if they wished and provided them with a sense of security when deciding to leave their child in the care of someone else.

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336 The Federation of Women Students, 2.
338 Bem, 21.
In the winter semester of 1973 the idea of a day care centre was proposed but nothing came of it.\(^{339}\) This was because there was a lack of political support and so the city council rejected the plan. But, by November 1973 plans for the centre were being revisited, “The UGCSA is presently drawing up a proposal for a new building to be used for day care, with a target date for opening of Spring 1974.”\(^{340}\) The student government was concerned with how to raise the money to create and provide such a service, but obtaining the land for the day care was thought not to be a problem because the university could provide it.\(^{341}\) It was determined that when the plans had been approved and the funds had been obtained, “a parent’s co-operative would be set up to own and operate the building.”\(^{342}\) The hope was that the centre would “operate on a break-even basis…” with money also coming “from some charges to the parents…”\(^{343}\) The rest of the funding and costs of the centre would be covered by provincial grants allotted to the operation of the centre.

An article in an October 1975 issue of *The Ontarion*, which had been written for “The Women’s Section,” discussed the finalization and opening of the day care centre. This occurred a year after the proposed opening date of Spring 1974, as was previously stated. Pam Archibald, the Coordinator of the Campus Childcare Cooperative, triumphantly “announced that the centre is now operating.”\(^{344}\) Archibald and her team had managed to obtain the financial assistance needed to initiate the project from the Ontario government, which in turn enabled them to finalize the project. The building was located at 346 Gordon Street, and the program could facilitate 35 children on a weekly basis. The university leased the building to the co-operative for the centre for one dollar a year and the Ontarion legislature promised to cover one-hundred percent of the capital costs. It was due to these generous offers that the centre was finally able to be completed and opened.\(^{345}\) It was mentioned in the article that, “Concern for a university community day care centre began in 1974, when a group of 10 concerned individuals pushed for a daily program…”\(^{346}\) This statement


\(^{340}\) “Off Again On Again Day Care Centre,” 3.

\(^{341}\) “Off Again On Again Day Care Centre,” 3.

\(^{342}\) “Off Again On Again Day Care Centre,” 3.

\(^{343}\) “Off Again On Again Day Care Centre,” 3.

\(^{344}\) “Day Care Opened,” *The Ontarion*: 58, no.8, Guelph, October 21, 1975, 5.

\(^{345}\) “Day Care Opened,” 5.

\(^{346}\) “Day Care Opened,” 5.
would be corrected by Archibald in a letter she wrote to the editorial team of *The Ontarion* in October 1975.347

In Archibald’s “Letter to the Editor,” in the final October issue, she addressed some changes that needed to be made to the article about the opening of the centre. She reminded the campus populace that the center was only for faculty and their families, as well as students, not the general public. Archibald also explained: “Concerned people at the university have been attempting since 1968 to establish day care facilities.”348 She openly expressed her gratitude because, “Without all the groundwork done by these people, the last group of us working since 1974, would never have been successful.”349 Archibald ended her letter by mentioning the hard work and dedication that Peter Clark had invested in the plan. She said, “The late Peter Clark bent over backwards to facilitate us by negotiating for the house, meeting with the government on our behalf and so on.”350 Peter Clark was a man among the university staff that had helped women fight for and obtain one of the many important services they needed.

Barbara Sawyers was one of the women who actively took part in making the Guelph campus a liberated space. Sawyers used her time at university to write about women and their fight for liberation, and she had not been afraid to make even the President of the university a bit uncomfortable while openly assessing the status of women with him. Sawyers finished the interview pertaining to the recommendations of the Task Force by asking about the day care, as “The present facility has a waiting list.”351 She felt that the day care centre needed to be reworked so that there was more space for the children of women on campus. This in itself would be an incentive for women to apply to programs and to jobs at the university. Pam Archibald expressed that beyond Forster providing some support and addressing the space restraint, the work she did to ensure the opening of the centre could be incorporated. Archibald said, “I spent a year and a half working very hard without pay, to set up this centre. Not fighting the university, but getting

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348 Archibald, 2.
349 Archibald, 2.
350 Archibald, 2.
government grants, hiring, equipping, and so on.” This was work she did so that the a much-needed service would be provided for and be accessible to students and staff at the university. The work to create a day care started before 1973, and before Archibald took part, but she was instrumental in ensuring it was finally established. Providing access to day care enabled any female student that was also a mother to take part in a university education. The opening of the day care centre was another monumental step towards achieving a fully liberated environment on campus.

Conclusion

Liberal feminists believe that women’s oppression stems from unequal educational opportunities, and the pervasive sexist discrimination rampant in society. This relates to what female undergraduates were attempting to do at Guelph by asking to be provided with an equal education, and for this education to include women-centered content within the curriculum. Liberal feminists argue that women and men are taught that they are different, it is not inherited, and without providing equal opportunities to each person, women will continue to reside in a state of oppression. This is why for liberal feminists, as well as feminists from other creeds, if women did not first identify that they were oppressed and then uncover the roots of their oppression, then they could not hope to liberate themselves. As women awoke to their second-class position within society, they began to redefine themselves and fought to rework the environment around them. Female undergraduates knew, before entering university, that they were unequal to men due to their biology. It was upon enrolling as students they were able to identify that the institution itself was also at fault for the continued oppression of women. Feminists, armed with the knowledge of who their oppressors were, and impassioned by their resolve to instigate change, began to do so within all areas of their daily lives. They reaffirmed for all women that they no longer needed to be oppressed, resulting in the “permanent increase in women’s capacity to choose.” If women wanted to be the change makers, then they had to choose to fight, that way

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353 Jaggar, Feminist Frameworks, 70.
354 Jaggar, 70.
355 Jaggar, 69.
356 Jaggar, 69.
they could move on to liberating themselves within their daily lives, and within societal institutions, such as universities.

Drawing on national leaders for inspiration, students at the University of Guelph shared their experiences by writing to The Ontarion. They expressed their grievances more openly than ever before and made their voices heard. The Canadian government had taken notice, due to the mass amounts of information being presented to them explaining the plight of Canadian women. Women no longer wanted to be second-class citizens in their own country, they wanted to see changes in all facets of their daily lives. The RCSW was charged with collecting information from women across the country and assessing the needs of women, but by 1973 the government was still dealing with all of the recommendations regarding the status of women. Canadian women had made advances in achieving equality, but a societal re-evaluation of the rights of women, and their worthiness as equal citizens was still underway. Women students knew that they could be a part of making the changes that were needed for all Canadian women by participating in the movement while at university and continuing to fight for change upon entering the workforce.

In Canada during the 1970s feminism focused on women working with other women, women writing about women and informing women, and providing Canadian women with a female perspective. Women across the country focused on fully breaking the barriers between the public and private spheres. They wanted equality to be realized for all women in each aspect of their daily lives. Women wanted to see more women representatives in government, educational institutions, and the workplace. The demands of the political movement included that women would be paid equal wages for any work they did that was equal to that of a man’s. Women wanted to be granted reproductive rights and have access to legal abortion, and they fiercely campaigned to end violence and discrimination against women and children.\(^{357}\) Importantly, women also wanted to see solutions to issues with hiring processes and housing for women. No issue went untouched by women during the 1970s as they strove for the liberation of all women across Canada, and female students were actively taking part in this process of liberation. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women, the subsequent report, and the establishment of a Task Force

\(^{357}\) Palmer, Canada’s 1960s, 302-303.
to assess the status of women at Guelph are evidence that women were being heard and that they were not only the instigators of change, but they were also the change makers.
Chapter 3
Reaffirming Our Right to Choose: ‘Our Bodies Ourselves’

Woman is the object; man is the subject. Women are fucked; men do the fucking. Men see sex as conquest; women as surrender. Such a value system in the most personal and potentially meaningful act of communication between men and women cannot but result in the inability of both the one who conquers and the one who surrenders to have genuine love and understanding between them.\(^{358}\)

With these strong words, radical feminists in the late 1960s like Judi Bernstein, Peggy Morton, Linda Seese, and Myrna Wood challenged the “compulsory heterosexuality” that lay beneath the liberal feminist creed.\(^{359}\) These women, who were active in the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) in 1967, published a paper entitled, *Sisters, Brothers, Lovers...Listen...*, in which their radical feminist manifesto was outlined.\(^{360}\) For them, sexual liberation was fundamental to women’s liberation and therefore traditional sexual roles would have to be changed.\(^{361}\) For the next decade women invited to liberation meetings, workshops and conferences across Canada would be forced to confront their intimate sexual relationships with men.

In 1978, Charlotte Bunch describes the radicalization of feminism, arguing that because heterosexuality was central to the oppression and subordination of women the idea of the “woman-identified-woman,” and Lesbian-Feminist politics was essential to liberation.\(^{362}\) Radical feminists, continued to argue that gender and sexuality were a historically and socially constructed choice, which could be changed with new forms of socialization for boys, and consciousness-raising of fathers, brothers, peers and lovers. This chapter identifies how female undergraduates at Guelph tackled some of the more radical issues of the women’s liberation movement, notably, abortion, birth-control, and heterosexuality. It will discuss in what ways these issues impacted the daily lives of women students at Guelph, and how they dealt with sexual objectification. At the University of

\(^{358}\) Bernstein et al., “Sisters, Brothers, Lovers...Listen...” 4.
\(^{359}\) Bernstein et al., 4.
\(^{360}\) Bernstein et al., i.
\(^{361}\) Bernstein et al., 4.
Guelph, female undergraduates were actively assessing the confusing social constructions about gender, sexuality and desire, while trying to figure out solutions for dealing with the sexism on campus.

“Boobs, Bums, Brains and Backbone”

One area of contestation for all feminists was the so-called sexual revolution of the late 1960s, because at this time abortion was still illegal, as was disseminating birth control information. The sexual revolution and the necessity of securing women’s rights led all feminists to fight for the right for women to control their own bodies. It appeared to some, including the celebrated liberal feminist Gloria Steinem, that the “free love” movement actually endangered women, because the open sexuality of the counter culture movement provided another way for men to dominate women. In 1969 Marlene Dixon argued that female students continued to encounter the sexual exploitation of women, and to suffer from it. According to Dixon, “young women have increasingly rebelled not only against passivity and dependency in their relationship, but also against the notion that they must function as sexual objects…” Reading works by empowered feminists helped young women on campuses reassess their roles as sexual beings and strengthened their resolve to do something about sexual objectification and harassment at university.

In 1971 women were standing up for one another on campus and telling men when their actions or words were inappropriate. A young woman wrote to The Ontarion saying, “Today I spoke with a man who was openly admiring an attractive woman as she passed by. Being a Woman’s Liberationist, I immediately classified his motives and attacked him accordingly.” She told him, “You’re objectifying,” to which the male student replied, “that it was, in his mind,

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365. Rebbick, 11.
366. Owram, Born at the Right Time, 250.
369. “Sexual Objectification,” 2; reproductive choice.
objective, but in the less intellectual areas of his body it was in fact natural desire.” The male student agreed that it was inappropriate to so blatantly gape and stare at the female student but he defended his actions by saying he could not suppress his natural response. The woman student who decided to intervene was put in a position in which she had to examine what sexual objectification meant. Nevertheless, she was proud that she spoke her mind, and wrote the article to tell people about it, because the movement was about women ensuring that they felt safe and respected on campus.

Douglas Owram was a university student in the 1970s, and his book *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (1996), drew upon what the women his age had previously discovered in the 1960s. He also reflected upon what the sexual revolution meant to young men of his generation, “The sexual revolution [is] not primarily about ‘promiscuity’ or even about the number of people engaging in premarital sex. It is about the redefinition of social values and the collapse of postwar notions of the sexually appropriate and socially acceptable.” Clearly at the time, the sexual revolution was just as confusing to men, as it was to young women. Female undergraduates had to figure out in what ways they would engage with their sexuality while at university. They were quick to identify that they were not there to be eye candy for the male students. Using *The Ontarion* to have an open conversation with the campus populace enabled students to understand what sexual objectification looked like and how women, and men, on campus could better combat this, which was beneficial to all the students.

Female students were still contending with old gender stereotypes about their intellectual inferiority and their ability to compete with men at university and in the workplace. In 1973, an article entitled, “Women and Insanity,” the author spoke against the sexual revolution, because it “has not freed women but made them better sex objects. It has reinforced the ideology that a woman’s role in life is to attract a man, that what she looks like is what counts, not her mind.” As women navigated the co-ed environment, and enjoyed more independence, they still had to

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370*“Sexual Objectification,”* 2.
371*“Sexual Objectification,”* 2.
373*“Women and Insanity,”* 12.
prove that they were worthy of an education. Women students had to fight daily to show that they were on campus to achieve a higher education for the betterment of themselves, and that they were not there to fulfill the sexual desires of male students, nor were they going to be passive prey to sexual objectification of any form.

Students began replacing old traditions on campus that openly objectified women with new activities, clubs and contests. For example, the annual College Royal beauty contest became a contested tradition. Annually at Guelph during College Royal festivities there was a beauty contest to crown a female student as the Queen. This was a good place for women students to start, as they could address why it was women were not being taken seriously. Even the editors of The Ontarion felt that if they lessened their usual coverage of the contest, then they could address how this pageant subjected female students to sexual objectification. The Ontarion felt that “A beauty contest promotes the old idea that women are to be valued on the criteria of what they are born with- ‘boobs’ and ‘bums’- instead of what is truly valuable- ‘brains’ and ‘backbone.’” The contributors openly thanked the liberation movement on campus, “We can thank women’s lib for starting the ‘revolution,’ and common sense for keeping it going.” It was important to the editors at The Ontarion that they no longer were seen to be promoting forms of sexism, whether in advertisements or campus activities. To have the campus newspaper on the side of women’s liberation positively impacted the movement on campus and encouraged women students to stand up for themselves.

The Emancipation of All Women’s Sexuality

Articles in The Ontarion did more than simply encourage women on campus to stand up for themselves, it allowed women’s liberationists to teach each other about sexuality from a “feminist framework.” In 1976, an event was planned called, “Women’s Health Day,” which was held on Saturday March 13th and was “…sponsored by the Federation of Women Students,

375“Sexism and the College Royal Queen,” 4.
376“Sexism and the College Royal Queen,” 4.
377“Sexism and the College Royal Queen,” 4.
Health Day encouraged university women, as well as women within the Guelph community, to participate and learn more about themselves as sexual beings, and how to properly manage female health. Female students expressed their interest in exploring their own sexuality and wanted to understand the female orgasm. Barbara Sawyers provided coverage of the event as well as helped to organize it, and she said, “Many are afraid to break out of their passive role to actively explore their eroticism.”

If women discussed more often their anxieties about sexual relationships, and their natural physical responses to sex, then they could work on eliminating their fears and prejudices and enjoy their sexuality. Understanding their bodies meant being adequately informed about menstruation and menopause, two areas of a woman’s life that had thus far been oversimplified by many male doctors. At Health Day it was explained that “Menstruation is still often regarded [as] a vile curse defiling women monthly, rather than a function of the reproductive system.” It was not uncommon for women to be told that menstruation and menopause were psychological, not a reproductive function or a disease. This resulted in many women being hesitant to even ask a doctor about them. Sawyers pointed out that due to this, “Women are insisting that the myths surrounding menstruation be replaced by facts.”

The myths attached to the female body and to their sexuality were areas that women had been working hard throughout the 1970s to eradicate.

Health Day also challenged the idea that heterosexuality was the only natural and normal choice when exploring and defining one’s sexuality. Heather Ramsey, of the “Guelph Homophiles,” was at Health Day to discuss heterosexuality, masturbation and lesbianism. Western society had deformed women’s sexuality and relegated it to that of only being heterosexual, “People used to think that female masturbation and homosexuality were nonexistent.” Ramsey denounced this patriarchal claim and expectation. She clearly explained that masturbation and lesbianism are legitimate sexual responses, and openly questioned “the attitudes which have

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379 Sawyers, 11.
380 Sawyers, 11.
381 Sawyers, 11.
382 Sawyers, 11.
prevailed regarding female sexuality."³⁸³ Women no longer needed to be told what they were, how they felt, and who they need to be attracted to. Their bodies were theirs, as was the sexuality and the desires that went with it. Women students got to experience quite an informative day, with almost all areas of a woman’s health being covered.³⁸⁴ Throughout the liberation movement women on campus and across Canada sometimes held different opinions on child care, parenting, and sexuality. This only added to the fluidity of the movement, and the ways in which individual women chose to participate. It was not overlooked that the biology of women was an inherent part of their societal oppression, but it was not the sole focus either, nevertheless, women rallied behind topics of sexuality, planned parenthood, and gender.³⁸⁵

Gender was inherently an inevitable subject of the women’s movement, as women had been oppressed due to being women. Even though gender issues were a part of each concern discussed by women, especially in relation to childcare, abortion and birth control, women could not focus solely on gender and biological differences as the reason for their continued oppression.³⁸⁶ The overarching factor was that the mistreatment of women was fully ingrained in all aspects of society. The fight to eradicate inequality and oppression from women’s lives had been, and would continue to be, an on-going generational battle for the betterment of women’s lives.³⁸⁷ Radical feminist Charlotte Bunch argued that women would not be liberated until they had fought male supremacy by becoming political lesbians.³⁸⁸ Bunch believed that feminists must be lesbian, because “lesbianism is a threat to the ideological, political, personal, and economic basis of male supremacy.”³⁸⁹ Not all radical feminists went so far as to argue this, but many understood that the oppression of women had to do with being inferior to men, especially within monogamous and heterosexual relationships. Equality between the sexes within relationships was paramount to achieving equality in the daily lives of women.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁴Sawyers, 11.
³⁸⁵Pitsula, New World Dawning, 157-158.
³⁸⁶Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 56-57.
³⁸⁷Palmer, Canada’s 1960s, 304.
³⁸⁹Bunch, 125.
³⁹⁰Bunch, 127.
The cycle of continued oppression of women, up to the 1970s, was seemingly unending, as women had always had to fight against and break free of the gendered roles in which they found themselves throughout Canadian society. Women were beginning to realize that it was time to do more than just discuss and voice their opinions, it was time to act. No matter what issues divided women within the movement, the gendered oppression they had experienced for so long, due to patriarchal systems, was the key to their connection and it drove them to fight for and eradicate inequality in all aspects of society.

**Biology Does Not Determine Choice: Women and The Pill**

As long as women have no control over the number of children they wish to bear or when they wish to have them, they are easier to control, being more in need of protection and less useful as members of the labour force. ‘The pill’ has the potential for making women free agents in this matter. The most optimistic thing about contraception is that once child-bearing becomes one option among many and women have some power to control their destinies, they may well be less ready to accept subservience as an inevitable part of their condition.

Radical and conservative feminists agreed that anatomy was destiny when it came to sexual reproduction, and without control over their own bodies, women would continue to be beholden to their biology. For many, securing control of reproduction by safe birth control and abortion was key to sexual liberation, Margaret Sanger “saw contraception as a prerequisite to the liberation of women.” For Sanger, the woman responsible for the birth control movement, motherhood should be voluntary. The basic freedom to choose to be a mother “would in turn be the keynote of a new social awakening.” In Canada, in the 1970s women were still grappling the medical profession, churches, federal and provincial laws and society at large, which denied access to safe legal abortion on demand and birth control.

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392 Bernstein et. al, “Sisters, Brothers, Lovers…Listen…” 3.
393 Jaggar, Feminist Frameworks, 70-73.
394 Rebick, Ten Thousand Roses, 36.
396 Cherniak, Birth Control Handbook, 3; Rebick, Ten Thousand Roses, 156-157.
In Canada, Myrna Kostash argued that the female being has historically been defined and limited as sexual and that a “woman’s body is used as a commodity or medium of exchange.”397 It was the women in liberation groups in 1968 who determined that a woman’s right to control the sexual functions of their bodies was the sine qua non of their liberation, spurring action around the issues of birth control and abortion.398 Reproductive rights have a long history in Canada, in 1892 the law dealing with contraception and abortion stated, “Everyone is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to two years’ imprisonment, who knowingly, without lawful excuse or justification, offers to sell, advertises, publishes an advertisement of or has for sale or disposal any medicine, drug, or article intended or represented as a means of preventing contraception or causing abortion.”399 This law was not properly questioned until the 1920s, even though families had been taking it upon themselves to deal with controlling family size up until contraceptives were accessible and legalized.400

In Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution Judy Rebick points out feminists of her generation continued to fight restrictive laws until 1988 when the Supreme Court of Canada finally abolished the abortion law.401 Even though by 1969 partial access to abortion was achieved due to revisions to the criminal code, it did not give all women access to abortion on demand. What was highly aggravating to contemporary women was that they knew the technology that could “free women from their biology,” was being kept from them to ensure their continued oppression.402 Their fight for liberation was on-going because they faced oppressive mentalities in every facet of their lives.

In the late 1960s, the women of the liberation movement felt that without an overhaul of societal beliefs, in relation to women and their place within society, women would continue to find

397Kostash, Long Way from Home, 171.
398Kostash, 171.
400McLaren, “Birth Control and Abortion in Canada,” 323.
402Women and Insanity,” 12.
themselves relegated to second-class citizenship. Women had spent the 1960s trying to figure out what this role was, and why it was they felt trapped and oppressed by it. In 1973, in an article entitled “Women and Insanity,” female readers of The Ontarion were told that they would have to, “escape the destructive effects of the role she is socialized into.”\textsuperscript{403} Clearly, by the 1970s women knew that they were fighting for total liberation, as the role they had been socialized into was an inferior one, where they were subordinate to men and played the part of a passive dependent. Women wanted to make the choices that determined what their role would be, and to liberate themselves from the inferior status they had been defined by for so long.

**Empowering Women at Guelph with Access to Contraceptives**

The birth control pill was made available to married women in Canada by 1961, which made it possible for women to engage in sexual activity without the fear of dealing with an unplanned pregnancy.\textsuperscript{404} It was, however, not easily accessible, and as a symbol of the ‘sexual revolution’ it did not restructure or challenge traditional gender roles.\textsuperscript{405} Radical feminists, like Shulamith Firestone, argued “to assure the elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass (women) and the seizure of control of reproduction: not only the full restoration to women of ownership of their own bodies, but also their (temporary) seizure of control of human fertility.”\textsuperscript{406} The fact that there was a way for women to control their own reproductive systems, but that many were unable to access the pill, instilled in young women an anger and frustration with the laws governing their right to choose. In retaliation to the oppressive and restrictive laws, McGill students published a handbook on birth control in 1968 and distributed it widely.\textsuperscript{407} Their student activism proved that students were challenging authority, as it was illegal to disseminate birth control and abortion information at the time.\textsuperscript{408}

\textsuperscript{403}“Women and Insanity,” 12.
\textsuperscript{404}Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 40.
\textsuperscript{405}Adamson et al., 40.
\textsuperscript{407}Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 45.
\textsuperscript{408}Kostash, Long Way from Home, 172; Cherniak, Birth Control Handbook, 2.
It was after female students and Canadian women liberationists started raising awareness about the need for all women to have access to birth control and abortion information and services, that birth control and abortion counselling were implemented at universities in Canada. However, it was not until 1969 that the Canadian law was repealed, which banned information on birth control, and still, by 1970, women were being denied contraception because it was controlled by doctors. It was possible that educated white middle-class women could have access to birth control by 1970, but whether they received the pill was still decided by a doctor. Male doctors made it quite difficult for women to get the pill, and more often than not, made women feel badly for even inquiring about it. The doctor patient relationship was an important issue to women in the movement, they wanted to be educated about their options and feel they were treated fairly when visiting a doctor.

The Roman Catholic Church and more conservative members of campus communities felt that the open and detailed discussions on birth control were only encouraging unmarried co-eds to engage in premarital sex. Female undergraduates had much to contend with when fighting for rights to their own bodies and to gain access to the pill. Arguably, contraceptives and information pertaining to the pill had become more accessible due in large part to the success and activism of the McGill university students who took it upon themselves to disseminate such information and to fight for women to have access to contraceptives on campus.

At Guelph, a letter to the editor in The Ontarion, entitled, “Beaver,” attempted to lighten the mood on campus in relation to birth control by jokingly asking a Canadian beaver about the pill. In the letter a man asked a beaver “What is the pill for?” To which the beaver had no exact response. Then the beaver was asked “How this tied in with his stand on Beaverette Liberation?” The beaver answered that it had something to do with “Just below the cervix.

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409Kostash, Long Way from Home, 171; Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 46.
410Pitsula, New World Dawning, 206.
411Pitsula, 206.
412Pitsula, 204.
413Cherniak, Birth Control Handbook, 2.
Nevertheless, if in doubt, please see a doctor. It’s free.”⁴¹⁶ The letter did not provide any relevant information about birth control; it instead belittled the movement and made it seem like access to the pill was easy. This cartoon and accompanying article show some of the anti-feminist humor that women were dealing with. This was an instance in The Ontarion where humor was used to subvert the seriousness of the issues that were important to female students and the liberation movement.

The Women’s Liberation Group (WLG) on campus was established in 1970 to help women students deal with the lack of information available to them.⁴¹⁷ Including providing information pertaining to birth control and other sexual health concerns, they facilitated a space that was supportive of women students and their battle to establish equality between the sexes on campus. In articles like, “Women’s Liberation Makes it All Clear,” the WLG did their best to inform the campus populace what liberation entailed, and why it was important to women that they have easy access to birth control and family planning material.⁴¹⁸ The group outlined “the purpose of their organization…stressing that a major concern was the education of women as to what their positions and rights are in society.”⁴¹⁹ The WLG felt that women are needlessly burdened due to being given misinformation, or not having access to any at all. Gaining access to everything a woman needed to properly inform herself about her own health, and about how to liberate herself, was immensely important to the movement. Without accessible information and woman-friendly spaces where this information could be obtained, the process of liberation may have taken longer to make any changes.

The WLG took the time to make room in their budget for providing pamphlets on birth control and abortion. This is because they knew that there was a need for this information, and

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⁴¹⁶“Beaver: Beaverette Liberation,” 5; Anti-feminist humor in written or cartoon form did not surface that often in the 1970s, so there was not a lot of evidence to support the presence of anti-feminism playing out within The Ontarion. I would have to do further research about other material printed on campus to know more.
⁴¹⁸Women’s Liberation Group, 9.
⁴¹⁹Women’s Liberation Group, 9.
providing it enabled them to participate in the liberation of women on campus. In 1971 the WLG wrote, “Women’s Lib. Birth Control/Abortion Referral Service,” informing readers of The Ontarion that the oppression of women “is to be seen as more relevant in that her role is much more rigid and defined.” Due to this, the group took it upon themselves to ensure that the oppression of women on campus was noticed and then dealt with. What frustrated members of the WLG was that many women had been relegated to suffering a negative cycle within the home, “a man comes home, unhappy with his work, takes it out on his wife, who then yells at the kids, and the kids in turn kick the dog.” The women of the group felt that this disparaging cycle could only “be broken by fighting to relieve the oppression by fighting for Women’s Liberation…and thereby people’s liberation.” Included in this fight for liberation was the need for women to have control over their own bodies.

The Ontarion featured advertisements and informative pieces from the WLG in almost every issue in the early to mid-1970s. In 1971 the group let women students know that a birth control and abortion referral service would be set up on July 15. They invited “all students-male or female- interested in working on this project are asked to sign the list in the Women’s Liberation office at Drew Hall.” The group continually expressed that men were also welcome, as the progress of women’s liberation needed the partnership of men. It was not only women that needed to change their attitudes about what it was they were capable of and the kind of lives they could live, men also needed to revalue the lives of women. This was something the women students at Guelph were quite good at, making the movement welcoming to men who were serious about helping women on the path to liberation. The University of Guelph was a unique campus because 500 or so women students that transitioned from Macdonald Institute in 1964 into the co-ed environment, had managed to make an impact and increase the women student population going in to the 1970s. Guelph was seemingly progressive in this way, as women were flourishing on campus, and targeting any barrier that was holding them back from reaching their full potential.

421 Women’s Liberation Group, 9.
422 Women’s Liberation Group, 9.
423 Women’s Liberation Group, 8.
424 Women’s Liberation Group, 8.
Enabling women students to have access to birth control information and eventually birth control itself was also a step in the right direction for women’s liberation on campus. By 1974 a birth control dispensary had been organized by the Central Student Association and Medical Services.425 The dispensary was put in place “to answer the current need for some reforms,”426 which was an exciting day for women students. The Educational Director of Planned Parenthood Guelph, Marilyn Stebbe also made herself available to women students. Stebbe contributed a monthly column to The Ontarion beginning in January 1974, entitled “Intercourse.”427 In this column Stebbe would answer questions “on birth control, venereal disease, pregnancy, abortion, or general problems related to human sexuality.”428 Information was provided about the various forms of birth control and Stebbe did her best not to over indulge in medical terms so that student readers could engage with the information more clearly.

Not What the Doctor Ordered: The Persistence of Female Students

Rights and access to birth control and abortion were necessary for women if they wanted to control their own bodies, and so these issues were closely linked to the fight for women’s liberation. In her 1974 article called, “Updating the Pill-Downgrading Women” for “The Women’s Section,” in The Ontarion, Gayle Annis described a male gynecologist’s noon-hour lecture in a biology class.429 Annis said the lecture material summarized the birth control information that was already available to women in birth control handbooks, “Dr. Gelb minimized the dangers to women of taking oral contraceptives and glossed over the various side effects attributed to the pill.”430 Annis was frustrated by the overwhelming presence of male doctors telling women how to use their own bodies, and what not to do. According to Annis, Dr. Gelb’s “patronizingly amused comments for the most part lessened the import of what he was saying.”431 Annis told readers of the “Women’s Section” that women were not only contending with fighting for access to birth

428 Stebbe, 16.
430 Annis, 13.
431 Annis, 13.
control and fair treatment when asking for it but having to deal with male doctors who glossed over the validity of their requests.

This was a chance for a male doctor to actively engage with the young women who wanted the most current information on the pill. Annis and the women in attendance felt that Dr. Gelb had lowered his own credibility by airing flippant comments regarding the side effects of the pill. Dr. Gelb inappropriately and unprofessionally said, “that since he wasn’t the one doing the breakthrough bleeding, it was all right with him if the patient chose to put up with it.” Annis went on to say that overall Dr. Gelb spoke quite dismissively about the side effects, including the chance of depression, without adequately explaining why these side effects may occur. Dr. Gelb explained his theory “that the reason for this depression was guilt[y] feelings on the part of the woman because she was suppressing contraception by unnatural means.” Ultimately Dr. Gelb proved exactly what it was women were contending with and unfortunately, he did not use his lecture to reach out to the women students in attendance and become an advocate for them. Instead he showed his disregard for women, and Annis pointed out, “he has been a gynecologist so long that he now sees women as being walking uteri.” Dr. Gelb was not the only chauvinistic male doctor whom women had to deal with while searching for information about the pill or acquiring it. It was 1974 and women were still having to jump through hoops and deal with institutionalized misogyny before they could have the pill. Which is why the women in the movement pushed for more female doctors and fair treatment, as well as the right to control their own bodies.

In 1975 women students were still hosting lectures to discuss birth control in their “Women’s Hour” series. Birth control and information about it was increasingly important to women students as they were exploring their sexuality in a co-ed environment. It was also during a decade when dating without parental approval and living as a couple were becoming more acceptable. At least this was the case for female undergraduates, as they worked towards liberating themselves in as many ways as possible. Part of this liberation was to establish themselves as independent and sexually freed women. In the “Women’s Hour” section of The Ontarion Linda

433 Annis, 13.
434 Annis, 13.
Barkley wrote an article covering another noon-hour lecture, this time presented by a female doctor. The subject of the lecture was “Women and Health,” and Dr. Pelletier made it clear that “nowhere have women borne the brunt of society more than in the area of medicine.” Even in 1975 a female doctor was still having to express that “the health issue is one of the most important areas in the struggle for inequality.” Dr. Pelletier discussed female sterilization, abortion, and the misogynistic structure of the healthcare system that women were contending with. She “cited four main areas of concern, reproduction, menstruation, the menopause, and the female sexuality…” as these were the areas in which women were left to find their own resources and ascertain support from the healthcare community. These issues were essential points being made in the movement, because if women were not given access to, and support in these areas then they were not going to feel or be liberated.

Dr. Pelletier discussed how it was necessary for women to be in control of their own reproduction, not only because women should have the right to decide what to do with their bodies, but due to the average life expectancy of women. Women lived longer than men and more of their children lived from birth, so it would be up to the women to take care of them. She noted that “as late as 1972, out of a study of 40 doctors 2-5 were refusing requests for contraceptives.” This was due to many of the patients being unmarried, and instead these women were receiving moral lectures. Doctors were often having women come off of the pill rather than just prescribing them a lower dosage if they were complaining of any side effects. Women were also being sterilized more than men, “even though all forms of female sterilization are more complex and carry more risk.” Dr. Pelletier addressed the difficulty for women when needing an abortion, as women were at the mercy of their doctor, many of which held the attitude of “she got herself into it, she can get herself out of it.” Women in 1975 were still having to struggle against the oppressive idea that it is the destiny of a woman to have and take care of children. Women in the movement had been working tirelessly since 1967 to fight for rights to their own bodies. Women wanted to

436 Barkley, 9.
437 Barkley, 9.
438 Barkley, 9.
439 Barkley, 9.
440 Barkley, 9.
be able to choose whether or not to conceive and to be in control of their sex lives and their reproductive systems.

Menstruation and menopause were still areas in which doctors were lacking pertinent information. Dr. Pelletier said, “as late as 1967, probably because it was an area beyond the comprehension of doctors- the medical world was teaching that menstrual cramps did not really exist.”\textsuperscript{441} Doctors in 1967 were espousing some of the same reasons for the inner-workings of a woman’s reproductive system, as Dr. Gelb was in 1974, “the pain was due to emotional problems, or was caused by an old wives’ tales and lack of preparation for menstruation.”\textsuperscript{442} Many male doctors were ill-equipped for dealing with women and the reproductive functions of their bodies, because they did not view women as equal or more than a baby-making vessel. Women’s liberation was concerned with making sure that male doctors were also liberating their own minds and discarding outdated and oppressive views. Dr. Pelletier mentioned that “until recently it was taught that menopause was not a disease, and since it was not a disease it did not deserve to be treated.”\textsuperscript{443} The women of the movement had a lot of issues to address in the realm of women’s health and sexuality, it would take more than liberating the attitudes of doctors. The inclusion of women in adding to the overall understanding and re-educating of doctors and society was also necessary. Women students utilized the “Women’s Hour” lecture series throughout the mid-1970s to address such issues and to more widely inform the campus populace.

Unlike Dr. Gelb’s lecture, Dr. Pelletier connected with the women in attendance, even arousing laughter. She mocked a male doctor’s work from 1958, “A woman is a uterus surrounded by the supporting organism and a directing personality…and can be best understood in terms of the functioning of the uterus.”\textsuperscript{444} Dr. Pelletier was able to address what it was women were working with in terms of the views men held about the use of women.\textsuperscript{445} She understood that women, and especially women doctors, had to work extremely diligently to change the way women and their reproductive organs were studied and thought of. Dr. Pelletier wanted to see more women going

\textsuperscript{441}Barkley, “Women’s Hour,” 9.
\textsuperscript{442}Barkley, 9.
\textsuperscript{443}Barkley, 9.
\textsuperscript{444}Barkley, 9.
\textsuperscript{445}Barkley, 9.
into the medical field, she said “the problem can also be solved by the woman patient herself…if one is unsure, question. And if one is not treated fairly, and not satisfied, get another opinion.”\textsuperscript{446} Another female contributor to \textit{The Ontarion}, Robin Huxtable, concluded that Dr. Pelletier did a good job of refraining from inundating the audience with too much medical terminology, making her lecture easily understandable.\textsuperscript{447} Ultimately, Dr. Pelletier wanted women to make sure that they were in charge of their bodies and understood that they deserved to be treated fairly. Which was wholly important for women to understand as the fight to have fair and easier access to abortion was underway.

\textbf{Joining the Fight for a Woman’s Right to Choose: Pro-Choice}

In 1980, Myrna Kostash wrote:

There was not a woman alive who did not fear the consequences of her sexual activity; nor one who did not realize, even instinctively, that this fear was a form of social control.” Because she might become pregnant at any time, and be reduced to economic dependency within the family, she was denied employment of equal pay and value to that of men, placement in professional and graduate schools at the same rate as men, and mobility and independence in carrying out life-decisions as she saw fit.\textsuperscript{448}

Kostash joined the women’s movement in the 1970s because “women’s right to abortion on demand had to be secured before any of the other campaigns for liberation of women could be undertaken. Only when freed of biological determinisms could women address themselves concretely as workers, intellectuals, artists or politicians.”\textsuperscript{449} Women within the movement organized around abortion in the late 1960s, because many women had experienced difficulty when requesting birth control, or had dealt with illegal abortions, making them personal and political issues.\textsuperscript{450} By 1969 abortion was somewhat decriminalized but women had to be approved for an abortion by a Therapeutic Abortion Committee (TAC), leaving many women with no choice

\textsuperscript{446}Barkley, “Women’s Hour,” 9.
\textsuperscript{447}Robin Huxtable, “Women’s Hour: Lecture on Birth Control,” \textit{The Ontarion}, Guelph, September 30, 1975, 8.
\textsuperscript{448}Kostash, \textit{Long Way from Home}, 172-173.
\textsuperscript{449}Kostash, 173.
\textsuperscript{450}Adamson et al., \textit{Feminist Organizing for Change}, 45.
but to seek a back-room abortion due to the lack of accessible and readily available legal abortion services.\textsuperscript{451}

So, in 1971 women were still avidly having to discuss, and fight for, their right to safe and legal abortions. Women students were actively making the campus populace aware of their need for this right as liberated Canadian women, as were many women at this time. There had been a program in January on CTV in 1971 called, “Vacuum Abortion,” explaining the different types of abortion.\textsuperscript{452} A concerned woman wrote in \textit{The Ontarion} that they “may have failed to distinguish between the vacuum aspiration methods of abortion and the use of a vacuum cleaner to induce abortion.”\textsuperscript{453} Women had to sort through much of the information about abortions on their own, and a lot of what they had to work with was unhelpful or unsafe. \textit{The Ontarion} printed quite a few advertisements from various anonymous contributors in the early 1970s about “Low Cost. Safe, Legal. Abortion.”\textsuperscript{454} Usually they were for clinics in the United States, as women could not go for a legal abortion in Canada without passing through a committee of doctors first. Prior to 1969 abortion was illegal in Canada, but even after the amendment to the law, it was quite difficult for women to get an abortion if they needed one. Abortion was not legal on demand, and women were not allowed to have an abortion unless a TAC permitted one on the grounds that the pregnancy, or going through with the pregnancy, would put their life at risk.

Dr. Henry Morgentaler, a Canadian physician and advocate of women’s abortion rights had been a part of the fight to legalize abortions in Canada since opening an abortion clinic in Montreal in 1969. He was one of the first Canadian doctors to perform vasectomies, to insert internal contraceptives, and to provide unmarried women with the pill. Laws prohibiting abortion placed a profound interference on a woman’s body and they were a complete denial of a woman’s constitutionally protected rights, because the law did not meet the objective between the right of the fetus and the right of a woman. The eventual appeal of the abortion laws would not have been

\textsuperscript{451}\textit{Kostash, Long Way from Home}, 172, 175.
\textsuperscript{452}“Vacuum Abortion,” \textit{The Ontarion}, Guelph, January 25, 1971, 2.
\textsuperscript{453}“Vacuum Abortion,” 2.
possible without the mass mobilization of women within the liberation movement, who fought for almost two decades against laws determining the reproductive choices of women.455

The First Instance of National Action in the Women’s Liberation Movement

In 1971, students at Guelph joined the “Abortion March,” and The Ontarion told readers what Morgentaler said at a press conference during the march, “that it is now possible to do safe abortions at the doctor’s office…” and “that once the legal impediments were removed it would be very inexpensive to set up abortion clinics…”456 This however would not be the case for the women of Canada, who would still have to be approved by a therapeutic abortion committee at an accredited hospital, up until 1988. A law that Dr. Morgentaler was instrumental in ensuring changed for the women of Canada.

Women from across Canada joined the Abortion Caravan’s March when it arrived in Ottawa in February 1971, “250 demonstrators, mostly Ontario women, gathered outside Parliament Hill in support of free abortion on demand.”457 The women were not allowed into the parliament buildings, “It seems you are only allowed into Parliament if you agree with the government…But, referring to a recent Toronto Star poll, 44% of the population agrees with us.”458 Parliament would not send out any members to discuss with the women why it was they were there, or what they could do in terms of the laws regarding abortion. Women wanted legalized abortion because it was about women having rights over their own bodies and the right to choose whether or not to have children.459 If the government, or the men in the lives of Canadian women, were the ones in charge of a woman’s body, then women were not liberated or equal citizens. As Mary Lalonde expressed that Professor Patricia McDermott from York University, who had completed her undergraduate degree at Guelph between 1967 and 1971, could pinpoint moments of activism on campus.460 McDermott remembers the atmosphere of activism at the time, she and

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455 Adamson et al., Feminist Organizing for Change, 155.
460 University of Guelph, Finding Feminism and Women's Studies, 5.
her friends even involved themselves with the Abortion Caravan. Other activists on campus were
championing reproductive rights by distributing information on contraceptives and telling people
about women’s liberation. Abortion marches were something that the women students could
actively involve themselves in, and they did so willingly because gaining the right to control their
own bodies was a right most women fully supported.

By February 1973 the United States had changed its laws pertaining to legalizing abortion
in the early stages of pregnancy.\textsuperscript{461} The fact that across the border women were gaining some of
their rights only further fueled women in the Canadian liberation movement.\textsuperscript{462} They were “already
beginning to rematerialize as determined women investigate and act en masse upon the reasons of
women’s status as the second-sex.”\textsuperscript{463} Women were beginning to reassess their place in society, as
it was becoming more obvious that what needed to change were the institutions around them and
not just the minds of women. Women at Guelph were excited about and took part in the Abortion
Caravan as it made its way from Vancouver to Ottawa. The caravan was established by the
Vancouver Women’s Caucus, and it as one of the first major national activities of the growing
feminist movement. The caravan reflected the new type of feminist radical activism, and it
connected to the radical politics of the New Left movement they had been previously engaged
with. The activists that took part in the caravan had themselves come out of radical political groups
and movements. The women from the Vancouver Caucus were well versed in radical politics and
direct action, due to their experiences in New Left activism. As awareness about the need for
women’s liberation grew young women across Canada readily participated in the caravan.

The methods of the Abortion Caravan included guerilla theatre, and they used a giant coffin
filled with coat hangers to represent all of the women who had been killed due to undergoing back-
alley abortions. On the side of the coffin a few women had painted, “Slash Capitalism,” which not
all of the women participating agreed with as it deterred from the actual slogan of the caravan,

\textsuperscript{461}“Feminism and Socialism: A Book Review,” \textit{The Ontarion}, Guelph, February 15, 1973, 6, 16; Adding
citation of the actual book, Linda Jenness, \textit{Feminism and Socialism}, 1st ed., (New York: Pathfinder Press,
1972).
\textsuperscript{462}“Feminism and Socialism: A Book Review,” 6, 16.
\textsuperscript{463}“Feminism and Socialism: A Book Review,” 6, 16.
“Free abortion on Demand,” making the caravan the wrong place to be addressing capitalism.\textsuperscript{464} The purpose of the caravan was to raise awareness about women’s rights, bring Canadian women together, and to make the government aware that Canadian women were not going to be silent on issues pertaining to their bodily rights.\textsuperscript{465} By the time the caravan arrived in Ottawa the plan was for thirty-five of the women to chain themselves to chairs during the politician’s period in the House of Commons so they could not be easily removed while voicing their opinions about the restrictive abortion law.\textsuperscript{466} Their bold attempt to interrupt the proceedings was successful because the question period was ended, and the House of Commons was shut down for forty-five minutes, giving the caravan ample media coverage.\textsuperscript{467} Media coverage was essential to the women’s liberation movement because it provided women across North America with a way to access information pertaining to liberation, and put a spotlight on the activism of women’s liberationists.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police spied on the women taking part in the caravan throughout the entirety of the march. Overall, the actions of the women leading the caravan were radical because they thought that they were at the front lines of the political revolution. At this time \textit{The Ontario} reviewed a book by Linda Jenness, \textit{Feminism and Socialism}, because it discussed the repeal of the law in the U.S. and how women in Canada could fight for the repeal too. The text called for women to revolt, as it was the system in which they lived that needed reworking. Feminism was a start, but a socialist revolution was necessary, “at the onset of female liberation in the early and mid-sixties, women identifying with the movement considered themselves to be revolutionary but did not initially associate their struggle with the entire analysis of socialism.”\textsuperscript{468} Women did not initially think that a revolution was the only way to have the Canadian government make changes. However, it was becoming more apparent to Canadian women that their rights were no closer to becoming their own, and that they needed to be more forceful in their fight for them.

\textsuperscript{464} Rebick, \textit{Ten Thousand Roses}, 37, 43.
\textsuperscript{465} Rebick, 43.
\textsuperscript{466} Rebick, 44.
\textsuperscript{467} Rebick, 45.
\textsuperscript{468} “Feminism and Socialism: A Book Review,” 6, 16.
Asserting Themselves: Women’s Fight to Change the Law

Women had been fighting to have the same rights as men, especially at work and to receive “equal pay for the same work,” but they had not won equality in this realm yet either. So, gaining the rights to control their own bodies was even more important, since they were not being treated the same as men were in the workplace. In *Feminism and Socialism* women were asked to write to the government to push for their liberation, this was an important step that Canadian women needed to take. The women in the U.S. took action into their own hands, “The Abortion Law would not have been repealed in the U.S. were it not for continual mass meetings, demonstrations and petitions- in short, unity for women throughout the country.” Women in the U.S. were working together to fight for their liberation, and many women in Canada were calling for the same action. Canadian women had written to the government before, when the Royal Commission on the Status of Women began in 1967. The recommendations tabled by the commission had yet to be dealt with or changed. Legalized abortion was just one of the many recommendations, and women were still having to harass the government.

The women students at Guelph were no stranger to using collective action to push for and enact change. *The Ontarion* contributor stated: “We in Canada continue after the example of American women in fighting for abortion on demand, government sponsored day-care centres and equal education, economic and political opportunities.” American and Canadian women knew that it was up to them to ensure that the changes they needed to live freely and more fully were made by the government. The article on *Feminism and Socialism* explained that “women have been trained to be passive, weak, self-sacrificing, submissive, gentle, emotional- in short to think of themselves as being powerless both as individuals and as a sex.” It would take more than letters, but a show of collective effort, women from all over Canada needed to express what it was they wanted to see happen by protesting, marching and raising their voices. As women realized how institutionalized their inequality was, and that they were not alone, they became “fighters,

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469*Feminism and Socialism: A Book Review,” 6, 16.
470*Feminism and Socialism,” 6, 16.
471*Feminism and Socialism,” 6, 16.
472*Feminism and Socialism,” 6, 16.
473*Feminism and Socialism,” 6, 16.
leaders, organizers, and clear political thinkers capable of mobilizing the power of the masses of women.\footnote{Feminism and Socialism: A Book Review," 6, 16.} Women utilized the power of combining their strengths with other women to tackle the issue at hand, their second-class citizenship, and to fight for the rights they deserved.

*The Ontarion* finished the review of *Feminism and Socialism*, edited by Linda Jenness, by announcing that Linda Meissenhelmer would be giving a talk on abortion.\footnote{Conference on Abortion," *The Ontarion*, Guelph, Thursday March 8, 1973, 2.} Meissenhelmer is “an activist in the Vancouver Abortion Coalition, she will speak on abortion within the context of socialism and feminism."\footnote{Conference on Abortion," 2.} Women students were staying up to date on the abortion campaign to have the law in Canada changed. They also wanted to be a part of the abortion coalition and to show their support for the women of Canada. In March of 1973, the Canadian Women’s Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws advertised that they would be “hosting a cross-country Conference in Toronto, March 16-18."\footnote{Conference on Abortion," 2.} The purpose of the conference was to “bring together women from across Canada to protest Canada’s restrictive abortion laws and to plan further activities to press for repeal of these laws.”\footnote{Conference on Abortion," 2.} Conferences gave women a chance to gather in large groups and to work more openly with one another to find solutions to the problems they were facing. Women knew that the government, and society, had “the wealth and technology to build child-care centres, develop birth control methods, and take other measures that would tremendously alleviate the discrimination women face."\footnote{Conference on Abortion," 2.} It seemed to Canadian women that thus far the government had failed to make any changes that would help women.

Women had made advances since the late 1960s, such as gaining access to birth control, and more equal-access to post-secondary educations. However, they were still fighting to gain the right to control their own bodies, and this seemed the most basic one to be given, which Marxist, radical and liberal feminists agreed was necessary to have if women were going to achieve liberation. There are quite a few articles throughout *The Ontarion* in 1973 about the revival of the fight for legalized abortion due to the repeal of the law in the U.S. *The Ontarion* provided as much
information as was possible about how women students could involve themselves in the fight to legalize abortion. Advertising the abortion conference, holding lectures on campus, and providing coverage of the conference enabled women students to access the relevant information and to find ways to get involved. The fact that the abortion conference was cross-country provided “an invaluable opportunity for women from all parts of the country to plan strategy and project ways of building a movement powerful enough to win repeal in Canada.” Women students in the 1970s wanted to be a part of something, as the women on campus before them had been a part of the move to a co-ed environment.

A petition had been circulated by the conference committee, and “over 100,000 Canadians,” signed to repeal the abortion law. The committee had reached out to students on “seventeen campuses,” across Canada, and they had “voted overwhelmingly in referenda last spring for a woman’s right to choose abortion.” This meant that young Canadian women were adamant that they be given the rights over their own reproductive systems and have the right to choose what to do if they did become pregnant. The women of the liberation movement, women students included, had made it blatantly obvious to the Canadian government that many citizens did not agree with the law. The government was proving to Canadian women that “its refusal to take action places them solidly on the side of all those who seek to deny women the right to have control over their reproductive lives.” To the women of Canada, especially after the repeal of the law in the U.S., it seemed that the government was determined to continue to relegate them to second-class citizenship. Women were adamant that they “must work together to win this important victory for ourselves and for women around the world, who, like ourselves, are victims of restrictive, archaic abortion laws. Together we will win.” Women had known for a long time that together they were stronger, and that together they must fight for their own rights.

480 Conference on Abortion,” 2.  
481 Conference on Abortion,” 2.  
482 Conference on Abortion,” 2.  
483 Conference on Abortion,” 2.  
484 Conference on Abortion,” 2.
Never Giving Up! Women’s Rights at Guelph

Women students had access to the Guelph Women’s Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Law, and due to this they began their own coalition at the university. The Guelph coalition wanted “to mobilize all women, student and non-student, in the fight for the repeal of the present restrictive abortion laws.” They also wanted all women in Guelph to have access to any information pertinent to their rights in relation to abortion. All women needed to know that it was their right to choose whether or not they wanted an abortion, if they were to ever need one. Having a supportive group of women to rely on in this fight was integral to the success of the movement. The Guelph coalition placed advertisements in *The Ontarion* to inform women students where they would be meeting, and that men could also attend. Lois C. Gottlieb, an English Professor at Guelph, reviewed abortion in Canada for *The Ontarion* in October of 1973. She explained that “Section 237, legalizing abortions in Canada, was included as part of the Omnibus Bill to amend Canada’s Criminal Code in 1969 and was intended, at least ostensibly, to bring Canadian law more into line with contemporary sexual mores and respect for individual autonomy.” This however was not the case when the law was amended, and Gottlieb’s review was to educate the campus populace about the law and what it meant for women.

Gottlieb consulted an outline given by Eleanor Wright Pelrine about “the stringent requirements which govern the performing of a legal abortion in Canada.” If women were to follow this abortion law they would have to be approved by a TAC and the “abortion must be performed by a qualified medical practitioner in an accredited or approved hospital, the practitioner must receive [a] certificate in writing from the therapeutic abortion committee of that hospital, stating that the continuation of the patient’s pregnancy would or would likely endanger her health. The therapeutic abortion committee must consist of not less than 3 members, each of whom must be a qualified medical practitioner and, the performing practitioner cannot sit on the

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488 Gottlieb, 18.
committee.” The requirements were difficult to fulfill not to mention time-consuming and devoid of any respect for the woman seeking help. Women would have to find a hospital near them that could facilitate a committee and take the time to go through with the required work. Between the time the law was amended in 1969 to this point in 1973, Gottlieb said, “applicants throughout Canada for abortion are treated inconsistently and therefore unjustly.” Not to mention that the “vague standards, and the wide variations of interpretation among therapeutic abortion committees infringe upon a woman’s right to due process, a fair hearing and equality before the law.” The law itself made women jump through various hoops before they could acquire the help they needed, and women felt that it should be up to the woman whether or not she wanted to have a child, not the government.

Gord Jeffries provided a male viewpoint on Dr. Morgentaler and the abortion case for *The Ontarion* in January of 1974. Jeffries, like many male students, agreed with Dr. Morgentaler that the government had no place in the private lives of women. Canadians were very aware of Dr. Morgentaler’s struggle with the government, and that he had provided a necessary service to quite a few women. However, many Canadians, including women, were opposed to Dr. Morgentaler providing this service. What angered women’s liberationists and supporters of a woman’s right to choose, was that abortion was a medical service, which the government could easily provide. Jeffries wrote, “with continuing ‘witch hunt’ atmosphere surrounding the Morgentaler case, the battle over whether a woman has the right to bear or abort a foetus may be coming to a head.” Dr. Morgentaler’s trial had been going on for almost a full year, and the Canadian public were aware of his integral role in fighting the abortion laws.

Dr. Morgentaler had been fighting against the government by providing his services in abortion clinics, to show Canadians that it did not need to be as complicated a process as the law required. By 1974 Dr. Morgentaler had been “charged with 13 counts of performing illegal

490 Gottlieb, 18.
491 Gottlieb, 18.
493 Jeffries, 7.
For many Canadians, especially to women in the liberation movement, “If the abortions were performed is immaterial; the question is whether ‘our’ government has the right to conduct the private lives of its citizens to the extent that it can force a person to continue an unwanted pregnancy.” Jeffries agreed with the women students who were adamant that the government should not be in control of the private lives of Canadian women. This was a rare instance where a male contributor to the campus newspaper not only stated the facts but used the media platform to show his awareness of the larger situation. It was not about whether having an abortion was right or not, but that women should have the choice, and he knew that this was not his choice to determine, or his question to answer. He proved that he supported the more important issue, that women were not in command of their own lives due to laws created by the government, and that they deserved better. Jeffries showed that he was supporting the women students on campus, and their fight to have the government give women their reproductive rights. By 1976 the fight to amend the abortion law was still on-going and the issue continued to be covered by *The Ontarion*, but it would not be until 1988 that the law was changed.

Barbara Sawyers, a regular contributor to *The Ontarion* wrote about abortion being a woman’s right and that it was an essential issue to the women of the movement. This was after a letter had been sent to the newspaper in response to an earlier article Sawyers had written about Germaine Greer and Sawyers’ opinion on abortion. The writer of the letter, a Ms. Hall “argued that although she is a feminist she feels that abortion and women’s liberation are two separate issues. Abortion she considered to be murder.” Sawyers challenged Ms. Hall’s opinion because she did not understand how Ms. Hall was able to say that a foetus was a living thing, or how abortion could be excluded from the liberation platform. Sawyers, not unlike most women at this time, were of the opinion that mothers should be willing, and each child should be wanted. To have laws in place that made it illegal for women to have an abortion unless approved by a therapeutic committee, went against this opinion. Sawyers, like Jeffries, argued “even more

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495 Jeffries, 7.
496 Jeffries, 7.
498 Sawyers, 15.
important than our inability to determine what constitutes life is the question of a woman’s control over her own body and fertility.\textsuperscript{499} Which is what the women of the movement were trying to make the Canadian government understand. The fight to gain control over their own bodies was the main issue here, and Dr. Morgentaler was supportive of this right.

Sawyers quoted the pioneer of the birth control movement, Margaret Sanger, because she explained women’s freedom so well. Sanger’s work expressed how the freedom of women impacted the rest of society;

\begin{quote}
A free race cannot be born of slave mothers. A woman enchained cannot choose but give a measure of that bondage to her sons and daughters. No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her own body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother…It is she who has the long burden of carrying and rearing the unwanted children…Regardless of what man’s attitude may be, that problem is hers and before it can be his, it is hers alone.\textsuperscript{500}
\end{quote}

If women do not have the right to control their own bodies then they are not free, or equal citizens. If women cannot choose to have an abortion and must go ahead with a pregnancy they did not plan or do not want, then they are not free. Women were fighting for a right that was an ultimate necessity on their road to liberation. What distressed Sawyers was to see a woman on her own campus disagree with the fact that women should be able to have the right to choose. Instead Ms. Hall was focused on if to have an abortion was right or not, not the necessity of having the right to choose.

To Sawyers, and many women at the time, “Whether a woman should or should not have an abortion is not a matter to be decided by the medical profession or the court.”\textsuperscript{501} To have the abortion law amended and for the process to become a private conversation, and decision, between the woman and her doctor was integral to the progress of the movement. Women were fighting for abortion on demand so that their rights would be recognized. Without the recognition of this fundamental right, then women would continue to be denied the choice of whether to have children or not. Sawyers’ article was an attempt to bring the women on campus together on the issue of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{499} Sawyers, “Abortion: A Women’s Right,” 15.
\item \textsuperscript{500} Sawyers, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{501} Sawyers, 15.
\end{itemize}
abortion being an essential woman’s right. If women were divided over the rights they should have, especially in relation to their own bodies, then it would be difficult for them to fight together to have these oppressive laws changed. Sawyers argued, “Control over our bodies is essential if we are to make any progress. Men are reluctant to give us control over our bodies. It is one of the most efficient means they have of asserting their supremacy.” The abortion law was established by men, and it would be up to the women of Canada to wholeheartedly and collectively assert themselves and push for reform.

What does a feminist look like? Relationships and Marriage

Another means of women gaining rights over their bodies, and of their minds, was to make changes in the realm of relationships and marriage. Alison M. Jaggar and Paula Rothenberg explained that a catalyst for the women’s liberation movement was Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*. It was published in 1963 and overtly attacked the oppressive conservative view that women “should find their supreme happiness and fulfillment in domesticity.” As younger women began to raise their consciousness, individually and collectively, and the movement formed, they began to rally against “the assumption that women are uniquely suited for housework and child care.” Women needed to obtain the rights to their own bodies, but they also had to assert themselves within the domestic sphere so that patriarchal structures could be altered. Liberal feminists were aware that being oppressed within the domestic sphere was linked to gender oppression in the wider social structure: hence, the personal was indeed political. Jaggar and Rothenberg determined that it was the task of feminists to unite and obliterate the lingering and pervasive traditional distinction between public and private lives.

By 1976, female students had been a part of facilitating much change on their campus. They finally had access to legal contraceptives and family planning information, there was also a

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503 Sawyers, 15.
504 Sawyers, 15.
506 Jaggar, 208.
507 Jaggar, ix-x.
daycare center they could use and family housing. But, they were still addressing how to go about dealing with traditional ideals concerning relationships and marriage. That is why the “Women’s Hour” section in The Ontarion continued to be an important space, where women students updated one another on key issues. Barbara Sawyers kept adding her voice to the newspaper, offering summaries of pertinent lectures held for the benefit of women students. Sawyers often wrote reviews of the “Women’s Hour” lecture series for the newspaper and always included her personal thoughts. The lecture held in February 1976 was entitled “A Road to Self Development,” by Mary Colter, a Guelph family counselor. Colter candidly lectured about communicating with your partner and encouraging personal growth. Explaining that it was important for students to make educated and realistic decisions when entering a relationship. Students who were living together while at university were experimenting with relationships akin to marriage and Colter wanted to raise awareness for students about the realities of entering into such a union.

As a counselor, Colter explained “The extent and intensity of the intimacy involved in marriage is rarely anticipated.” Students, while exploring the freedoms that university offered them, needed to educate themselves about what marriage entailed. Colter focused on how important communication is to marriage as it “…enables people to establish a close relationship and fend off loneliness.” As men and women students interacted more freely with one another, they also worked on their communication skills. Women students had been helping the campus populace to liberate their minds in relation to women at university since 1964. Naturally, the language used by both men and women on campus changed as the presence of women increased. The changes in the 1970s enabled a more fluid and interpersonal connection as men entered into open conversation with women on an even playing field. Much of the oppressive and overtly sexual

511 Sawyers, 15.
512 Sawyers, 15.
language used so openly in the 1960s on campus had changed during the 1970s, due to the presence of women and their work to alleviate sexual objectification.

Colter wanted students to use their new-found language skills to continue communicating honestly with one another, especially if they entered into a marriage.\textsuperscript{513} She also suggested that “For a good marriage, a similar, educational and social background is an asset.”\textsuperscript{514} Now that women were participating in the same education as men, this opened the door to more choices of a partner for women. Women students had the chance to be involved with men at various stages throughout their university career, and to experiment with dating, and as traditional roles outside of the home changed so did the concept of marriage. This made Colter “concerned with the unconscious motives of the participants. Patriarchal society has tended to polarize the sexes. Women and man [men] are said to be endowed with mutually exclusive characteristics.”\textsuperscript{515} Colter, like many women during this decade, wanted to see a change in the roles that men and women in marriage had previously been relegated to. As women continued to achieve success in post-secondary institutions and enter into the workforce, it was only natural that domestic life would change too, or so women hoped.

Colter wanted to see a combining of the male and female roles, “allowing women to be assertive and men to [be] tender…,” which would enable men and women to reform traditional gender roles and rework the patriarchal standards.\textsuperscript{516} If both parties in a marriage can achieve “a personal wholeness unshackled by the restrictions resulting from the polarization of the sexes…”\textsuperscript{517} then both parties, as well as the marriage, will be stronger and happier. Women students were being urged by Colter to ensure that they continue to strive to be their best self, and to not let marriage stunt them or to relegate them once again to the home. Colter expressed that it was the “androgynous psyche” within each person that should combine and work with one another.\textsuperscript{518} It was becoming a more common notion that married life should be about sharing the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[513] Sawyers, “Women’s Hour,” 15.
\item[514] Sawyers, 15.
\item[515] Sawyers, 15.
\item[516] Sawyers, 15.
\item[517] Sawyers, 15.
\item[518] Sawyers, 15.
\end{footnotes}
roles within a marriage, that men should also help with taking care of the home and the children. Couples should not let the traditional patriarchal terms of marriage and predetermined gender roles relegate either party to a specific way of life within the marriage. Sawyers supported Colter’s “rejection of the polarization of the sexes. But rather than concentrating on mystical unions of the psyche within the context of the marriage we must take a closer look at what effects an androgynous consciousness will have on the existing social structures.” Colter, and Sawyers, both agreed that “new social institutions will have to evolve to replace those belonging to previous epochs.” Women, especially women educated in the decade of liberation, had to be at the forefront of this change, or at least the catalyst for it.

This was highly important to women students, because they had spent the better part of a decade asserting themselves as worthy of an education beyond that of home economics. These young women had enjoyed the freedoms of university life and ventured into relationships within a co-ed environment. They had liberated themselves from the restrictive patriarchal structure of the 1960s and created a space for themselves on campus. They were no longer deemed hubby-hunters, as “Mac” girls had been in the 1960s. It was up to these women to continue with their self-assertion outside of university and create lives for themselves that they could choose to share with a partner. If they wanted to marry then they now had the tools, mentally and emotionally, to know that they were equal to any man and that all responsibilities of domestic life should be shared.

The Significance of “Women’s Hour” and Discussing Women’s Health

By December 1975 “Women’s Hour” had been held and reviewed in The Ontarion for five consecutive semesters. It was an important installment in the lives of women students at Guelph, providing a space for women, and men, to gather and learn about women’s issues. The program was held each Monday from 12:10 to 1:00 in room 442 of the University Center. The weekly

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520 Sawyers, 15.
521 “Hubby Hunters Hustle for Mrs. Honours,” The Ontarion: 29, no.13, Guelph, January 27, 1966; Using this citation to show change from 1966 to 1975-76.
522 “Women’s Hour,” The Ontarion: 58, no.14, Guelph, Tuesday December 2, 1975, 12.
523 “Women’s Hour,” 12.
programs were outlined on “The Woman’s Page” in *The Ontarion* so that women students knew what was being offered. The hour allowed people “from the university and [the surrounding] area to speak on topics they are familiar with. The talk is not as formal as a lecture and there is always a question and answer period…” Dr. Margaret Andersen and Diane Goodwillie facilitated this hour and ensured that whoever lectured was going to offer something informative to the students. Some of the topics planned for the winter semester in 1975 were, “‘The Status of Woman Report of the University of Guelph,’ ‘Who was Virginia Woolf?’ ‘Woman and Alcohol,’ ‘Portrait of Simone de Beauvoir,’ and ‘Communications in Marriage.’” “Women’s Hour” functioned to inform and support the women students and added to the overall demarcation of the female space they had created on campus. Health was important to women students and the “Women’s Hour” series tried to support women as they endeavored to educate themselves about their health. Due to the women’s movement and consciousness-raising, women began to realize and to understand that they could expect more from their healthcare provider.

**Conclusion**

Even if female undergraduates were not using the term feminism to define themselves when writing to *TheOntarion*, or when engaging in the liberation movement on campus. They were definitely putting each of the feminist theories into action and using their newly awakened feminist consciousness to tackle all issues relevant to the movement. By openly discussing sexism, birth control and abortion on their campus, these young women were taking part in the more radical ideals of the wider movement. They were also expressing their more liberal ideals when identifying in what ways they were oppressed, whether due to their biology, or because of the pervasive sexism present on campus. These young women, who more often than not, defined themselves as women’s liberationists, were putting feminist theories into action, even if they did not recognize them as such at the time.

Female students were determined not to live the dependent and oppressive lives that some of their mothers had; they would choose whether or not they wanted to stay home, or if they wanted

\footnote{524}{"Women’s Hour,” 12.}
\footnote{525}{"Women’s Hour,” 12.}
to have children and continue to work. Women students used the movement, and their collective power, to assert themselves within society. They began to rework society from inside an institution, the university, as this was an esteemed social platform. If they actively took part in their post-secondary education and fought for more than just a role inside the home once they had a degree in hand, then they could help society to revalue the roles of women. They were educating themselves in a variety of interdisciplinary studies and knew that the role of women was integral to the success of the university and of society as a whole. Women were no longer going to allow themselves to fall into the trap of the socialized role of object and procreator, but to expand their minds and female spaces beyond that of “second place,” and be equal to the men around them.

The liberation movement was not just about freeing women from lives defined by someone other than themselves, but also ensuring that women knew they had choices. Especially in terms of motherhood, young women were beginning to understand that it was their choice to start a family or not. To obtain a university or college degree did not mean they should not have children. Being a liberated woman, also did not mean this, it only meant that they make an educated decision. Women students needed to know that they had access to any information they may need if they wanted to become mothers. Women used the movement to re-learn how to live, and how to be independent of a patriarchal society that had relegated them to an oppressed position. Freeing their minds went along with freeing their bodies, educating themselves and exploring their own sexualities.

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526 “Women and Insanity,” 12.
Conclusion: Liberation and Change for Women

The 1970s was a momentous decade because many Canadian women became empowered by consciousness-raising and chose to join the women’s liberation movement. By doing so, these women took part in the nationwide struggle to gain equality in the lives of all women. This struggle took place throughout society, including on university campuses where young women engaged in liberationist activism. As was highlighted in this thesis, the University of Guelph was a site of liberation, where many female undergraduates became active participants in the movement by creating feminist spaces on their own campus. An analysis of The Ontario shows that women students at Guelph chose to raise their voices and be heard, without doing so, the many changes made at the university in the name of women’s liberation may not have occurred. The Ontario was an essential tool of consciousness-raising, enabling female contributors to maintain the growth of women’s liberation on campus.

It has been made evident throughout this thesis that female students at Guelph took part in Marxist, radical and liberal forms of feminism when they endeavored to transform Guelph into an equal opportunity campus. Women students, as well as some female faculty, and with help from the administration, reclaimed and promoted the voices of women by sharing their personal problems and espousing their needs as being political. They worked to redefine the societal position of women from second-class to equal by using the Royal Commission on the Status of Women to request a Task Force on their campus. This ensured that the university assessed the status of women students and faculty, provoking the administration to make the necessary changes relevant to fostering equality on campus. Finally, many women students fought to reaffirm that it was essential that women must have the rights to their own bodies, otherwise liberation could not be achieved.

Although the struggle for liberation remains underway in many areas of society, female students at Guelph had achieved a lot by 1976. However, they had to continue working together to produce any changes on their campus in areas that were still lacking, such as requesting equal pay and increasing the number of female faculty. This was especially relevant as women continued to register in previously male-dominated programs and were still working to adjust the male-centric curriculum within post-secondary education. Even at this time and after much success,
women across Canada still had to contend with the prevailing traditional beliefs that trapped some women in archaic social roles. In 1974 it was noted that, “If university students in general are low in the social hierarchy, then women university students are at the bottom of the heap.” This was because women were still not being taken seriously as they followed an educational path that took them beyond being confined to the domestic sphere. Support systems were still not being provided by the university in all academic areas so that women students would be successful and go on to graduate school.

In the mid 1970s there were still fewer women than men enrolled in universities across Canada. Statistics collected in 1974 showed, “women constitute 51% of the entire population, [yet] they make up only 35% of full-time undergraduate students in Canadian universities.” The presence of women in graduate studies dropped even further, “with only 20% of graduate students being women.” The statistics of women in the workplace after graduating showed even more of a decline in the presence of women. Throughout Canada, within universities and the job market, women were not equally represented. Even if a woman had obtained a degree and entered the workforce, she more often than not found herself being relegated to a feminine role. It was frustrating to Canadian women that outside of the home their work still mirrored the outdated societal expectations placed on women. Canadian society, for the most part, still adhered to placing women into the role of domestic servant, mother and caretaker. Women still had of lot of work to do in changing society’s perception of them as it was still thought by many people that a “Woman’s acceptable position in the labour force is one which is merely an extension of this social role.” What angered women was “when an entire class of people is predestined at birth to exclusively fill these roles, then the class itself is degraded.” It was obvious that women were still in a position of oppression and their gender roles were not being re-evaluated in work-life.

527. “She Walks! She Talks! She Thinks! (Does She?),” The Ontarion, Guelph, Tuesday June 11, 1974, 4.
528. “She Walks!” 4.
What was important to female students was that the university was becoming a place of equality, but some still felt that the university was perpetuating feminine roles in some areas. Throughout the 1970s this was what women on campus had been addressing and working to change. Yet, it was still a prevailing thought that, “Education for women is only tolerated because of the influence they will have on the children they bear.” This did not sit well with female students because they worked hard to prove that they were as worthy of an education as their male peers. Women in the movement had also fought to prove that they had a right to use their education in whatever way they wanted. Not everything women did had to be connected to if, and when, they would be wives and mothers, and this was the prevailing societal attitude that was slow to change. It was aggravating to students that the attitudes of the university and of society were changing too slowly and not keeping up with the societal changes that were needed.

An article in *The Ontarion* noted, “Canada has one of the finest educational systems in the world. But many Canadian employers unjustifiably underpay some very well-educated graduates of that system. Women.” This was disheartening to women students who had navigated a male-dominated education and increased the level of equality for women on campus. The thought that they would have to assert and liberate themselves in the workplace when society should have changed as women had, was increasingly difficult to understand. The article highlighted discrepancies in pay between women and men once they left university. These statistics did not alleviate the stress that women students felt, and they made their opinions known. In 1974 “A 24-year-old male, leaving university with a degree, earns on the average 19 per cent more in his first job than a woman of the same age with the same degree. A male high school graduate can expect an average [of] 34.2 per cent more than the equivalent female graduate. It just isn’t right.” It most certainly was not right, and women students were made increasingly aware that even if they went to university it was still expected that they would return to the home.

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534 “She Walks! She Talks! She Thinks! (Does She?)” 4.
535 “Will You Be Wearing This Button When You Graduate This Spring?” *The Ontarion*, Guelph, March 4, 1975, 20.
Even though the university had changed its opinions of women and began to offer a more inclusive and supportive environment, women were still facing unequal treatment outside of education. This was part of what women were fighting so hard to change in the 1970s, but by 1975 it was obvious that this was still an area that needed a lot of work. Women students wondered, “Society expects women to cook and sew because it expects them to get married one day. Don’t men get married too? Maybe they should learn household skills as well.” It was becoming more obvious to women, as they joined forces and added to their education, that they were still being held to a double standard. Women students wanted to know why, “Of some three million women working in Canada today, more than 50 per cent are married. Why are they being paid less than their husbands?” It did not make sense to women students “when 50 per cent of all Canadian women in the labour force, having completed their high school education, have gone on to take post-secondary training, compared to 39.3 per cent of men.” Women were obviously not underqualified in comparison to men, yet they were being provided with less than men were.

Female undergraduates had come so far by the late 1970s, they had left behind being relegated to the study of solely home economics and had escaped the trap of domestic life. Yet they were now expected to be educated, go to work, marry and have children, but earn less and be treated unfairly. The liberation movement had enabled women to change so much in their lives, it opened their minds to a situation they thought was only an individual problem. But now, women had to continue the fight by helping liberate the rest of society and demand that everyone start thinking of women as equals. Women of the 1970s would no longer be relegated to second-class citizenship and this meant that they would not earn less than men in similar jobs or be relegated to traditional social roles within the workplace. It would be up to the women of the 1970s to do as the women of the 1960s had done and teach their children to be better, to be open-minded, and to further support the liberation of all women.

Revisiting the lives of female students in the 1970s is significant because their voices provide a starting point for when the discourse on women and education changed. It was not an overnight endeavor, and it certainly was not fully altered by 1980, it was instead a long and drawn out process, but a successful one.\(^{545}\) These women fought against the preconceived notions of earlier generations, and felt, as well as lived, an entirely new consciousness.\(^{546}\) This revaluing allowed them to determine why they were in university, and to achieve a degree besides that of MRS.\(^{547}\) The female undergraduates present at the amalgamation of the University of Guelph were the first generation of women to take part in what would become an on-going historical narrative of women’s successes within educational institutions. A narrative that is necessary to have within the canon of feminist history, and one that should be studied more closely.

Second wave feminism and the women’s liberation movement were fortified by the awakening of the feminist consciousness in female undergraduates, which led them to activism.\(^{548}\) Guelph became a liberated space for women, but only because the undergraduate women of the 1970s fought for this change to be realized. Florence Howe, who established *The Feminist Press* in 1970, and Paula Caplan argued, “Having a room of her own, both actual and metaphorical made this reform a move toward female visibility within academia.”\(^{549}\) Women needed a space in which to grow and succeed, and universities needed to be at the forefront of their liberation by providing such a space.\(^{550}\) The evidence provided in this thesis shows how women at Guelph rigorously and aptly used the platform of *The Ontarion* to raise awareness in areas pertinent to women’s liberation, and that their fight was successful in many ways. Married-student housing was created in the late 1960s, a day care was finally opened at Guelph in 1975, women’s courses were added, birth control


\(^{546}\) Waterloo CUP, “Consciousness Raising Not Enough Says Feminist,” 15.


\(^{548}\) Consciousness Raising: Backbone of Women’s Liberation Movement,” 19.


became accessible, and the fight to legalize abortion was well underway.\textsuperscript{551} The lasting effects of the changes made at Guelph during the 1970s can be seen today as women students largely outnumber males, female professors and staff can be found across campus, and women-centered courses have become an essential part of interdisciplinary studies.\textsuperscript{552} However, feminists continue to stress “the importance of grassroots organizing” and the significance of women “working within existing political parties,” or in institutions like universities, to fight for liberation, as it is an ongoing struggle.\textsuperscript{553}

While there is still a lot of work to be done globally to fully eliminate inequality in the lives of every woman, it is arguable that the rise of feminist activism in the 1970s is what empowered many of those young women to become leaders in the fight for equality today. This research has indicated that female students of the 1970s did not only fight to enhance their own lives, they added to the wider movement by joining together, speaking their minds, and effecting change for women in the subsequent generations. Women students from the 1970s have left a lasting impact at the University of Guelph as the co-ed and equal education atmosphere thrives today. Over a decade many of the young women that came to Guelph, and then left as graduates, took the time to add to the female space on campus leaving behind a changed university. Exploring the history of liberation on the University of Guelph campus is significant because it highlights the lives of women students at a time when they were actively involved in instigating change on campus. Ultimately, they assisted in the burgeoning role of women in academia, where women are now heard and valued, where they have female role-models within the faculty and staff, and where they can continue to add to the history of women at Guelph and in Canada.


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