

Feminist Peace Activists in the U.S. and the U.K.: Navigating Faith, Identity, and Practice

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Abstract:

This thesis examines how self-identified feminist women peace activists living in the U.K. and the U.S. understand their activist lives. Although the topic of women peace activists is an established field, research explicitly on *feminist* peace activists is limited. Moreover, starting with my own life-story I take a holistic view of ‘peace activism’ as a mode of engaging with ‘everyday peace’ as well as specific oppressive practices, including but not restricted to war. I start by critically engaging with academic literature on feminist activism, peace activism, and women’s experiences of war and categorise key threads of identity, practices, feminism, community, and media. These ideas formed the basis of the thirty-seven semi-structured interviews I conducted with women feminist peace activists. In these conversations, the expected topics of identity and community emerged strongly, while I was surprised to discover the strength of faith and Christianity for most of the interviewees, given that religion was not a reference point for recruitment. My investigation thus evolved into the overarching question: How do peace activists navigate (practice) Christianity and maintain an activist feminist identity? For my interviewees, the path to peace activism was not always clear; however, for all of them the role of peace and feminism in their lives was a salient place of interconnectedness. This experience was often described in relation to family and community, especially faith-based groups. I identify the difficulties faced by the activists within traditionally masculine and conservative spaces, describing how they navigate these situations. I argue that their thoughtful holistic approaches can be theorised as a form of ‘queering’ as resistance, and that their belief in, and activation of ‘hope’ for sustainable peace is both a form of resistance to oppressive practices and a strategy for change.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter 1

Identities and Labels: What Feminism has to do with the Current Peace

Activist Movement

After completing my Master's Degree on Women's Political Autobiographies in 2015, I was left feeling unsatisfied with the research I had completed, particularly how theoretical and detached I felt from the subject matter. I knew going into my PhD that I wanted to choose a research topic that was not only an extension of my feminism but was also rooted in activist work. Having identified as a peace activist for the entirety of my adult life and most of my teenage years, I decided this would be the place where I could have an authentic research experience which would fit with my activism. Prior to starting at the University of York, I had never left the U.S. and had a limited knowledge of the peace activism rooted in the U.K. I knew coming into this process that I wanted to take this opportunity not only to interview and research my own U.S. based peace community but to explore what was happening in my new temporary home in the U.K.

It is important to note that I am a first-generation Latina American on my father's side, a man who only came to America to escape the dangers of El Salvador, and came from white poverty on my mother's. I lived in a small racist and conservative town in the U.S., was the child of a teenage mother, lived on government assistance, and was homeless at multiple points of my childhood. I missed nearly half of my elementary education because of domestic and sexual violence, and by most accounts was tossed away as a worthless member of society. These identities, labels and experiences all shaped me, made me intimately aware of the injustices of my community and provided me with a strong sense of agency and self.

My interest in and passion for peace activists and peace work started when I was a small child. Growing up in a violent environment magnified the harsh realities of daily life

and brought the atrocities of the world to the forefront for me by the age of six. I was surrounded by people who did not know how to communicate with each other peacefully or end disagreements without physical violence. While this was my home life, I also had several friends throughout elementary school whose own experiences mirrored my own. As my knowledge of the world began to grow outside of my existence I found I was drawn to books, movies, news reports, and any art form that dealt with social justice issues. These were the stories that I chose to surround myself with, whether consciously or not, and they shaped my future as a peace activist. Once I became a teenager, I started to demonstrate my agency through protests, environmentalism, vegetarianism, volunteering, and through the course work I studied at university. As an outsider in nearly every situation I existed in, I was able to silently and often invisibly take in the complexities of my world which allowed me to recognise patterns and understand why and how violence and hatred worked on an emotional level. While people become activists for several reasons, for me it was a method of survival – from an early age – something that never felt like a choice.

Although I would have always said I wanted peace, and I thought that was an essential part of social justice work, there was a definitive shift in my approach and understanding of peace activism and how to achieve peace after becoming a mother. This statement is not meant to be cliché or to follow along the lines of mothers as nurturers. The aspect of motherhood that shifted my perspective was the traumatic experience of pregnancy that led to me being bed rested for five out of the eight and a half months of my pregnancy. Before becoming pregnant, I was an outwardly angry feminist and was not particularly worried about maintaining peaceful protest strategies. Honestly, I felt frustrated by pacifism and non-contact forms of social justice work and would have aligned with the label of a social justice warrior before identifying as a feminist peace activist. However, being bedridden and near death multiple times shifted my perspective. I began to value my own life

and realised I had more to offer as an activist by staying alive than putting myself in life-threatening positions. I was most drawn to peace work in particular because I saw it as an umbrella concept that encompassed all of the issues I felt most passionate about: social justice, environmentalism, peace within the home and interpersonal relationships, and feminism. For me, peace activism was no longer a positivist idea of ending wars and the military, but a holistic creation of peacefulness in all areas of life.

One person I found most inspirational for aligning with the peace movement was Kathy Kelly; I attended one of her lectures in 2010 at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland and found that she was able to unite all of these issues into the peace movement. She was also a Catholic, which created an additional level of connection with her, as a previous Catholic myself. Her ability to embody peace while remaining active served as a model for my activism, it demonstrated how I too could remain active in the movement while keeping peace central to my work. Having such a drastic shift in perspective in a relatively short time led me to start questioning what my own life as a feminist peace activist would look like, and how I would continue to grow and adapt my practices. I was curious to see how those activists before me had navigated such fluctuations in beliefs and practice, if at all, and to look more closely at how a feminist peace activist's life looked. Until my PhD, my knowledge of peace activists was monopolised by those who were famous, usually saintly figures who in most regards felt distant and unreachable in my ability to connect to them on a personal level. I began to redefine what a peace activist might be, and reflect on the peace-making practices I had seen my whole life, specifically within my childhood and home. This might seem a strange comment given my description of my childhood violence, but I began to realise that the women in my life were acting as peacemakers, albeit imperfectly and inconsistently. Their violence mitigation and often secret-keeping from violent and abusive partners was done to create an environment as peaceful and safe as possible (within such

tragic situations) for their children. My understanding of domestic violence has developed over the years, and I realise that this peace-making within abusive homes also follows a clear pattern of the domestic violence cycle; particularly the “tension building” portion of the cycle of abuse (Walker, 1987). However, it does not diminish my early exposure to women attempting to create peace in nearly impossible situations. From this realisation, I decided I wanted to shift away from the most known activists, and I wanted to see what the life of an “average” peace activist looked like; I wanted to hear their stories. However, to my surprise, as I started my field work I was contacted by four ‘well-known’ activists who wanted to participate in my research. Through self-reflection, I began to question what it means to be a feminist peace activist in the U.S. or the U.K., to wonder how activists see these identities as affecting their practice, and to ponder how these labels become a part of their identity. As part of my personal and academic self-reflexivity, I applied these questions first to my own life. I wondered about what I identify as, and how, if at all, this had changed over time. I thought about how these women, the first examples I had of trying to create peace, affected my own development, and I considered what I do now to create peace in my environment. Then I was ready to begin conversations with other activists, to try to understand how they had, if at all, dealt with these topics in their own lives.

The academic development of my personal connection to feminist peace activism began when I started to consider how I could utilise academia as a tool for activism. I wanted my research to serve as an additional outlet for lesser-known activists, even if their words were anonymous, their message and experiences as feminists in the peace movement would have a platform to be shared amongst academic communities. I find this to be an extension of my feminism, one that brings together academia and activism. In many ways, it is a way of ensuring that my voice and others like it are also represented in the academy. Initially, I wanted to complete interviews in countries outside of the U.S. and U.K.; I was drawn to see

how feminist and peace activist identities looked in countries outside of the ones with which I was most familiar. However, it quickly became apparent that that scale of research was not feasible in three years with no budget or research assistant. I had to tailor my idea from one that felt more transnational in perspective to an idea that focussed in on a smaller number of feminist peace activist experiences. In retrospect, this change in my original research concept was beneficial to the time and depth of interviews I was able to have with my participants.

I knew I wanted to complete qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews. I believe that I would not have obtained as detailed or data-rich details had my interviews been questionnaires, surveys, letters, blogs, online forums, or any other form of quantitative methods. I also would not have been able to focus on feminism in peace activism in the same nuanced way had I done quantitative or statistical analysis alone. I wanted to allow the complexities of the participant's experiences and stories to be centred in the research, so I knew that I needed to take a qualitative approach in the form of thematic analysis. Initially, I considered utilising photovoice as a methodology which would have allowed feminist peace activists to engage in reflection on their experiences as activists through the medium of photography. I also considered taking a portrait of each activist to go along with their photographs as a potential art exhibit. However, once my call for participants went out, and I completed my ethics application for the University of York, I realised that the safety and anonymity of my participants were essential. It was not a risk worth taking, nor one I felt comfortable asking my participants to take.

When I began this work in 2015, we were living in a pre-Trump and pre-Brexit U.S. and U.K. Similarly, when I was interviewing activists, these two potential outcomes in U.S. and U.K. politics were discussed mostly in joking terms, with the feminist peace activists saying both were nearly impossible outcomes. While completing my transcriptions and analysis during the election and voting times, I felt pings of pain whenever I transcribed the

optimism, or perhaps disbelief that we could live in a world where simultaneously Trump was president of the U.S. and the U.K. was leaving the European Union. I am also curious if the responses to my questions would have been drastically different had I completed my interviews after these events. Given the resurgence of feminist political activism since my research, it's possible that my whole research project and interview questions would have focussed on these events and how feminist peace activists were responding to them as individuals or communities. This is not to say that there were not significant social and political issues occurring before Trump and Brexit, but I would guess that topics such as 9/11 and the excitement about Hillary Clinton's campaign would have been less central to the conversations, whereas the topic of migrations and refugees could have had enormous implications in my research had I completed the fieldwork just six months later. While the topic of deportation, the wall along the Mexico/the U.S. border, and the implications of Brexit are all growing concerns for activists within my communities, these are also a place of distress and where a lot of peace work is currently directed for activists in the U.S. and the U.K (Factora-Borchers, 2019; Binkowski, 2016). This research, then, reflects on feminist peace activism at a specific moment in history.

As I began to read literature about peace activists from the past three decades, I realised this research primarily focussed on peace/feminist groups and organisations, famous activists, or a general history of the peace movement. Most important to my research is the lack of work being done specifically on *feminist* peace activists and their individual processes and experiences as activists. Significantly, my work adds to this conversation by bringing both feminist and Christian identity into the research on peace activism within the U.S. and the U.K.

This thesis aims to explore how self-identified feminist women peace activists understand their identities as feminist peace activists. To do this, I explore how they

understand feminism in connection to their peace work. Further, I consider the unexpected prevalence of self-identified Christians in this study, and investigate how the participants navigate identities of feminist and peace activist with the identity of Christian as well. The topic of women peace activists is an established area of academic study and covers broad areas such as history of women peace activists, critiques of women peace activist, tool kits, and international policy reform (McCammon & Banaszak, 2018; Erzurum & Eren, 2014; Anderlini, 2007; Cohn, Kinsella & Gibbings, 2007; Women Waging Peace, 2004; Porter, 2003; Mazurana, 2002; Rehn & Johnson-Sirleaf, 2002; Olsson & Tryggestad, 2001; Frantz & Alonso, 1994; Pierson, 1987).¹ However, research done on feminist peace activism as a whole is still limited (Sharp, 2013; El-Bushra, 2008; Cockburn, 2004; Reardon, 1993; Brock-Utne, 1992). The majority of this research focuses on specific individual organisations or actions.² The subcategories of religious peace activism and religious feminism are also established areas of research which are significant to this study (Coblentz & Jacobs, 2018; Fiebig & Christopher, 2018; Desmazières, 2012; Dear, 2005; Fuchs, 1999; Isherwood & McEwan, 1993).³

Further, I have only found five texts that research religious feminist peace activists, however none of these directly deal with the same issues, or have the same approach as my research. Kathy Kelly (2002) discusses her identity as a Catholic peace activist, but does not identify as feminist. Helen Taylor was identified as a Catholic feminist activist, without specific reference to being a peace activist (Larsen, 2017). Two additional texts discuss religious feminist peace activists, but have a limited scope. The first article by Spahic-Siljak (2013) is about feminist theology and peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whereas the second considers Catholic women's grassroots anti-abortion activism (Haugeberg, 2015). The

¹ In addition to these eleven references, there are an additional ninety-eight references in my bibliography that focus on women's peace activism.

² There are thirty-two additional resources regarding feminist peace activism found in the bibliography.

³ Thirty-two additional resources for religious peace activism and religious feminism can be found in the bibliography.

most similar text I found to my own considers religious feminist women's peace activist identities, which focuses on Jewish women, and does not go into the same depth in their six-page article (Gorelick & Safran, 2011).

My research is important not only because it adds to the current academic literature on feminism and peace activism, but also because it provides insight into the lived experiences of current feminist peace activists. It is also unique because I interview women with a wide age range of activist experience, from those who have been activists for seventy-five years, to those who had just turned eighteen and starting their feminist peace activist lives. Some themes were expected, such as identity and community, but themes such as the prominence of faith and Christianity with feminist peace activism were surprising. As a general framework, I have rooted much of my activism and approach to research through Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, specifically utilising it as a methodology of the oppressed which I connect to general feminist research practices throughout my work (1985). My connection to Freire's work began during my Master's degree in 2013. Although his work is not explicitly feminist, its underlying ideologies and its centring of oppression and oppressed members of society resonated with me on an activist level more deeply than more explicit feminist theory did, at the time. By employing his work in this research's methodology, I am best able to connect both academia and activism in one practice without feeling that I must align more strongly towards one or the other.

Overall, before conducting the interviews, I was interested for this thesis to explore the ways in which feminist peace activists understand their identity as feminist peace activists. However, throughout the interviewing process I came to realise how frequent religion, specifically Christianity was mentioned by the participants. Once I was done with the interviews, and started my analysis, I began to see that this was the largest and most obvious common theme across almost all of the participants. I went back to my call for

participants and ensured that there was nothing which requested religious feminist peace activists. I also looked at the organisations I contacted, and found that only twenty percent of these had any kind of religious affiliation. Completing the analysis confirmed the participant's overall connection to Christianity, and highlighted some of the commonalities and differences between the participant's experiences of their faith and activism. I began to wonder throughout this process, how are these women able to hold onto their Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, which has some outspoken conservative and patriarchal values, alongside their feminist identity (Manning, 1997)? I realised that having multiple conflicting identities is something that I can recognise within myself, and I noticed the opportunity to learn from this unexpected sample of participants and find out ways in which they were able to exist within all, often contradicting identities of Christian, feminist and peace activist.

With this in mind, my research question is: How do the peace activists navigate (practice) Christianity and maintain an activist feminist identity? I specifically address the difficulties the activists face within traditionally masculine and conservative spaces, how they navigate these situations through queering and forms of resistance, and how they continue to have hope that sustainable peace is possible. I addressed these research questions through semi-structured interviews, which functioned more like conversations, with thirty-seven feminist peace activists within the U.K. and the U.S. I found by exploring the lived experiences of self-identified feminist peace activists, I was able to understand better their perspectives on feminism's place within their peace activism work and how they navigate multiple identities.

1.1 Chapter Outline

In Chapter 2, "Critical Context of Feminist Peace Activism", I review research published over the past thirty years mainly in the fields of Women, Gender, and Sexuality

Studies, Peace Studies, and Sociology, with some research coming from the fields of Psychology and Religious Studies, in order to contextualise my own work on feminist peace activism. This literary engagement helped me identify several themes which I utilised to formulate my semi-structured interview questions, including the role of community, paths to peace activism, influence of family and parenting, and religion. These ideas have been written about in the aforementioned fields of study, and allowed me to root my own work in the ideas other academics have previously developed. Specifically, I consider theories of identity, with a focus on their role in social movements. I discuss the importance of community, and the different ways in which communities function and work together to make impactful change. At the same time, I engage with literature that points out the various barriers which peace communities face and how they have adapted. I go on to explore ways individual's paths to activism have been attributed to the contribution of forming these peace communities. I then examine the academic literature that discusses the influence of parenting and religion on peace activist identity.

In Chapter 3, "Keeping Feminist Methodology Central: Design, Recruitment, Collection, and Analysis", I discuss the research question, and my aim to harness feminist research practices in the best ways possible. I explain the research design and reflect on my decision to use semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. I include information about how I recruited participants and where they were located. The role of technology is highlighted as a versatile way to engage with interviewees but also a tool which aligns with feminist research methods. I discuss my own experience as a peace activist and how this affected the interviewing process, and the importance of reflective practice as an engaged feminist researcher. Finally, I include information on the thematic analysis and how this was utilised in this research.

In Chapter 4, “Praying ‘Symbolically with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other’: The role of Christianity for feminist peace activists”, I begin my thematic analysis. I investigate the relationship between feminist, peace activist and religious, specifically Catholic identities. Through the exploration of six main themes: familial connections to the church, finding harmony between faith and feminist peace work, identifying with Jesus, contemporary masculine Christian leaders, queering Christianity for peace, and hope as resistance, I investigate the ways the interviewees navigate their often-conflicting identities in order to maintain internal peace while sustaining their feminist peace work within Christianity.

In Chapter 5, “Beyond Themselves: How feminist peace activists are sharing their practices with the world”, I continue my analysis and discuss different ways in which feminist peace activists affect and interact with the world around them in their activism. This investigation is broken down into several subthemes: interconnectedness and mainstream integration and how activist values integrate in their lives over time and how they bring these ideas outside of their peace activist communities; support and challenges from peers, family and friends and how this affects their activism while balancing their relationships; religious peace education including aligning with Jesus in their activism as well as Quaker history of dissent and Buddhist tradition of non-violence; and social justice practices such as morality and grassroots work as well as the links between religion, peace and social justice.

In Chapter 6, “Concluding Remarks: What I Found, Future Research, Value, Limitation, and Reflection”, I draw together the ideas that have arisen so far. I start by focussing on how my interviewees explored internal and external peace practices, and relate my findings to other literature in the fields of Women’s Studies and Peace Studies. I then reflect on the value and limitation of my research, highlighting its function as an activist and academic piece of work. I conclude by returning to my autobiography and the positioning of

my research within a particular point of time, before much of the current right-wing leadership and policy changes. I make suggestions for future research which takes into account my own development as an academic and peace activist, and the dramatic changes visible in peace activism around populist ideologies and climate change.

1.2 Key Terms

Defining key terms in this research is a difficult process since they can be thought about differently depending on their context. It is important to acknowledge how these words can be understood as they are brought up throughout the rest of this research, both in theory and from the participants' experiences. It is important to consider the participants' definitions of key terms because the knowledge of this thesis comes from my analysis of interviews with the participants and each person has developed their own understandings of the terms and how they identify with them.

Most importantly and very difficult to define is the concept of peace. As I mentioned earlier in the introduction, my understanding of peace began with the notion of violence mitigation, and eventually saw peace activism as a holistic creation of peacefulness in all areas of life. This research has helped further develop and expand on my understanding of peace from my first experiences. First is in the complex relationship of peace to violence. Through my dialogue with the research participants, I have come to define violence as a choice, whether it is an action or inaction, that results in some kind of harm to a person, group or environment. When peace is thought of in relation to violence, it is as if it is the lack of or avoidance of violence, but I believe it is something more than that. There is something active about peace that requires development and maintenance. This is something one participant spoke about, that peace is "an ongoing process" and requires conflict resolution skills that prevent situations from turning into violence (pg. 172). Another participant

helpfully described conflict as an “indicator of injustice or abuse to human dignity” and by failing to address these, the tension will persist (pg. 183). It is important to note that this process also involves a lot of hope. This is another topic that is discussed in this research, and can also be defined in terms of action. In this research, hope is described as the perseverance of an action through making adjustments until the desired result is achieved. This was a very important concept to address within peace work due to the consistent setbacks and new conflicts that peace activists encountered.

Other than understanding peace in its relationship to violence, this research explores how peace can be built and incorporated into all aspects of life. Through these definitions that show how active peace needs to be when positioned against violence, I have been reminded of the notion of non-violence. Some participants described non-violence in terms of pacifism, and a complete avoidance of violence in their lives. Another participant discussed how violence is treated in society as inevitable, as if there is no alternative. With this she talked about the importance of expanding what non-violence looks like to include trauma healing, civil resistance, and unarmed police forces (pg. 186). Although the definitions of peace and violence cannot be fully separated from one another, the participants have not just aimed to stop violence, they also work to create peace in their own lives. That peace can be practiced in many ways, including social justice activism, environmentalism, anti-racism, and feminism. Each of these areas are described by the participants as ways of challenging harmful norms by acknowledging the impact that ignoring and inaction can cause. Instead, the participants give examples that peace work is about building relationships with people in prisons to help disrupt the prison industrial complex (pg. 199); it is about choosing locally sourced organic food to support the environment (pg. 170); supporting BAME lead social justice causes and many other “tangible” ways of incorporating peace into daily life (pg.

156). As one of the participants point out in Chapter 5 (pg. 170), peace is “not just not harming, but it’s really love in action”.

Chapter 2

Critical Context of Feminist Peace Activism

It will be clear from the introduction that I developed a personal and activist understanding of some aspects of peace activism through reflection on my family life, involvement in social justice campaigns, and exposure to significant ideas from Kelly and Freire. As I began my PhD and more systematic study, these perspectives influenced the framing of the critical ground I wanted to draw on. I had some broad research aims – to explore the meanings and practices of feminist peace activism – and knew I wanted to investigate these ideas from the stance of self-identified women feminist peace activists in the U.S. and U.K.

I read widely at first, soaking in theories around peace, feminism, and activism. Through this reading I began to focus my aims and research questions, and I homed in on five key areas: identity and social movements, family and parental influence, religion, paths to activism, and community. First, I consider theories of identity and take a specific focus on their interaction within social movements. Then, I look at the importance of community as a whole, specifically how community organisations and civic involvement are influential in consciousness-raising and creating social change. Third, I examine paths to activism including experiences and possible motivations. I balance the individual activist's path within a group and assess the need for representation of marginalised people within activist communities as a place to provide additional paths/routes to activism. Fourth, I discuss the role of family, specifically parents and interestingly fathers, and their views and activism in the childhood of the activist. Lastly, I examine the impact of religion on peace activists' lives and peace activism, specifically Catholicism. I also look at how Quakerism was noted as a foundation of peace work both locally and globally.

2.1 Identity and Social Movements

At the onset of this research project, there was an expectation that the feminist peace activists would be discussing social movements in relation to their identity. However, this expectation, or hypothesis, ended there, as it was assumed that how these conversations and understandings of identity and social movements would reveal their own definitions and ways of becoming. Nick Crossley, in his key text, *'Making Sense of Social Movements'* (2002), acknowledges the impossibility of defining social movements more broadly but how even defining one specific social movement can result in a myriad of definitions (p. 2). What becomes important is that there exists what Crossley calls a "family resemblance", meaning that there are shared characteristics within activists' definition of their social movement, but there is less emphasis on a shared and narrow definition (p. 2). This lack-of-definition theory becomes ever more relevant as social movements morph from measurable goal specific endeavours (policy change, freeing those imprisoned, and/or legal ramifications), to more broader changes in our social and cultural understandings, expectations, and realities where legal changes are only the start and one small part of social activism and movements. This complex understanding of social movements has long been supported by activist-based theorists, noting that "some movements consist of little more than a 'cultural drift' ... a discernible and coherent, yet decentred and unorganized shift in particular ways of thinking, acting and perceiving." (Blumer, 1969). It is Blumer's ideas about the shifts in 'thinking', 'acting', and 'perceiving', that are of particular relevance to this investigation of how Christian feminist peace activists practice and navigate their identities. As they suggest the acknowledgement and validity of the sometimes intelligible knowing of what a social movement is without clearly defined parameters. It is perhaps this understanding of thinking, acting, and perceiving that provide a framework of the Christian feminist peace activist's ability to position their activism within their minds (thinking), their social political activism

(acting), and their insights about their practices and identities (perceiving). Although these understandings can present problems in traditional academic practices, due to challenges in being able to quantify, categorise, and provide definitive parameters. There is also a freedom and acknowledgement about the fluid nature of social movements and thus identities rooted in these movements, this expansive understanding provides the opportunity to explore academic literature that seeks to explain and understand the connections of social movements and the activist's identity within them.

The notion of identity has been understood in many ways across disciplines all trying to answer the fundamental questions about ourselves, *who am I?* One of the most influential theories of identity development comes from the field of psychology in the form of Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages of development (1968). Overall, the theory suggests that people develop stage by stage, each with its own conflict that a person deals with at specific times in their development. The fifth stage of this theory highlights the conflict of identity and role confusion, and is theorised to occur between the ages of 12 and 18. Although Erikson describes identity as a "fundamental organizing principle which develops constantly throughout the lifespan", it is through adolescence that a person develops a sense of self that remains relatively stable throughout the rest of their life (Rageliene, 2016). When a person resolves this conflict and successfully develops through the previous stages, it is thought that they have more confidence, independence and are able to relate to others. With these things in mind, we can make a few different conclusions. One is that Erikson's theory relies on the basis that identity is a social construction since it has to do with relating to others. There is something about identity that connects people to one another. Identity is also personal as it is connected with one's ability to be sure about what they are doing, even when that person is alone. Finally, this theory relies on time for a personality to develop. This stage of psychosocial development is one of eight different stages that each have their own

developmental goals, and each can impact on the person's sense of self, behaviours and relationships.

James Marcia's (1966) work also investigates this identity formation by theorizing that the identity is in flux until it reaches identity achievement. This theory distinguishes four different progressions of identity exploration. First, Identity Diffusion describes a lack of commitment to goals or values, and displays disorganization and avoidance. The person does not have a clear idea of what they identify with or as, and this shows up in how they think and act. Second is Identity Foreclosure which describes an instance of forming an identity of something without evaluating if that fits, or if there is something else that could better fit. Third, Identity Moratorium, is when a person forms a temporary status as a part of their identity. An example of this could be identifying themselves with a specific school they attended or a sports team they played on. Both of these are time limited experiences, but also identities they could explore and learn from. Finally, is Identity Achievement. This final progression happens after exploring different options and when an individual makes a commitment to a set of values, goals and beliefs.

Marcia's theory brought a more nuanced way of understanding how identity forms by a person's unconscious process of trying things out until deciding what is right for them. This fits well with Erikson's theory considering there are aspects of development over time, and a sense of self-confidence and direction that identity provides. In these theories It can be understood that healthy identity development can result from successful navigation of these stages. However, this is also a simplified understanding of what identity is for a person, and how it can form. Identity cannot be fully understood by incorporating single points of context over all time. It is also important to consider that people are a part of multiple identity classifications at any given time, and in regard to many social contexts. A person can identify

with ideologies, interpersonal relations, social groups, or very specific to the individual, and all of these can exist simultaneously (Syed & McLean, 2016).

One way to conceptualise this is through the idea of multiple identities, where a person is able to hold several different identities (Kiang et al., 2008). One problem with this idea is that it assumes that these identities can have similarities, but are not necessarily connected in any way. However, this may be limited in its understanding because it assumes that identities are compartmentalised into sections within a person and do not interact, support or are in conflict with one another. This points out the ‘assimilation and pluralism paradox’ of identity, questioning if parts of ourselves are assimilated and integrated into our whole being, or if we can hold separate identities for separate contexts (Pradhan, 2020). Studies have discussed intersecting identities as a concept of overlapping qualities between identities that can show commonalities and conflict, but these studies have been limited to discussing two specific identities at once, and rely on contextual identities (Sarno, et al., 2015; Walker and Syed, 2013). Pradhan (2020) theorises that multiple identities can exist in simultaneity, which acknowledges potential internal conflict, but redefines this as ‘unresolved co-presences’. It may be too difficult to accurately study what it is like to hold more than two identities at the same time, but considering that people hold many identities at once, it makes sense that the combination of these is a complex network of complementary and conflicting qualities people are made up of.

Instead of understanding identity as a list of attributes a person develops in association to different contexts, Burke & Stets (2009) describe identity as a set of meanings a person develops with relation to a social category, group, role or to themselves as a unique individual. They go on to discuss how the importance of meaning impacts on our perception, and over time when we perceive ourselves through the lens of these meanings, that we begin to develop an image of who we are. We then characterize and group these meanings together

to establish a defined sense of self. Within this theory, all of the meanings exist for the person at the same time and can be categorised into multiple identities. The meanings are activated by the context of the situation, and go through a process of evaluation. A person strengthens their identity when their identity meanings fit with the meanings of others in the same situation, and as this strengthens, behaviour is solidified – similar to Erikson’s increased confidence with increased identity strength. When there is a ‘mismatch’ of identity meanings in a context, the person will pick up on this and make adjustments to the meanings and behaviour to help it fit. If there are only small discrepancies, adjustments will be made without much effort or awareness, but larger differences can result in intense emotional distress and more adjustments until the identity can sit within the context.

The meanings which identities are based can be established from many different parts of life. Since identities are formed through individual and shared meaning of societal, group, role and individual levels, it can be expected for any context to stimulate some kind of response in a person’s identity. As Erikson (1968) points out, identity develops over time, with many crucial points taking place throughout childhood. If identity is also developed through relationships and meanings, the sustained contact with family must play an important role. This can come in the form of intentionally passing on information through intergenerational story telling (Thompson et al., 2009). However, identity is also impacted by the other experiences and social groups which a person spends less time with. Marcia’s (1966) theory of Identity Moratorium identified a temporary identity status attributed to short term groups which a person can explore before reaching Identity Achievement. Considering the temporary nature of the group, this also suggests a temporary nature of one’s ability to identify with that group, and asks the question, at what point does identifying with a group turn into part of one’s identity?

Social movements have been noted to bring people together for a single, but sometimes abstract cause, however these groups have also been found to deteriorate when movement members ‘disagree and fallout’ (Della Porta & Diani, 1999). This shows that even when individuals may initially see themselves as a part of the same group, there are often differences in what they see the group as. This suggests that there is a relationship between the members of a group that helps to define what the identity is and that “movements are in movement and that their characteristics will consequently change” (Crossley, 2002: pg. 7). To become more involved with the movements means that members need to be actively involved in it and develop the basic actions and beliefs of that time (Blumer, 1969). It is in the sustained interaction between the members of the social movement, and the collective narratives and history that forms which creates the sense of identity and purpose for its members. As the group develops its self-image and identity, it simultaneously contributes to a stronger sense of direction within the movement as well. Additionally, if people share multiple social identities, they are more likely to mobilise together (Crossley, 2002).

There are many parallels between forming the identity of a social movement, and a person’s own ability to form their identity. For both individual and social movement there is a process of movement, defining and building which results in a confidence and direction in action. Likewise, when there is sufficient conflict or disagreement then individuals move on to find other identities and groups that do fit for them. In both cases there is a process of evaluation of experience, and reflection that contributes to a person’s ability to engage with new identities and groups, and strengthen existing ones.

2.2 The Importance of Community

Academic literature about peace activists tends to be divided into two categories: looking at peace activists as individuals or positioning them as members of a specific peace

organisation. However, the same literature seems to neglect the effects of community on activists' lived experiences. When community is mentioned, often it is regarding a specific community or the need for stronger community alliances and connections. In this segment of the critical context, I ask: What role does community play in the lives of activists? What are the benefits of such communities? What kind of issues do communities have, and how do they deal with them? How are these communities formed, and how do they work with other communities? What defines a community? Lastly, what are the values that go into the creation and maintaining of a peace activist community? While these questions are broad, they provide the opportunity to analyse literature from the last three decades in innovative ways.

The importance of having emotional support and networks among peace activists and their communities is not new. Ingrid Sharp's (2013) research of peace activist movements in western society looked at the work of women activists over the last ninety-five years. She suggests that activist networks, and the friendships that result from them, are just as essential to a life of peace work now as they were at the beginning of the twentieth century. Not only is it reassuring that you are not alone working to create peaceful social change, but this process provides a theoretical foundation as to why these types of networks strengthen peace activist work (Kirk & Mak, 2005). From a psychological perspective, group sharing, the process of bearing both the concerns and hopes for society among a group of people, works as a coping mechanism to allow individuals, as members of a broader community, to place their fears and hopes within a framework of creating long-term change, not merely reacting to the threat of violence or war (Sarrica & Contarello, 2004). Additional benefits of peace activists surrounding themselves with like-minded individuals are increasing effective communication and understanding (Deiana, 2013), and how they provide a safe space to "come out" as a woman devoted to peace (Schwebel, 2005:p.402). These benefits can be seen in specific

community examples from peace activist literature. One occurred in Israel, where women in the Kibbutz found solidarity and many forms of freedom they might not have experienced outside of this community. Due to the confined nature of the Kibbutz, duties were distributed equally amongst all women to best allow the community to thrive. This allocation of labour also allowed the women to have more time and freedom to become politically active and remain knowledgeable about national issues than they would have if they were solely responsible for all childcare and home duties (Weinbaum, 2010). In Vietnamese nunneries during the 1960s, the woman-only spaces provided “sisterhood, empowerment, and harmony” in a society where women often lacked all three of these privileges. Rather than feeling a sense of loss in these closed communities, they felt that living in a space with like-minded individuals provided them with the freedom they would find hard to have elsewhere (Topmiller, 2005).

While these spaces do allow for physical and emotional support to engage with community work, it is also essential to acknowledge the risks and the courage required to lead an activist life. Protesting the government’s involvement with war and other forms of violence while being a woman or a member of an oppressed identity group comes with risks, and requires a person to have the courage to lead an activist life. However, Goss & Heaney (2010) argue that there is little research about how these risks build stronger connections to the movement and organisation which create a longer-lasting commitment to peace work. These ‘risky’ community involvements also function as safe spaces for many women to demonstrate their agency and leadership skills; many for the first time (Logie & Daniel 2015:p.3). Often this support leads to confidence and knowledge about creating change. One example is the Women’s League of Chinland that partnered with the International Women’s Partnership for Peace and Justice. This partnership resulted in the feminist leadership training of women from communities in Northeast India. These educated women brought their

knowledge and training back to their communities to continue feminist leadership training in their hometown (Norwood & Zabau, 2011). Such training provided not only spaces and opportunities for empowerment, but hopeful instances of peace work that can be passed on from women in their communities.

Increased marginalisation and abuse of society's most vulnerable and oppressed populations is a direct impact of communities experiencing war and violence. This may result in building stronger communities where solidarity and unity are often a tool used to survive. This refers to the notion of community coping, which is a specific a community's ability to resist oppression and deal with their social problems (Sarrica & Contarello 2004). One societal method of dealing with violence is through radical healing as Shawn Ginwright (2010) wrote, "it involves building the capacity of... people to create this type of communities in which they want to live" and from this form of action, they can take an active role in their healing process (p.77). Women, in particular, have a way to encourage healing in their communities including locating gaps in service and needs in their own towns/villages/societies, and creating their support centres and means to address the problems their community is facing (Keegan 2004). Along with addressing the specific needs of their peers, women also acknowledge the importance of community mobilisation, and the healing possibilities that can result from making members of the community feel in control and active in their lives and the spaces that they live (Logie & Daniel 2015). The creation of stronger community identity and the feeling of personal investment make up only a fraction of the 'positives' that occur as a result of systemic oppression.

One way communities retain agency and remain active is by developing methods to deal with the systematic oppression they experience. By better understanding the systematic oppression that occurred, there is an awareness of how important it is to create change from within, most notably with children. This form of change, of "pass[ing] my new understanding

to my sons and daughters” is an example of both agency and radical healing (Norwood & Zahau, 2011:p.228). However, this is not the only method of dealing with such forms of oppression.

Specific communities have responded to the systematic oppression through physical acts, including women in Northern Ireland ‘fighting’ back against British military presence in public. They have also performed riskier physical acts like ringing an alarm to warn their communities of military invasion that allow people to take precautions or hide if need be (Callaghan, 2002:p.38). The mothers of La Plaza de Mayo’s form of resistance served as a sign of hope and encouraged the belief that the systems could change, and injustices could be served (Abreu Hernandez, 2002). One commonality among these methods is the belief that systematic oppression can be dealt with, and that there is hope for positive change. When hope itself is attacked as a process of war, these communities can be broken and divided.

Ginwright (2010) argues that these forms of oppression and violence threaten the community spaces that foster revolutionary hope, and losing hope is instrumental in the destruction of both the physical and emotional health of a given community. Drug use, the destruction of the physical environment in a community, and continuous policing are all forms of social toxins that inhibit people from action and create apathetic individuals instead of invested community members (Ginwright 2010). Women in particular face gendered barriers to becoming active within their communities. High poverty rates, low academic attendance, and social norms that inhibit women from the public sphere of their communities serve as the main barriers to women’s participation in peacebuilding (Moosa, Rahmani & Webster, 2013). A particularly violent gendered method, which often divides families and destroys the social fabric of a community, is the raping of women (Saleh, 2012). This violence not only breaks down family and community units, but isolates the victim of rape

due to the social stigma surrounding sexual assault. Without community support, or organisations to seek help from, the options for the victim are minimal.

Women's organisations can be inhibited from working effectively to aid women and other marginalised individuals. These barriers can be found at the structural level of society. When some women's organisations attempt to network with peace activists from other parts of the world, there is a disconnect around the topic of utilising community support due to the lack of a western perceived community structure in some non-western societies. This is magnified when westerners suggest simplified solutions to aid women without the correct understanding of the different structure within their community and that women do not have enough resources readily available (Hrycak, 2007). Even when women's support organisations are created in war or post-war communities, they are created as a single identity group (religion, race, etc.) and create further isolation and barriers to all women receiving aid (McIntyre, 2003). In Palestine and the Gaza Strip, where there is a strong desire to have cross-community networks, the limited mobility and increasing restrictions on media communication make such work near impossible (Farr, 2011). While the destruction of communities as a tactic of war and systematic oppression continues to occur, individuals are creating unique and alternative ways to organise.

Typical forms of organising for peace like government-sponsored organisations, NGO's, and religiously affiliated groups that offer direct services are not always able to occur. In response to barriers which inhibit typical organisations from forming, or break down existing communities, alternative forms and spaces of community develop. The utilisation of the internet, specifically email as the primary method for communication both within the community and cross-community work, has become more common. For instance, in the former Yugoslavia, the primary means of communication was through an email link called 'Za mir' which translates to 'for peace' (Korac, 2006:p.9). In a war-torn country, this

served as a feasible and accessible means to build peace work communities and remain relatively active and safe. A similar form of email ‘gathering’ occurred in Palestine where border crossing became impossible, but the need to network and continue building a community with Israel remained. Such long-distance communities allowed for members in both countries to join together in protests even though a wall and space separated them (Byrne, 2013:p.114). In addition to email communication, social media has become an alternative method for organising. For instance, the Belfast Feminist Network has become fully operational via social media, and it is a part of their mission to create a stronger connection between online and in community forms of activism (Deiana, 2015). This form of organising is practical for communities with limited physical mobility, those who need to network across long distances, and for the younger population of society who have become more media centred in their daily lives.

Arts have also become more prevalent in peace activist work as an alternative means of creating and maintaining a community. Not only is it seen as a unique method to spread a message, but it also serves as an accessible and alternative way to engage in peace work. Mulvey and Egan (2014) suggest that art-making itself serves as an embodied method of storytelling by creating deeper connections between the artist and viewer. A photovoice project centred on the Maya Ixil women of Guatemala included over fifty photo narrative images that represented the experience of women survivors of a thirty-six year-long civil war. Such images were shown to contest violence and war, as well as presented as a collective voice of women survivors (Lykes, 2010). An artistic medium coming out of the U.S. uses hip-hop music to create social change. While this art form is not without criticism, Ginwright proposes that looking at hip-hop lyrics can show the kind of social change this particular community is hoping to create. Community psychologists Mulvey and Egan (2014) have supported the idea that the arts can serve as a welcoming space for the most marginalised

members of society. In particular, to make use of the arts in peace work more meaningful and impactful for those most harmed by war and violence. These artistic forms of creating community thrive in the given examples due to their specificity to the communities they occur. This community-centred approach to activism is not only present in artistic forms.

A peace activist needs to organise in authentic and accessible ways to connect with the needs of a community. Grassroots organising is one form of this. It not only is fostered by the people whom the organisation aims to serve, but allows individuals the space to focus both on their activism and other responsibilities such as their job, family, or other duties that require their attention (Deiana, 2013). These community spaces have been particularly influential in minority communities, such as poor and black communities in the U.S., where neighbourhood based organisations are becoming more popular as methods of resistance and emotional support and care (Ginwright, 2010). The increased flexibility and tight-knit relationships also foster alternative methods of running their organisations. For instance, the Derry Peace Women of Northern Ireland prided themselves on their informal processes, specifically the ‘grapevine’ method of relaying information across their community (Callaghan, 2002:p.42). This process of instilling responsibility on the organisation members to transmit information to community members at large has also been completed in a more formal process. The Women’s League of Chinland created a workshop that trained women in peacebuilding methods and teaching techniques. This training was intended to be continual as new trainees become teachers at regular intervals and spread their peacebuilding message further (Norwood & Zahau, 2011). Peacebuilding education can also be utilised to reach large portions of a community, such as the annual “16 Days of Activism” community event held by the Kup Women for Peace in Papua New Guinea. An event such as “16 Days of Activism” serves as a unique opportunity for community members to ask questions, attend workshops, and find a supportive environment while discussing and focussing on issues such as violence

against women, war, and other forms of oppression (Hinton et al., 2008:p.527). These unique forms of organising point to a recurring trend of women utilising and benefiting from such activism.

One method of creating a stronger presence is to expand the parameters of peace activist communities and networks through cross-community and international partnerships. Increased networking is one way to challenge oppression and violence (Deiana, 2013; Erzurum & Eren, 2014; Erickson & Faria, 2011). Types of networking include cross-community work, the creation of mutual support groups, and the development of women's activism groups (Deiana, 2013). The networks did aid in the reinforcing of solidarity, and the concept of a collective 'we', however, this collectiveness did not restrict individuals, and in many ways maintained or encouraged agency (Fisher, 2010:p.100). Agency was presented in forms of public speaking and writing. For example, autobiographies and testimonials were used as ways of dispersing messages publically and were also seen as valuable representations of community voice and struggle communicated both within and outside the community (Lykes, 2010). This networking and public presence resulted in the increased formation of groups for marginalised people. It also helped to maintain increased empowerment and involvement as a community (Muhlbauer, 2001).

The benefits of cross-community networks, such as collectives, include maintaining intergenerational relationships among feminists and peace activists, and bringing a plethora of formal and informal organisations together to create a stronger voice and presence within a given town, country, and culture (Deiana, 2015). Additional benefits of such partnerships are what Miriam Anderson (2010) called the 'boomerang model', describing how activists utilise their networks internationally to help influence government officials when their activism alone is not resulting in change or action (p.12). Similarly, there is a feeling of safety and security knowing there is a form of protection by the international community where activists

frequently risk their safety for their mission (Sharp, 2013). In essence, this serves as a safety net and reassurance that even if harm comes to the activists, a broader international platform will know their struggle. Well-known examples that such collectives can work are Northern Ireland and Israel and Palestine, who are referred to as the beginning of feminist cross-community initiatives in the 1980s (Byrne, 2013). The Nobel Women's Initiative was founded and run by a small group of Nobel prize laureates. Their primary mission is to bring attention to the work done by peace activists globally, especially those individuals and groups who would otherwise go unseen on a global platform. They are also an example of women peace activists coming together on an international scale to effect change (Saleh, 2012). There have been many other groups and attempts to run cross-community initiatives, although their success is debatable. Even so, the benefits and positive experiences of international collectives does point to the need and desire for such international connections and efforts.

The difficulties of cross-community work are rooted in miscommunication, nationalism, limited mobility, and an inability to compromise. There also appears to be a trend of distrust also rooted in each of these difficulties, which prevents long-term or positive peace activist relationships. This lack of trust is seen on a larger scale with countries; for instance, Palestine not trusting in the United Nations ability to be effective or equitable in its concerns. Palestine's questioning regarding president Obama's administration and their relationship with Israel and lack of pressure to cease territorial expansion further magnifies this untrusting relationship (Farr, 2011; Krause & Enloe, 2014). There is also a failure to appreciate the differences and perspectives of many members across a network and a tendency to essentialise members of cross-community networks (Byrne, 2013). This essentialising often results in an inability to create equitable cross-community environments. One of the biggest criticisms is that the agendas/missions/organisations often mimics or

aligns with the programs of the global north members (Snyder, 2006). At the same time, they suppress the national differences of women from the global south and fail to find common ground or space of agreement (Byrne, 2013). This occurrence is criticised as being a perfect example of the shallow commitment of cross-community work, and its lack of feminist integrity. These failures are not reasoning alone to discourage continued cross-community work. However, they do display the need to address the difficulties of maintaining productive and positive structures. Encouraging the use of cross-community work does not require discrediting, or removing their identity-based politics and activism. This understanding creates a shared space for conversations between organisations (Byrne, 2013). Additionally, there are benefits of strategic essentialism within specific communities (Anderson, 2010). Such understanding can also put perceived failure at cross-community work into perspective, and be seen as an attempt to follow in the footsteps of well-intended transnational work (Krause & Enloe, 2014). Allowing discrepancies of opinion to coexist, even within academic literature, does not discredit the relevance of cross-community work in peace activism, but signifies the complexity of this current issue.

In a 2006 research project with participants similar to my own, Anna Snyder interviewed individual women peace activists. After conducting interviews, it became apparent that the ability to address internal conflict as an organisation could predict the success and longevity of an activist organisation. Specifically, it was essential to have the ability to communicate and be compromising. Similarly, the method of ‘root and shift’ clarifies that finding a compromise does not have to mean the abandonment of one’s values or mission. The underlying principle of this method is to stay rooted within their identity while also being able to empathise with their peers—in other words shifting (Byrne, 2013). It is not surprising that the peace studies literature within the last decade focusses on the importance of communication, understanding, and lack of competition. This is reasonable

considering Quaker ideologies founded the beginning of peace studies, whose central tenets included the importance of unity and non-competitive decision making (Stephenson, 2012). The process of reaching consensus, unity and more profound understanding within activist communities is through clear and open communication. For instance, in former Yugoslavia, feminist activists from Belgrade and Zagreb were able to maintain open communication despite nationalist values. This type of communication was described as emotional and painful due to notions of misplaced blame among the activists. However, their ability to maintain these networks was regarded as one of their biggest successes and invaluable to their work (Lukic, 2011). The push to move beyond nationalism in peace activist work has been encouraged since the beginning of the 1920s (Whipps, 2006). Instead, there is a need to focus on commonalities and overarching best interests for all people. Further, it is argued that this kind of joint effort will result in diminishing the prevalence and threat of war in society. This shift in thinking is potentially instrumental in achieving peace work goals.

The mind-set of “with, not for” spoken by Nobel peace laureate Emily Balch Green was referring to international peace relations and expresses the understanding that in some form all people are affected by the war and violence occurring all over the world (Whipps, 2006). That by working for peace in a community/city/country that is not your ‘own’, you are still contributing to your peaceful existence (p.127). More recent Nobel peace laureate Jody Williams is also a proponent of the “me becomes we” mentality, which also suggests the benefits of similarities and interconnectedness over difference and individualities (Saleh, 2012;p.56). Not only is this shift in mind-set encouraging of peace work, but it is also a political act within itself. Hagar Kotef (2011) suggested it to be the most ‘radical political act,’ your identity becoming the epitome of peace through this change in identity and perspective (p.566). The community can become more central to the field of peace work through its ability to change or affect the individual’s path and perspective.

The feminist movement aimed to create solidarity among women to increase their rights and have had a strong presence since the first wave. Judy D. Whipps (2006) suggests that both the feminist movement and peace activist movement provided unique women's only spaces inherently due to the interests of each social group. This argument utilises both essentialised notions of women, and addresses the lived reality of the many women who persisted throughout the twentieth century, and was a central tactic utilised throughout the second wave of feminism and peace movements. By the 1980s it became common for women involved in peace movement organisations to seek alternative groups that were women-only spaces and a desire for sisterhood over differences became a recurring narrative among peace activists in western societies (Murray, 2006). In a small group intervention workshop held with internally displaced women in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, researchers Logie and Daniel (2015) found that the overarching narrative of the women's experiences centred on the unity and connectedness they found by being with women who have shared their experiences and come together as a group to address the hardships that they face. It was also strongly suggested that this bond would not have been possible in a co-ed group setting. This form of unity among women in conflict zones aligns with the narrative of overcoming differences for the better good of the overall movement. However, the idea that overarching unity is not always possible and cross-community and cross-national networks do break apart due to rooted national agendas each activist hold is also acknowledged (Byrne, 2013). While there is the risk that essentialism minimises the unique experiences of individual members of a community, it is all a strategic tool utilised to create form change.

The utilisation of women identity politics as a basis of feminist resistance in peace community activism is a tool seen as resistant to the transversal dialogue that is encouraged by feminist scholar Nira Yuval-Davis (2006). This form of resistance is present among women's peace work organisations in both Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine (Byrne,

2013). In Papua New Guinea, uniting rivalling parties of women and presenting a united front to the leaders, meaning men, was able to strengthen their call for legal action (Hinton et al., 2008). In many cases, women have also realised that in order to change policies, women must have a voting presence. In Liberia, women have launched a women-only led campaign to educate women on politicians and how each one can help or hurt them (Gbowee, 2009). Through identity-based politics, women create spaces where they feel empowered and capable of creating change and being leaders. However, women based movements are not always successful in their abilities to create political change.

Women's leadership in peace activism is not often contested in academic literature; however, this literature does discuss their absence from peace talks and negotiating tables. This inability to translate presence in numbers on the ground, let alone equal representation at the decision-making table, is systemic and not unique to any specific region of the world (Hinton et al., 2008). Women remain absent from the negotiating conversations within large scale peace initiatives such as the Beijing + 5 Review, and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 even though they notoriously discuss the importance of gender and women in creating sustainable peace (Porter, 2003). Therefore, it is unsurprising that the erasure of women at the UN level would then mirror smaller scale policies and legal conversations. In Papua New Guinea, where women peace activists succeeded in pressuring politicians and leaders to discuss post-conflict resolutions, women remained absent from the official discussions about these resolutions (Hinton et al., 2008). The same occurred for women in Northern Ireland in 1996, whom through loopholes, such as definitions of political parties, were nearly pushed out of peace talk conversations. Although this group of women were eventually able to claim political party status, this incident highlights the ways that informal organising, often dominated by women and other minority groups, gets pushed to the side-

line of policy conversations (Sharp, 2013). However, it is essential to note that the physical presence of women does not guarantee representation of feminism, minorities, or all women.

The minimal presence of women elected officials often limits active discussions regarding women's presence in peace legislation. The idea is that women can be political leaders if they and their constituents wanted/tried to be. The 2005 election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as president of Liberia, served as a moment of great hope for the role of women in politics. However, the assumption that her role as president will in some way deconstruct patriarchal structures has yet to materialise (Gbowee, 2009). Electoral quotas, which aim to have women 'equally' represented by their political leaders, address this desire to have more women at the table (Anderson, 2006:p.7). However, having women politicians does not in any way ensure that the goals of peace work are better addressed in policy conversations.

This questions the importance, or need of women at negotiating tables, and if it makes a difference at all. Elisabeth Porter (2003) addresses this with a three-point response starting with the fact that women are personally affected by violence, and thus would logically be affected by peace legislation. She also argues that in order to have an inclusive society, we must also have inclusive representation. Lastly, she argues that women's presence in other formal institutions has proven effective, and concludes the same would happen in peace processes. This claim is increasingly supported by notable peace activists, such as Jody Williams and feminist academics (Saleh, 2012). Creating sustainable change is not possible through policy reform alone, but societal change at multiple levels (Saleh, 2012; Erzurum & Eren, 2014). It must become systemic in the way violence and war has, so its normalisation occurs when the marginalised members of society physically see the effects.

The theme of community within peace work is wide-ranging. However, there are central themes that appear salient within recent literature. Such as the formation and destruction of communities as a result of violence and war. It is through this struggle that

communities are also created and used for emotional support, forming networks and empowerment. They become stronger as the community heals together, and work together across communities to accomplish deeper, more impactful social and political change. This suggests that while some communities do deteriorate as a result of ongoing conflict and oppression, there are also instances where such prolonged oppression resulted in peaceful resistance. As they have to overcome barriers, unique forms of organising and creating communities, such as in the use of the arts or technology, are becoming increasingly utilised. This is especially the case among cross-community organisations and global networks whose limited mobility or physical contact is often supplemented by technology. Women's presence in peace activism is continuously gendered and often ends at the community level, even if attempts are made to create policy change. Gendering also appears to be the most detrimental to legal and social change. However, since women are the most affected by acts of war and violence, there is an argument for the strategic usage of gender essentialism and identity politics to connect them with other communities and empower women to be included in peace negotiations. It is crucial to keep in mind understanding individual communities have their histories and methods of practice, while also recognising that one community's peace is linked directly with each other community's peace. In order for peace to become as systematic as war and violence have, communities will have to overcome barriers and work to support each other so all of them can benefit.

2.3 Paths to Activism

One of the first questions I asked my interviewees was, "what brought you to peace activism?" This question was mainly based on the prevalence of literature arguing its importance in activist lives. The importance of understanding a person's path to feminist peace activism lies in the shared narratives surrounding this process. At its basic level,

different experiences bring people together naturally as a way to deal with difficulties, one such way of responding to challenging situations or experiences is through activism. While there are many motives for becoming a peace activist, many paths to peace activism fall under the categories of experiencing/witnessing oppression or becoming cognizant of the salience of violence in our society.

Milton Schwebel (2005) has identified four primary reasons for becoming an activist: the threat to cherished values; notions of duty and responsibility to those experiencing oppression; a similar loyalty to descendants who faced oppression; and overall political efficacy. One aspect that connects them all is the importance of other people in becoming an activist. Such practices can lead to social isolation and even safety concerns for the activists themselves. However, they are also presented as inevitable for each activist when faced with the reality that they are fighting for the lives and safety of other humans; most commonly women and children (Schwebel, 2005). For example, Saleh (2012) wrote about how Nobel peace prize winner Jody Williams' work involved the issue of banning antipersonnel landmines, "not[ing] that landmines affect the poorest members of society, often women, children, and civilians" (p.52). Such realities made peace activism crucial to her life, no matter what risks were involved. In this regard, Williams used her voice to advocate for those who lack the public platform to do so themselves. However, the narrative paths to peace activism do not appear to be contingent on mass level oppression or violence; this is also seen on a smaller scale among women in their communities, witnessing the need for food and shelter for those living in their towns (Faver, 2003). In both of these examples, the pull to activism stemmed from the connection they had with things they knew were happening around them. However, it is vital to acknowledge the magnitude of peace activism done by oppressed and marginalised individuals and communities.

For many it is, as Schwebel (2005) discussed, a loyalty to descendants, meaning that being a peace activist and fighting for social justice was the least they could do for all of the work and tribulations their ancestors faced. For them, the pull to activism does not just stem from witnessed experiences, but also felt more directly from their families and internalised in their identities. Kirk & Mak (2005) found in their research that among women educators for peace and primary school education, there was a reoccurring theme of grandparents and parents' oppression as Germans during WWI and Jews during WWII, that triggered a sense of obligation and passion to continue the work for 'their' people. Connecting back to Schwebel's loyalties to descendants, these feelings of loyalty rooted in childhood stories passed down from one generation to the next, in them the value of strength and the need to fight oppression was rooted. One of the many steps needed to overcome the internalised hatred and apathetic path of many children from marginalised communities is the ability as a child to acknowledge these forms of oppression. Shawn Ginwright (2010) argues that the intense form of violence and oppression faced in U.S. communities threatens the futures of African American youth. In order to combat such internalised forms of violence, Ginwright suggests their perceptions of their worth and the potential will only become clear through political awareness and social understanding. This process is referred to as 'radical healing,' and it is argued that this process of healing is in and of itself a radical form of activism for minority youth in America to complete (p.85). Outside of this internal process of healing is the post-healing process within a community of people with shared experiences. For minority youth in America, the best-case scenario is finding positive outlets and resources to continue on their journeys as activists.

Ginwright (2010) further argues that praxis can occur through civic organisations and discusses how access to community organisations can make a difference in the life of a youth by changing the perspective of youth, such as thorough 'radical healing', and turning it into

action (p.87). This also demonstrates one way a collection of individuals with shared experience can naturally form into an activist community. However, the problem of defining civic or community involvement is difficult without having representation from inside of these communities. Without this, the full function of these communities and the actions they take can be missed. This difficulty lies in the reality that each community practices civic involvement in unique ways. These are forms of community engagement or activism that are not necessarily being researched, or recognised for what they are. This difficulty also highlights the main difference between this type of community and one that has a specific defined structure, boundaries and goals, and challenges the idea that an activist community has to be well defined. The inability to classify this can become even more problematic if policy workers or people from outside the community are trying to ‘create change’ for a community in need. Although this may be well-intentioned and help significantly, such as the example of Jody Williams, there will also be something missing. Simply stated in the process of giving aid, “we are bound to miss important questions in our attempts to develop more useful theory” (p.81). This issue of visibility is then further problematized when discussing youth participation in peace activism. Youth, especially girls, are often considered non-existent or apathetic. Recent research is showing that this is not the case.

The absence of young girls in peace activist communities is connected to the lack of awareness that girls might be doing things differently, or that they are not given the opportunities to be active members of social change. This connects to Ginwright’s (2010) argument that having information about an issue does not equate to having power; this lack of power could well be the barrier to girls creating change in their world. In support of this claim is the non-profit organisation Journeys for Peace that is based in Mexico and provides children with the opportunity to network with peace laureates, policymakers, and other influential members of the world. The project centres around stories and art which allow each

child to connect to the project through their identification with life stories and artistic images that represent their hope and vision for peace (Kopeliovich & Kuriansky, 2009). By providing children with the chance to tell their stories and display their artistic representations of peace, each child feels empowered and is seen as a social activist in their own right. It is also important to acknowledge that children, girls in particular, are active in ways that often go unseen which then results in collecting minimal data on girls versus boys (Pruitt, 2014). Failures to take into account the very different lived experiences between boys and girls in most societies erases the importance this information holds. Pruitt (2014) has provided insight into a counter-narrative, showing that young girls are not apathetic despite stereotypical beliefs that suggest otherwise. The difference in findings was primarily based on what was defined as political activism, once the definition was expanded to include NGO work, and volunteering, the presence of girls as actors of social change shifted. Further understanding of the experiences of girls will allow for greater participation and awareness of their actual involvement in peace work.

There needs to be increased relatability of peace activism and peace activists to young girls. Relatable figures within peace activism allow for a belief a person can participate in peace activism too. With only twelve women Nobel Peace Prize laureates out of the one hundred and twenty total, it is not surprising that girls lack role models in this field (Newsom & Lee, 2009). While there are numerous women peace activists who are not receiving this award, there is an argument that their absence in one of the highest honours in their field signals a lack of appreciation for the work of women. However, young activists such as Malala Yousafzai and Lina Ben Mhenni are showing the world just how impactful a girl can be, focusing their activism through school attendance and the medium of a blog. Not only does this provide other young girls peace activist role models, but points to the importance of making activism accessible (Pruitt, 2014). Although many girls are growing up in

environments that have normalised computer usage, there are still a disproportionate number of girls whose knowledge of technology would further limit them on their activist paths (Newson & Lee, 2009). What is clear from existing research is the continued need for community involvement and consciousness-raising opportunities for marginalised people. Two important parts of changing the image and role of girls and other marginalised groups in peace activist communities and social change work are implementing government policy and through educational reform.

Considering girls are still the most at-risk group of people in war-affected countries, a greater focus on policy and educational reform regarding girls is essential to end the unjust violence against all people. Not only are girls the last priority in policy reform, but they also receive less attention than boys and women in social justice community organisations. Youth groups prioritize boys and women's groups focussing on older women over young women and girls (Pruitt, 2014). However, this does not mean young girls, like other marginalised populations, are not a part of social justice organisations or form a kind of community of their own to access support and healing. Additionally, there is a need for policy implementation and educational reform that support the goals and initiatives of peace. With the increasing globalised world, it is in everyone's interest for children to become a part of the movement for peace, only when peace is normalised will hate be seen as wrong and thus implemented by all levels of society.

Although research shows there might be only a few distinct identified reasons why people become activists, there are many more ways how people do activism. Expanding our definition of what a peace community looks like would help to better understanding how people actively 'do' peace. Examples of this like seeing 'radical healing' as a way to deal with oppression healthily is, in its way, a 'radical' way of understanding what it means to be active in peace. However, it is impossible to capture the nuances that these loosely defined,

naturally forming communities have without having representation from within these groups. It might be more helpful to see these peace groups as a group of individuals being drawn to help each other and heal and is also a positive way of looking at the path to activism. It is not as clear cut as signing up to be a member in an established peace organisation. It is closer to thinking about individuals finding their routes to deal with the violence they witness or experience in a way that, intentionally, or not, attempts to reduce perpetuated violence. This is also why it is essential to enable access and representation to oppressed and marginalised populations, specifically young girls, so there might be a clearer path to peace activism which allows them the ability to find what practices work best for them along the way.

2.4 Family/Parental Influence

The presence and encouragement from activist parents in early life have been viewed as essential in the formation of peace activist ideals. During the middle of the nineteenth-century, large-scale international peace conferences were held in Europe and the U.S. in which “delegates insisted that peace should be promoted in schools and at home” (Lambert, 2015). These conferences promoted the idea that opposing all practices and ideas that naturalise militaristic values and actions was a critical method to reach the “ultimate goal of peace” (p.6). This form of peace activism is rooted in the notion that change occurring locally also has an impact globally. Robin Riley (2005:p.352) astutely asks: “does teaching one’s child that [this] is wrong, or to think critically about government actions, constitute resistance within a militarized culture?” Their question encourages thinking about peace activism in non-traditional terms and gives power to the simple decision to allow and encourage our children to think differently. Specifically, acknowledging the change that occurs from within is also a valuable contributor to peace work.

Research as early as 1997 indicated that households who are aware of, and empathetic to political issues are more likely to raise children who become not only activists but also retain political agency (Bilic, 2010). However, literature published in the past thirty years does not just speak to the importance of political awareness within families, but the relevance of parents being active on peace issues within their communities. In this way, the parent's participation is modelling an activist lifestyle for their children. Fifteen peace activists interviewed in Montreal, Canada in 2005 spoke about how being around and normalising community and civic involvement as children was a significant influence for them (Kirk & Mak, 2005). Vietnam anti-war peace activists in England cited their parent's encouragement of radical political discussions as providing confidence in moulding character traits, such as strength and courage, they presented as essential to a life of activism (Hopkins, 1999). However, not all peace activists were raised on radical ideologies. Some found strength in their family's devotion to religion and their belief that God wanted them to follow their own "personal expressions of identity". For instance, several peace activists' mothers and grandmothers demonstrated that women can still be active late into life, and saw this as their "God-given potential" which resulted in their ability to "express their identity through service or activism for others" (Faver, 2003:p.73).

There are also specific narratives of influential women peace activists who credited activist parenting in their childhoods as fundamental in their paths to peace activism. In their autobiographies, Doris Miller and Elise Boulding, two influential early twentieth-century U.S. peace activists, detailed their experiences and paths of becoming peace activists (Miller, 1986; Boulding, 1989). Schwebel (2005) examined these autobiographies and identified how they explored their experiences as activists starting in childhood. He discusses how Miller, who was radically influential in the American Psychological Association and academe related to peace psychology, presents her upbringing as one which encouraged social welfare

activism and challenged the oppressions identified in normative society. Such encouragement was fostered by Miller's witnessing her socially engaged parents, and by a recognition of the value of educational achievements as a means to aid others (Schwebel, 2005). Miller's emphasis on her parent's influence on her career in activism is mirrored by Boulding, who discusses her role as a parent. Boulding, who is referred by many in the field of peace and futures studies as the founder of academic Peace Studies, wrote extensively about her experiences as a child of a supportive and activist parent, and as an activist parent herself. Carolyn M Stephenson also discusses Boulding's autobiographical accounts of the impacts of activism and a peaceful environment have on childhood (2012). She points to the uniqueness of "doing peace" versus only supporting a philosophy of peace (2012:p.115). It is, she argues, the concept of "doing" that differentiates a theory from practice, and she quotes Boulding on this: "we had to practice at home what we wanted for the world". It is this active notion of practice that framed her concept of best practice for child-rearing 'peacemakers' for the future (Stephenson, 2012:p.116). Interestingly, active rearing of peace-minded children is often connected to the father and is evidenced by how often their paths to peace activism reference this relationship.

While peace activist literature often mentions activist upbringings and households, specific attention is given to a father's influence on their daughter's activist roots. This occurrence could be due to the historical time frame of many activists' childhood, the early 1900s, and therefore a male's opinion and support in radical causes would allow more social, financial, and political movement, but this does not seem to be the sole reason. Schwebel (2005:p.406) points to Doris Miller's activists' roots in childhood but connects it explicitly to her father whom he cited as "courageous and adventurous" and concerned for workers despite his position as a businessman. More recent accounts from Lesley Pruitt (2014) also suggest this paternal influence is still visible, for instance, in accounts of the lives of Malala

Yousafzai from Pakistan, and Lina Ben Mhenni from Tunisia. Both activists are known globally, with Yousafzai winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 at age seventeen, becoming the youngest person to receive the award. Mhenni has become known as a famous activist in her own right, utilizing social media and her blog as an outlet for the crisis and terror occurring in her country. Pruitt discusses the attention given by Yousafzai's to her father, who is presented in documentaries and speeches as fundamental to Yousafzai's path to activism. Pruitt claims "the dedicated involvement by males and adults" in young girls lives and utilises this claim when discussing the recurring trend of a father's support, (p.490). Mhenni's path to activism is not presented as overtly as this: Pruitt acknowledges that her father was a political prisoner, but does not elaborate on how this affected Mhenni's path to peace work. While attributing Mhenni's activism, in part, to her father but not clarifying via direct quotes or accounts of their relationships, there lacks explanation in how her father was directly impactful. In each of these examples, the young women's fathers are portrayed as influential, albeit in very different areas.

Similar to Yousafzai's sharing of her father's influence, Addams, more than two decades before she won the Nobel peace prize, described her time and reflections from her years spent in Chicago at the now infamous Hull House in her autobiography *Twenty Years at Hull-House*. She wrote about her life before becoming a social worker and highlighted the impact and connection she had with her father and his influence on her path to peace activism. In their article, Klostermann and Stratton (2006) place great emphasis on the adornments Addam's gives to her father. Noting that her father was an abolitionist and a strong and loving presence in her life, the most influential aspect is presented in the forms of religious underpinnings of such characteristics and values. His Quaker 'tendencies' are rooted in pacifism, and moral integrity put Addams on a lifelong path and conversation with her own religious identity (p.159). Although she never became a full member of the Quaker Church,

she often worked with the church and found their values, especially the phrase “speaking truth to power” highly influential during her decades of activism (p.162). Religion’s influence does not only come from parental upbringing, and can be seen in a variety of other circumstances. Addam’s is not alone in her value of Quaker practices and ideology, as other denominations of Christianity prove influential in a peace activists path to social justice work.

2.5 Religion

A religious ideology which highlights the importance of peace work is referenced as having a significant impact on every aspect of a person’s life. Stephenson (2012) also writes that Boulding was a notable Quaker peace activist whose strong affiliation with the Religious Society of Friends started in young adulthood. This peace activism often mirrored the principles found in the Quaker text, *Faith and Practice*, the values included simplicity, peace, integrity, truth, community and equality, and proved fundamental to her teaching of active peace. Although rooted in these beliefs, there was minimal reference to God as having a direct influence on the women; thus, the agency and power to ‘do’ good were found within. This notion of working from within, from one’s own ‘light’, provided the opportunity for marginalised groups such as women and children to participate alongside men, in equal partnership (p.119). This connection once again was not just found in the most widely known peace activists, Leckie Hopkins (1999) also cited the significance of religion, specifically Quaker faith, for four elderly Australian activists. These values were also seen within each activist family’s dynamics and raise questions of the connection between Quakerism and feminism; however, this project does not have the space to delve into this, but it is suggested for future research.

Although there is considerable work on the connection between Quaker beliefs and peace activism, the connection between faith and peace also is made with other religions. In

Catherine Faver's (2003) article, "Being Called: Women's Paths to Service and Activism" over fifty Protestant women were interviewed on their lived experiences as activists through the church. Many women stated that God called them to their positions of service and that the church served as a haven that allowed them to build women-only communities and projects aimed at serving others. Also, important to note is that most of these "calls" to service occurred to people who were dealing with difficult situations, mostly as oppressed individuals in society (p.69). Experiences shared with Faver included a woman whose family became "financially vulnerable" due to parental illness. She found assistance through the church and from this experience continued to stay active in a religious peace community as an adult. A fellow experience detailed how a socially active student during the civil rights movement who received financial support also credited their development of a "professional commitment to education and community development" for the "African-American community" because of the assistance they received from a local church (p.71).

It was not until after my interviews that the connection between Catholicism and feminism became an essential component of my research. I group prior work connecting Catholicism, feminism, activism, and peace into six main categories: historical accounts, feminist Catholics, women's ordination, educational practices, LGBTQ centred, and motherhood. There are historical incidents of Catholic women merging and navigating both their Catholic and feminist identities, such as German activist Klara Marie Fassbinder and U.S. activist Mary Daly. Gisela Notz provides a historical account of Fassbinder, whose intersectional like approach for peace was one that was rooted in her Catholicism and connected themes of pacifism, social reconstruction, religion and activism into one existence. This approach also serves as an example of how Catholicism and activism could occur simultaneously in the early 1900s. In a similar historical account, the life of Mary Daly is assessed from the perspective of her impact on Catholic feminist theological discourse over

the fifty years since her publication of the book *The Church and the Second Sex*, one of her most notable works and included much criticism of the Catholic Church (Coblentz & Jacobs, 2018).

Lisa Cahill (2014) presented a theoretical positioning of feminism within Catholicism as four distinct “conceptions” that have developed since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s; these four branches of Catholic feminism were named Augustinian, neo-Thomistic, neo-Franciscan, and Junian. She looks at how Catholic theologians navigate the church from the ethical and theological positioning of each of these forms of Catholicism. She then goes on to define six “Commitments of Catholic Ethics and Catholic Feminist Ethics...are difference in unity, moral realism, social meliorism, human equality, preferential option for the poor, and interreligious dialogue” (p.41). While she is clear to explain that these are not exhaustive and inclusive to all Catholic feminists, there is a broad stroke approach to her categorisation and does not take into account women who identify as Catholic feminists but those who are working for gender equity. A year later, Cahill (2015) published another theological text that looked at similar issues of theologian conversations occurring on the topic of Christian feminist ethics from a postmodern feminist perspective through a Thomas Aquinas lens.

The focus on feminist theology within Catholicism has also been presented within the context of the country Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically the country’s history of feminist theology (Spahic-Siljak, 2013). The development of feminist theology created a community of feminist theologians who were also devoted to activist works. Their activism deals primarily with women and children and also resulted in the creation of Women’s Studies programs within the country. In contrast to this positive implementation of feminist theology for Catholic women, there has also been critique within the academic community. Angelo Nicolaidis (2018) analysed the public perception of Mary Magdalene in popular media and

academic study in contrast to her mentioning within the Old Testament. She positions modern understandings of Mary Magdalene against those of Christian faiths, particularly in Catholicism where she has Sainthood status. This text critiques any feminist analysis of Mary Magdalene and reduces her to a possessed woman whom Jesus saves, primarily through textual analysis of the New Testament.

The interviewing of twenty-six Catholic women religious in eight communities in Ontario, Canada looked into their negotiating of both Catholic and feminist identities was completed by Christine Gervais (2012). She looks at how these nuns are integrating feminism into their religious practices in productive ways, specifically how they challenge the Roman Catholic Church's to create change. Gervais went on to complete another qualitative interview with thirty-two Catholic women religious, a group that included both Catholic nuns and sisters, in Canada, where she looked into the historical and theoretical construction of an "authentic" Roman Catholic Church and how women religious navigate and resist these patriarchal understandings (Gervais & Sjolander, 2015). The resistance of women in the church was also found in Emily Bucar's comparative analysis study on women within Catholicism and Shi'i Islam. She looks at how religious women display agency and navigate the clerical moral guidance they receive from clerics, specifically, how these instances of moral guidance are used as points of engagement in feminist politics and faith.

The role of women within the Catholic Church, particularly their presence as nuns, has been studied by theologians and sociologists. Mary Hunt (2013) shares her experience of entering divinity school and looks at the history and treatment of women religious and argues for the need for feminist ministry within the Catholic Church. She explained how "feminist ministry, by contrast [to historical practices], is done on women's terms, often outside of organised structures that perpetuate a model few communities can sustain" (p. 83), and how it can create change amongst the U.S.'s largest religious population. In 2018, Jennifer Fiebig

and Jennifer Christopher studied women's leadership within the church by interviewing one hundred and nineteen Catholic women religious on their leadership styles. Their findings suggest that their 'feminine' style of leadership should be encouraged and taken up by all leaders within the church. In a particular connection to my research, their study found that "while women religious have been at the forefront of many social justice movements, they have also been de facto occupational trailblazers for women" (p. 511). The agency of Catholic women religious was researched in Australia and New Zealand in by Megan Brock, who asked "should we view nuns as oppressed or agentic?" and concluded that the women in her study demonstrated agency and rejected notions of being oppressed (2010). This agency was demonstrated through acts of resistance, rejecting the guidance of men within the church and deciding to live alone, instead of the traditional communal living. The limitations of women religious within the Catholic Church, particularly their exclusion from ordination, was investigated by Ryan Murphy who looked into the gender inequalities for women religious before, during and after the Second Vatican Council (2014). Another significant form of inequality Murphy identifies is the required wearing of the habit by women, which visually created a gendered workplace for women religious and contributed to their exclusion from leadership within the church.

The attitude of women's ordination in the Catholic Church was surveyed in 2012 at the University of Granada in Spain (Franco Martinez, Rodriguez-Entrena & Rodriguez-Entrena). After interviewing one hundred and ten postgraduate students, they found that there is a positive correlation between having a conservative view on gender equality issues and being in favour of women's ordination. This surprising finding highlights the complexity of women's role within the Catholic Church. Arguments in favour of women's ordination into the Priesthood were presented by Mary Grey, who was inspired by Pope Francis's acknowledgement of the importance of liberation theology within the Catholic Church. Grey

looks at the “historical, theological and ecclesial grounds” for women’s ordination and argues that women have been practising unofficial forms of ministry for decades (p. 216).

The centring of social justice within Catholic theological educational spaces is not a recent occurrence. Dara Mulderry researched the social-justice education campaign in the 1950s, where Sister Mary Emil Penet created a new social justice rooted curriculum for nearly one hundred thousand women religious teachers in U.S. Catholic schools (2017). The impact of this curriculum and its historical significance as a pre-Vatican II Council campaign are explored by Mulderry seventy-seven years after its implementation. Women religious and Catholic teachers are the focus of Elizabeth Smyth’s Canadian based research (2013). She completed a case study of two Canadian women’s colleges, St. Joseph’s College and Loretto College. She makes the argument that Catholic women and women religious are positioned within complex spaces as teachers, where they have to navigate both the confines of the academy and the Roman Catholic Church. What is particularly interesting about Smyth’s research is the idea that in addition to these patriarchal pressures, the women also are dealing with “the pressures, supports and discrimination emerging from their religious, social and intellectual peers” (p. 547) which appeared to cause more stress in their daily lives. These complicated negotiations not only happen at the local level but have also been found to occur on the international level. At the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, Catholic NGO women representatives faced similar pressures and discrimination from the Vatican for their positions on the women’s movement (Desmazières, 2012).

Researchers have used various methods to investigate the relationship between the LGBTQ community and Catholicism. One method that is particularly interesting to me as a feminist researcher was completed by Elizabeth Ettore, who approached this topic through the methodological tool of autoethnography. In her accounts, she describes being a closeted lesbian Catholic nun in the U.S. during the 1970s and explains how through the process of

storytelling the traumas that occurred during that period in her life were healed (2010). The role of LGBTQ youth in Canada has also become a topic of conversation in academic literature. In 2012, a bill called “The Accepting Schools Act” was passed in Ontario, Canada. This bill required all schools, including publically funded Catholic schools, to support any student initiative to create and run a gay-straight alliance program. Lee Iskander and Abigail Shabtay look at how this bill was influenced by the LGBTQ youth activism happening before the passing of the bill and intends to bring awareness of youth activism to academia (2018).

An additional identity-based connection to the Catholic Church in academic literature is the relationship between motherhood, feminism, and Catholicism. During the Cold War, Catholic Italian women peace activists made significant attempts to bridge the divides amongst women and worked to unite mothers to work towards ending the war and creating a peaceful life for their children. Wendy Pojmann argues that although these attempts were stifled on the international level, these mothers were able to make direct impacts on the lives of Italian women in their communities (2011). Such influence between mothers and social justice movements was also discussed by Anne Keary who looks at how the social justice movements of the 1960s and 1970s affected the mother-daughter relationship dynamic in Catholic communities in Australia (2016). Keary finds that despite multigenerational differences, both mothers and daughters express similar issues when discussing the role of the church in their lives at school. When discussing topics such as sexuality and menstruation, Keary found the silences of both mothers and daughters were significant in her analysis.

2.6 Conclusion

There are many contributing factors which lead people to identify as peace activists. Some research points explicitly at childhood to identify the root of this influence. Religion, rooted explicitly in Quakerism, also was a contributing factor for some and was identified

that the clearly stated peace ideals helped build the foundations of which they continued on their peace activism. There is also the idea that just being aware, connecting to, or personally feeling oppression, influenced them on their way to peace activism. On some level, seeing peace activism happening through childhood and holding onto peace ideals also means they had to witness or connect to the violence and oppression that was happening as well. For everyone, especially younger people, it can be challenging to deal with being exposed to such conflict. In order to manage this healthily, people tend to seek comfort from others, especially those who understand the same kind of experience. On the path to peace activism, these kinds of moments draw people closer together as the most basic form of actively 'doing' peace. Although the most basic, and shared among all people, these actions can be easily missed when discussing an individual's path to activism.

Lack of representation was apparent in both research on paths to activism, as well as understanding the importance of community. It also showed up in different forms, including the apparent lack of research done about young girls' involvement in peace activism. It was clear this trend of under-representation went up through other vital facets such as in peace negotiations and government policy work. As they and other marginalised groups do not have many roles models to see themselves in, it would naturally be difficult to 'do' peace in a way that is more widely recognised. Identity politics has been used to bring a group of people together under a specific, distinct identity and was shown to help gain some acknowledgement for the group as a whole. It has also helped to empower women into taking more leadership roles within peace activist communities. Some communities are using the arts to bring people together and convey a specific message that is meaningful to their community. Grassroots movements like this that are built from the communities they are meant to help, naturally empower people from within. In following these trends, there is hope for an increased number of role models and general representation for these communities.

However, I found that translating representation into policy change or being included in political peace negotiations comes with other barriers.

One way that was discussed to widen the impact of the community was to extend their networks to other organisations which have similar causes. As important as this is for the overall peace movement, there are challenges in being able to connect with other organisations which have different roots, and different methods of activism. Some of these difficulties may be linked with the differences between each individual's path to activism. For example, a person who is connected to the violence in the world because they have experienced it first-hand may find it more challenging to work with someone who has only witnessed it. By not being in the violence, the understanding of the conflict, as well as how it is being dealt with and healed from is very different. This same dynamic has been seen between organisations, with outside organisations with good intentions missing out on a lot of the critical information and nuance, which would better help a community. There are times which this can lead to a lack of trust, and apprehension to work with other organisations. Since one community's peace is directly connected with everyone's peace, cross-community work is essential. This is not just for communities which have had challenging pasts working together, but also to account for political, or cultural divides which make it challenging to come together for a common benefit. By acknowledging each person's path to activism, we can understand the importance of the 'root and shift' method to opening up these connections and build more extensive networks, and having more significant, more impactful change. People have been finding ways around these barriers and others like geographic divides. The use of communications technology has been crucial for people to make long-distance connections. It is important to note that just as individuals naturally come together to deal with shared experiences, communities internationally are coming together, or at least extending their messages using this method through the internet and social media. Similar to

how individuals have many different influences from how they were brought up, religious groups they may have been a part of, the experiences they had, or the things they witnessed, communities form and act in different ways, but they still manage to come together.

Ultimately, there is a common shared goal in which these people and these communities come together to heal and actively work towards a more peaceful world.

Chapter 3

Keeping Feminist Methodology Central: Design, Recruitment, Collection, and Analysis

“[T]he more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into a dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side”.

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1985)

The hesitation that I felt choosing my research topic, and finalising my method of in-depth interviews, was entangled entirely with fear as a researcher. It was fear of not being accomplished enough to interview such phenomenal women, fear that I would be wasting their valuable time, fear that I was not one hundred per cent confident in my abilities as a researcher, fear that they would see me as ‘only’ a researcher, and along with that someone distant and cold, an outsider, something I never wanted to be called amongst my fellow peace activists. These concerns, amongst many others, were reflected upon in my research journal; a tool I found essential to my process of acknowledging my concerns and then addressing what it was these concerns were rooted in and how they would affect my research process. I had to ask myself, what was it about conducting research that made me feel cold? Sterile? Distant from ‘real’ activists? Was this rooted in my psychological research training, or the positivist practices of the ‘hard’ sciences?

These questions seemed to consume my thinking for months. Then I returned to a text that is fundamental to my feminist pedagogy, and to the way I interact with the world as an activist. It was in that text, re-reading the notes in its margins, I was able to find answers. There was comfort in the notion that my identity as a researcher could coexist with my identity as a feminist, activist, and marginalised person of colour, and that they could all present in my actions as a researcher and the work I would produce. The *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed, although written by Paulo Freire in Brazil before I was born, spoke to my lived experience of knowledge production and creation in unconventional settings, with this ultimately leading to my involvement and passion for grassroots movements (1985). While Freire was not explicitly a feminist, his work was foundational in my engagement as a peace activist and served as a reference point to my methodology. His outlined list of the obligations of a listener, serve as a reminder of the importance that “in the process of speaking and listening, the discipline of silence, which needs to be developed with serious intent by subjects who speak and listen, is a sine qua non of dialogical communication” and is of just as much value as any other stage of the research process (1998:p.105). I recognised that, in true Freirean fashion, if I wanted my research to reflect my fundamental values as a feminist researcher, I would not only have to ask the questions but listen to the answers and allow their truth to unfold. Only then would we, as researcher and participants, be able to move forward, and see what role feminism is playing in current peace activist lives, and how this knowledge can be utilised to create change.

3.1 Research Design

I decided which research methods would best suit the aims and goals of the project and how to best approach them through the creation of a research design. To ensure that my research was in alignment with my feminist research ideals, I chose a design that was as collaborative as possible. When I trained in feminist methodologies in 2013, I was drawn to and utilised community-based participatory research, which had an underlining principle that both researcher and participant created a research project (Hacker, 2013). Although I could not make this project fully as collaborative due to time and financial restraints, I did want to utilise ideals of community-based participatory research through the usage of semi-structured interview questions. Although semi-structured interviews are a standard non-community-

based method, the way I approached them is what makes them more participatory, and thus more community centred. Semi-structured interviews can be seen as “conversations with a purpose”, but within the conversation I focused on active listening as a means to facilitate conversation (Burgess, 1988). While I did want to concentrate on particular topics in my research, I also wanted to ensure that the feminist peace activists had space and time to discuss any issues they felt relevant to their lives as feminist peace activists. By not having a restricted question and interview style, I was best able to provide space for a breadth of responses from the participants. In addition to semi-structured interviews, I decided to make my interviews available both in-person and via Skype. This flexibility allows as many opportunities as possible for feminist peace activists to interview with me. As feminist peace activists, time and money can be particularly valuable resources, by alleviating the money aspect of travel for both myself and my participants, I was able to interview more people in a timelier matter.

The decision to complete a qualitative style of research was not difficult due to the nature of the research project and the aims of the study. However, aligning the aims of the research project with the ideology of feminist research practices required more thoughtful consideration. My desire to listen to peace activists tell their stories, define their own understandings, and elaborate on their narrative of feminist peace activism is what drew me to choose in-depth interviewing. This idea aligns with Hesse-Biber and Leavy’s understanding of the role of the researcher as a listener of stories (2007). The decision to not only focus on ‘mindful listener’ but to incorporate it as an essential part of my feminist methodology has impacted my research at every stage. Centring listening had an impact in the interview question development and style, as well as my transcription process. Including ‘mindful listening’ at these stages of research was not a particular challenge for me, as they are practices that would have happened for me quite naturally in any interview scenario.

However, incorporating ‘mindful listening’ to the analysis portion required me to not only rely on my past training as a crisis counsellor, and my ‘common sense’ knowledge and skills as a listener, but to return to the academic literature to further develop my understanding of listening as a methodology and form of analysis. Heather Moquin’s usage of a listening methodology best displays the importance of listening as method to avoid potential ethical or culturally insensitive analysis in research (2014). This practice of listening also included “critically questioning my intentions within this research” is one that I also apply to my work (p.3). Moquin’s research was on the Inuit populations in Canada, a community she did not belong to, which is a central reason she decided to centre listening as practice. Although I do belong to my research population, feminist peace activists are a vulnerable population, which also influenced my desire to take as many actions as possible to best share their experiences in a way that centred their voices, and allows the reader to listen to their words in an as authentic undisturbed by analysis way.

My usage of the term “listening” is similarly applied in interviewing as Marjorie Devault, in that it denotes all aspects of interviewing. Including, “what we do while interviewing, but also to the hours we spend listening to tapes or studying transcripts...the ways we work at interpreting respondents’ accounts” (1990:p.101). Although her methodology of listening focusses on “listening as a woman” her approaches can be similarly applied to my own feminist methodology, in that her research argues that when listening is utilised as a reputable academic practice, that also prioritises listening “in ways that are personal, disciple, and sensitive to differences” (p.105). By listening there isn’t a decrease in my engagement with my transcripts or ‘data’ but an alternative approach to how I view this material in the realm of academia. This approach being that my own “personal experiences [can be] a resource for listening”, and can provide a deeper or at least mindful, discussion of

the issues, themes, or questions brought up throughout the research process by my participants (p.104).

I did not follow any specific “listening” guidelines throughout my research, however, such resources are available (Woodiwiss et al., 2017; Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Woodiwiss et al. further developed the “Listening Guide” which was originally created at Harvard University by Brown and Gilligan for their study of over one hundred girls’ navigations of adolescence in 1992. The original listening guide was comprised of four main stages, which was then adapted to be an explicitly feminist methodology by Woodiwiss et al. and focussed primarily on the “politics of giving voice” which is a theme I purposely do not apply in this research (p.75). I do acknowledge that my research can serve as an additional platform for less publically known activists but this sharing of platform is distinctly different from the concept of giving voice, in that I acknowledge that each of my interviewees already have spaces and opportunities to utilise in their own lives where they choose to give their voice. However, their decision to expand on the “Listening Guide” based on its foundation of having an “explicit rejection of the notion of a neutral, distanced and detached researcher” is validating of my own research practices, and demonstrates at least a twenty-seven-year history of applying listening as a research method (p.76).

Determining the form of the interview was my next step, and initially included informal, or semi-structured interviewing styles. Informal ‘unstructured’ interviewing is best utilised when an interviewer is attempting to build a relationship with or discover what topics or issues are most relevant or important to a participant. This is in comparison to semi-structured interviews which have a clear agenda in mind and questions to ask but remain flexible in the interviewing process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2007). Locating my research methods in between these two interviewing styles felt the most authentic to my research philosophy, which highly values collaboration and working towards equitable

interviewer/interviewee power dynamics while maintaining the goal of positioning feminism within modern peace activism through sharing the stories of these women

However, the next step was much more difficult: how to devise the kind of interview schedule which would best enable me to explore my research aim and encourage participants to explore, and perhaps even extend my research questions. The research questions were: What does it mean to be a feminist peace activist in the U.S. and U.K.? How do the peace activists navigate (practice) Christianity and maintain an activist feminist identity? One additional question that arose before the interviews was, how did experiences as a child, if at all, shape their path to becoming peace activists? While I had experiences with this and had read other activist accounts discussing their childhood, it was not a topic I asked about or chose to address in this research. This decision was primarily based on my research supervisor's suggestion that it would be too suggestive of a question and limit the themes and topics the feminist peace activists would discuss. It was not until after interviewing that I noticed a trend of the role of childhood in activist lives coming up in a majority (twenty-nine out of thirty-seven) of the conversations, that I decided it was a theme to address in my analysis chapters. From these research questions, I identified five main themes: biography/identity, peace activism, feminism, community, and the media. Then I created four to six questions and sub-questions within each theme, as shown in Appendix 1. After fine-tuning the questions by answering the questions myself, I predicted that the interviews would take approximately one and a half hours. Since these questions were open-ended, and the goal of the interview was to cover all five themes, not just each question, I knew it was acceptable to skip specific questions, or making slight alterations of wording to a question.

3.2 Recruitment

Having identified my methodological perspective, and decided on the data-collection method, I needed participants. I devised recruitment criteria intending to position feminism within the current peace movement in the U.K. and the U.S. The first criteria category states that self-identified women had to also identify as both peace activists and feminists. This identification was based on each participant's understanding of these terms; I did not provide definitions of these three identifiers; instead, I hoped that by leaving these terms open-ended, I would represent a more extensive range of activists in my research project. This strategy also had the potential to expand the definition of what it means to do peace work and be a feminist. Secondly, these feminist peace activists had to be active or current with their peace work. Thirdly, the women feminist peace activists resided in either the U.K. or the U.S. Although it was my initial hope to conduct fieldwork in more than two countries, ideally, I would have added Australia, Canada, and South Africa to my research, it was not feasible within the scope of my research project due to financial, time, and manageability issues. Ultimately, I chose the U.S. and the U.K. because I reside in the U.K., but am also a U.S. citizen familiar with peace work in my home country. Additionally, while all of my previous work had been completed within the context of the U.S., I was interested in researching the differences and parallels between the activist's identities, experiences, and understandings of feminist peace work. I also became aware of numerous similarities between the U.K. and U.S. peace activist communities; for example, when looking at organisations to contact, I noticed that they frequently have sister or partner organisations in both countries and utilise a lot of the same organising techniques and social media resources.

At the onset of the project, there were no age (other than being at least eighteen years old), class, race, or regional restrictions. I did not ask about demographics prior to the interviews, when demographics such as race, gender, and class became clearer. Although my

ideal sample would be more wide-ranging in demographics, particularly in race and ethnicity, and equal in the numbers of participants from the U.K. and the U.S., this is not the case for my participants. The reasoning for wanting a racially ‘diverse’ interview base was to keep my research in line with my feminist values of not contributing to the exclusion (accidental or not) of voices of people of colour. As a Latina, I was hoping to speak to fellow women of colour about their experiences of feminist peace activism. From my own experiences and communities, I have often been involved in personal conversations surrounding the unique experiences of women of colour in activism, especially in the U.S. While I did receive interest from activists who were people of colour; those who agreed to participate in the research project were all white. I have found this to be a significant weakness in my research and one I did attempt to avoid by reaching out to organisations that centred people of colour (forty out of one-hundred and fifty). Following recruitment, it was important for me not to follow up with these specific organisations with the sole purpose of recruiting racial diversity in my participants because this would be tokenising people of colour and would go against my personal and feminist research ethics. This decision was also impacted by time constraints of my thesis, as I had already reached the maximum number of interview hours and participants recommended for my study. Instead, in an attempt to address this issue, I found it helpful to ask participants about inclusivity and the lack of diversity in the field of peace activism. This questioning provided some significant insight into this issue, which I address later in Chapter 4.⁴

Regarding participant location, participants were based more in the U.S. than the U.K. but were spread throughout both the individual countries, generally concentrated in cities. One demographic that I did succeed in was the recruiting of people from a wide range of ages, eighteen to ninety. There might have been other wide-ranging demographics such as

⁴ Discussion found on page 124.

philosophies of feminism and peace, gender identity, socio-economic status, sexuality, and (dis)ability, but these were not shared with me consistently between interviews.

To begin recruiting, I conducted an online search of activist organisations. I created a list of keywords to guide the search, as well as collected the names of organisations cited in the literature from my critical context. I completed an extensive literature search through the university library databases and google scholar. Terms that I used when completing the search were: feminist, peace, activist, organising, women's movements, and anti-war. In addition to these terms, I also included peace organisations, anti-war organisations, and feminist peace as keywords when locating specific organisational groups and resources such as journals and listservs. These terms were sufficient in locating organisations relevant to my research finding of over four-hundred organisations. After organising them by country/location, and themes (peace organisation, religious organisation, anti-war organisation, environmental organisation, feminist organisation, internationally focussed, and/or a mixture of all of the above), I contacted one-hundred and fifty organisations, eighty-one in the U.S. and sixty-nine in the U.K., based on their criteria fitting into the scope of my research project. This contact was made via email, and I asked if they would be willing to share my call for participants and contact information with all of their members and volunteers.

After this initial step of outreach, I was contacted by most of the organisations (one-hundred and twenty-nine), and was either informed that they would forward the information onto their staff/members (eighty-eight), that they wanted additional information (thirteen), that there was no interest in participating (seven), or I received no contact from the organisations by the time the call for participants has concluded (twenty-one). From this point of contact, I was either given direct contact details of possible interested participants, or I waited to be contacted by interested participants. Once contacted, I provided a complete

description of the research project, the informed consent, and addressed any questions/concerns possible participants may have had about agreeing to be interviewed. Out of the seventy-four people who reached out about the project, thirty-seven decided to participate and met the essential requirements for the research project. Out of these seventy-four potential participants, five were rejected due to being located outside of the U.S. and U.K. For both in-person and online interviews, once the informed consent was signed using an electronic signature for an online interview or a scanned copy of a physically signed consent form, I was able to schedule them for an interview. I tracked all scheduling via an excel sheet uploaded to the university google docs. Interview times were blocked for three-hour time slots to ensure plenty of time to complete an in-depth discussion. Three feminist peace activists were recruited in an alternative method to my online search and call for participants: two people were contacted through a personal connection with a specific organisation in the U.S., and one person was approached at a peace march and decided to follow-up after our in-person conversation. There was no occurrence of snowballing in this process, with most participants being informed through their respective peace organisation affiliations, although connections between individuals and organisations were made known during the interview process. This process occurred over January 2016 through May 2016. Although interest in participating continued to be shown after this time frame, I found I interviewed a sufficient number of participants due to the repetitive nature of the interview themes and conversations. Also, according to Fugard & Potts (2014), thematic analysis has been used in studies ranging from two participants to over four-hundred, but suggest between ten and fifty participants for studies using interviews. This shows that the thirty-seven participants I recruited in this study were adequate to develop a new understanding of identity and practice of feminist peace activists.

The primary gateway for recruiting participants and disseminating my call to recruit participants was through the internet. I only recruited three participants through word of mouth, and the remaining thirty-four were sought out via the internet. This recruiting style raises a concern of access, and which individuals were able to participate. I did not ask for socioeconomic status or class information; however, many activists provided this in the interview themselves as either working class or from upper-class backgrounds. Interestingly, middle-class was not a demographic brought up by any of the interviewees. An additional concern and potential sample 'bias' is that all participants were those who not only self-identified as an activist but were enthusiastic about discussing their experiences with and pathways to activist work. Although such enthusiasm did lead to rich material, it could also have the potential of skewing the perception of what it means to be an activist as more positive than it might be. However, I believe it is impossible not to have bias, and as this was done through a recruitment process, it would mean that all of the feminist peace activists elected to meet with me and participate in this research. With such a small-scale qualitative interview, there will be a leaning, and of the thirty-seven interviewees, no one described or found activism to be worthless or an overtly negative experience, or individuals who were once activists and left the field.

3.3 Location Demographics

While my goal was to interview participants from across both the U.S. and the U.K. through cross-national outreach of agencies/individuals, the responses/interest and feedback I received tended to be condensed in specific locations, primarily those in or surrounding big cities. As noted in Appendix 4, chart i, I interviewed twenty-one participants from the U.S. Out of this number, seven were located in the mid-Atlantic region, which includes Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia, West Virginia, and Delaware. The

D.C. metropolitan area contained the majority of these participants due to peace organisation headquarter locations and accessibility to governmental officials. The second most populous region with five participants was the north east, also commonly referred to as New England, whose primary location is New York City, a metropolitan hub and accessible location for activist organisations. The third most represented location with four participants was the West Coast, which includes California, Oregon, and Washington, and had participants represented from all three states. Outside of these three geographical locations, the five remaining participants were located throughout four of the five remaining regions of the U.S., and there was no representation from the Southwest region in this study (Appendix 4, chart i).

Although I contacted organisations across all of the UK, I interviewed only people from England and Scotland and did not conduct interviews with people living in Wales and Northern Ireland. No participants responded from Wales, and out of the two possible participants who displayed some interest in the research project located in Northern Ireland, neither of them decided to continue with the study. As noted in Appendix 4, chart ii, sixteen activists from the U.K. participated in this study. These activists were based in four out of the nine main regions of England and one from Edinburgh, Scotland. Six out of sixteen U.K. participants were located in Yorkshire and the Humber, which is where I live and conducted three in-person interviews. Greater London also had six of the participants located in the city centre. Similarly to the U.S., many activist organisations are based out of the city and contribute to this occurrence. The remaining four participants were located in the North West and South West regions of England. Although I attempted to recruit participants in the North East, East or West Midlands, East Anglia, or the South East of the country, no one from these regions participated in this research (Appendix 4, chart ii). Throughout the thesis, I refer to an activist's general location within the U.S. or the U.K.; sometimes, these descriptions are more specific or vague depending on the activist's comfort level and safety needs (Appendix 4).

Therefore, I only revealed the location demographics of participants who felt comfortable with me disclosing them.

3.4 Ethics, Informed Consent, and Audio Recording

Staying within the framework of ethical guidelines of the University of York Research Ethics, which is supported by the Social Research Association of the U.K., based on the ‘human subjects model,’ namely the right to privacy, three factors must be addressed and taken into consideration when completing a social research project both in-person and online. These include the right to confidentiality, informed consent, and the maintaining of anonymity (Fieldman, Lee, & Blank, 2008). Further, it is becoming a commonly held belief in the academic community that online research does not require a unique approach to ethics as it once did when the usage of the internet was not commonplace (Ess, 2002). However, there still is concern about the borderless nature of online research, meaning that there is the potential of a lack of national research guidelines (Fieldman, Lee, & Blank, 2008). However, I was able to address this in my Economics, Law, Management, Politics and Sociology Ethics Committee (ELMPS) application by researching and complying with both the U.S. and U.K. guidelines and creating those two national boundaries for my research project in an online interviewing space.

Under the Data Protection Act, political opinions, religious views, and criminal convictions are considered sensitive ‘data’ and are all topics my participants discussed. Additionally, personal relationships are likely to be discussed regarding these sensitive topics. In these instances, I carefully anonymised all transcriptions. However, it was through detailed processes of not only adhering to ethical practices in fieldwork, but also by positioning myself as a feminist researcher throughout the entire preparatory and fieldwork process, that I was able to remain reflexive throughout. Ensuring anonymity within this

research project included omitting all names, email addresses, and additional identifying information. All recordings, transcriptions, and data analysis were kept either separately in my locked university office, or on a password-protected secure university server. The transcription process, which is an integral part of the analysis portion of the research, was completed entirely by me and provided an added layer of confidentiality and ethical insurance. The following processes were made clear to all participants before completing the interview: I provided identification numbers for each participant after interviews completed. Additionally, I gave pseudonyms to each participant and any participant third parties they mentioned. All sensitive organisational information disclosed by participants was anonymised to ensure no harm to the interviewees' place of work/activism. To further minimise risk, I treated all information collected for this research project as sensitive information requiring a high level of security. Further, participants were also made knowledgeable of the possibility of their statements being quoted and made publically available upon publication of the thesis.

In order to minimise potential risks to participants, I completed a thorough risk assessment for each interview. This assessment took into consideration the location of the interview, the time of the interview, continued anonymity of the interviewee, and ensuring the security of all research equipment during transfer. All interviewee data was transferred to and kept secure on the university campus or the university server. All in-person interviews took place in neutral and safe locations during the daylight hours, and the participants chose times for online interviews. In an attempt to minimise possible emotional distress, all interview questions were asked in a generalised way and were kept open-ended. This allowed participants to share only the information they felt was relevant to the topic/question. In the event a participant became distressed, I provided additional relevant support information/documentation.

Potential participants were provided with an information sheet which contained the nature of the research, the types of research questions I would be asking, the ways I would use the interviews, and for what purpose. This information was provided electronically via email to all participants, including in-person interviewees (Appendix 2). All participants were asked to sign a consent form before the interview began ensuring they have read and understood all relevant information prior to beginning the interview. I kept these consent forms in my locked university office for safety and in a password protected university email drive. Additionally, keeping in line with ethical (feminist) research practices, all participants were given time to ask questions prior to the interview and on the interview date if needed. I also explained the right to withdraw consent to them and allowed adequate time before the write-up portion of the research to withdraw their interview responses (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007).

To minimise potential room for error in the collection of data, the audio recording was completed using two recording devices at all times. For online interviews, a recording software installed on the computer was utilised and synced with the Skype software. Additionally, a separate recording device was placed on the table beside the computer to record the interview audio. For in-person interviews, two separate devices were placed between the participant and me to collect the audio best. Prior to turning on the tape recording devices, I once again reminded participants that the interview was going to be recorded. Only two participants displayed any visual or verbal concerns of anxiety regarding the tape recording, namely that they wanted to clarify that it was just audio recording and that all identifying information would remain anonymous.

3.5 Navigating the Interviews

Although I was initially concerned about the number of questions I had come up with, I felt much relief after the first interview. While the list of questions seems quite long (thirty-one in total), during the interview I found that many of these questions were answered during previous responses that led to a natural overlap and flow of conversation. I found myself asking questions “out of order” due to my judgement about the best timing; I felt right about this as it encouraged a natural dialogue between participants and me, and allowing such flexibility reinforced my decision to have semi-structured interviews. I was able to cover all of the questions and topics within two hours for most of the interviews, with five interviews going on for three to four hours. Only two of the interviews were completed in under seventy-five minutes. For one participant, this was because she answered the questions in a rather straightforward fashion despite my efforts to probe for more information or encourage her to elaborate; this also meant we did not discuss additional topics. For the second shorter interview, this was due to her time restraints in her work schedule, but she and I both felt she was able to address the questions and topics in an in-depth manner adequately. However, it was more common that participants wanted to provide stories, examples, and discuss additional topics, which I encouraged. The interview was very one-sided (as intended) for the bulk of the time, and allowed the participant to do most of the talking. This made it possible to respond accordingly and prepare in my mind for which topic or question to address next, and avoid any awkward silences. It is important to note that nearly all of my interviews went over the initial estimate of one and a half hours, but this did not cause a problem for my participants because I let them know the interviews could last as long as they needed or wanted. A possible reason that the interviews went smoothly was that I provided all the participants with information sheets prior to the interviews. These outlined my key research questions, which could have allowed them to mentally prepare for the interview itself.

Additionally, some participants asked clarifying questions during the initial email contact, which could have unintentionally provided them with some insight into the interview. However, no direct interview questions were disclosed in these emails (Appendix 1).

3.6 In-person interviews versus Skype interviews

While in-person interviews have been the predominate way to complete qualitative research, for practical reasons, I expanded my research methods to include online video chat based interviews. Skype interviews became my predominant way of conducting interviews both in the U.S. and in the U.K.; this was not intentional, as I had hoped to be able to meet all U.K. participants in-person as a balance to having to complete all U.S. based interviews online. However, I quickly found that most participants preferred Skype interviews to in-person ones when given the option even though I offered to meet them at their preferred time and location. As noted in Appendices 2 and 3, I only conducted three in-person interviews and one interview was completed via email in order to be inclusive to a participant who was deaf and preferred an email interview to having an interpreter service via video chat. Further, I completed thirty-three in an online format, two of these interviews were audio only via Skype, and the remainder were audio-visual.

Although technology can make us less connected to each other (Turkle, 2017), it can also allow us to share our stories across time and space. My initial concern was that I would not be able to reach the ideal depth in online interviews which lead me to the question: in what ways can academics utilise these modern technologies to not only enhance and broaden their research, but maintain a collaborative feminist research methodology that keeps the story of its participants at the centre? However, my experiences helped me to understand the value of online interviews, and thus expand on my practice. The issues I address are ethics of online interviews, synchronous interviews, and increased level of agency.

Regarding ethics, there is a moral panic amongst the academic community about the potential space for unethical practices to occur in online interviews; specifically, the possibility of misrepresentation of both the researcher and the interviewee responses (Fielding, Lee & Blank, 2008). However, it is important to note that this concern was based on positivist research practices, specifically those that do not consider feminist research practices in their fieldwork. A difference was that many of the online interviewing texts focus on email as a medium, whereas Skype allows face to face contact, thus alleviating some of these concerns in my research project. Handbooks are being written with the intent to quell the anxiety/fear that goes into online interviewing amongst academics, mainly that there is less reputability with online interviewing and concerns about how the new practices fit into the arena of academic writing (Hine, 2005). These handbooks are further adding to the normalisation and acceptance of this form of interviewing, especially over the last fourteen years since Hine's article was written.

An argument for online interviews, specifically synchronous interviews, those that happen in real-time, are found to be the most compatible to face-to-face interviews, alleviating many concerns regarding online interviewing (Fielding, Lee & Blank, 2008). Most of the studies before 2008 regarding online interviewing focussed on email interviews, or any other interviews that occur asynchronously (Fielding, Lee & Blank, 2008; Hine, 2005; James & Busher, 2006). The ability to avoid such concerns through video chat is what initially drew me to Skype interviews as a compromise to face-to-face interviews. A concern surrounding online interviewing is the possibility of the disembodiment of participant and researcher/interview process (Fielding, Lee, & Blank, 2008; Hine, 2005). Once again, I found that Skype can address this concern. In many ways, our computers and their ability to aid us in communication across time and vast spaces allow us to expand our embodiment. Perhaps the most convincing argument for online interviewing, especially in a feminist research

project, is its promotion of empowerment for participants. The utilisation of online interviewing has been connected to the increased agency and collaboration of participants (James & Busher, 2006). They attributed this to the control participants have over the time length and parameters of the study. Additionally, having access to email allows participants to ask questions and provide pre-interview information to the researcher in a time frame and location of their choice. Further, participants can end the interview at any time if they feel no longer safe or able to continue with the interview, which may be more difficult if they were in the same room as the interviewer and felt compelled to continue.

Prior to conducting my fieldwork, I prepared for various situations that could arise during an interview by generating a list of tasks to complete before each interview. After fieldwork, I added to this list based on issues that arose, or instances that could have gone smoother had I known of these possible circumstances before the interview. Therefore, I have curated what I found to be the best practices for online interviewing. First, I printed out a questionnaire for each interview for me to take notes and add thoughts/reflections immediately to a given question asked. This was also a tool I found helpful in addressing the concern of disembodiment with online interviewing, especially those regarding body language. By having a note sheet, I was able to record the gestures or body language of a participant that I would no longer have once the interview was completed since this research project recorded only audio. Second, setting personal boundaries in advance regarding what I was comfortable disclosing about myself was also helpful, alleviating the task of having to negotiate on the spot with participants staring at me waiting for a response. For instance, I knew from the beginning that I did not want to connect with participants on social media but would be happy to meet up in-person if they ever came to town. I was able to convey this to participants interested in taking the relationship beyond interviewer/interviewee once the study was completed. Third, it was essential to develop excellent listening skills, especially

since my interviews were in-depth and often ran over two hours in length. I used my experience as a crisis worker as well as having guidance from a feminist research methods workbook (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007) to tune in on my listening skills. Fourthly, I decided early in the fieldwork process to not argue or correct participant statements. This is mainly concerning statements that I not only found offensive or inappropriate, but also knew to be factually wrong. I made this choice in order to limit my influence and ensure I get the most complete life and peace work narrative from the participants as possible. My interview was not an instance for a ‘teachable moment’, or confrontation. A fifth practise I included in the successful recruiting of participants was promptness in emailing contacts before the interviews. It was helpful to be flexible in my emailing times due to the broad range of time zones I was contacting people, and awareness that many participants would email me after their workday was over. Lastly, I found it essential to allow for participant questions at the beginning and end of each interview. I also made sure to ask them the open-ended question, “Is there anything else you would like to share or be a part of this research project?” I hoped that allowing questions would help the participant feel comfortable and in control of the interview; a contributor instead of someone being studied. These practices not only helped the interviews run smoothly; they also were a basis to create a supportive environment for the interview to exist. I knew that there was a chance that some of the relevant experiences that the participants would talk about could also be difficult, and emotional triggering experiences. Being prepared with boundaries and interview skills enabled me to be sensitive to the state of the participants and to navigate any potentially distressing conversations.

Additional practices I found helpful were: clearing my workspace to ensure fewer distractions; providing a technical guide to participants on how to access Skype; only having browsers/programs open that were necessary on my computer at the time of the interview; having a drink prepared in advance; having a back-up video chat connections such as Google

Hangout on my computer in case an issue arose with Skype; installing a Skype app on my phone in case there were complications with Wi-Fi; scheduling multiple hours around the interview in case it began late or ran over; researching participants so you can focus your questions and ensure the participants that you value their contribution to the research project; and lastly, always having a backup recording device.

While I chose to utilise online interviewing as my primary tool for fieldwork, I also acknowledge that there are limitations to this method, as well as benefits. I have identified six significant benefits of conducting synchronous online video chat based interviews. The first is the potential to include a broader range of people, reducing location as a factor for participant inclusion. Second is a financial incentive as less money is spent by cutting out travel costs, allowing any additional money to be spent on other areas of the research project or for projects where costs might be higher. The third benefit is lowering the environmental impact being made by utilising computers for research. For instance, by having electronic informed consents, there is less paper waste, and fewer fossil fuels being used to travel. The fourth benefit is increased safety for both interviewer and participant, further increasing the ethical practice in research. The fifth benefit, which is particularly relevant for those in academia, is the potential of having less impact on academic schedule and duties. For example, not having to travel for fieldwork means that it is still possible to maintain some other tasks such as teaching, committee work, and mentoring that might not be possible if there was a need to travel and be on location for fieldwork. The last and perhaps most exciting benefit was that by conducting online interviews, I as a researcher was more in line with peace activist values. I did not initially consider this a benefit, but approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ participants addressed it during our conversations. It is important to note that the environment was not a direct topic of my interview, but was a connection that was drawn repeatedly. The

idea was that the loss of resources, finances, and environmental impact costs of travel is inherently not peaceful, and thus not aligned with feminist peace activism.

Potential limitations also need to be taken into account both prior to conducting fieldwork and afterwards, during the analysis in order to best reflect on the possible weaknesses of the research project, I have identified four limitations. First, is the necessity of access to a computer and the ability to use one at a level necessary for a video chat. Paired with the reality of socioeconomic status divisions, this means those individuals with low incomes, who are homeless, or even those opposed to the usage of technology might not be able to participate in this study. A potential way to address this issue is to seek out public spaces with computer access, such as libraries or community centres. However, this does not solve the problem of availability, and how free time or privacy to complete an interview might not be possible for all individuals. The second potential concern is the possibility of an age gap due to the use of technology as a concern for elderly participants. While this concern is ageist, I found it to not be apparent in my research project. Although I did not specifically ask, many participants disclosed their age during the interviews and the number of participants who were 'elderly' (sixty-five and older) was the largest category of people interviewed. The third concern, technical difficulties, is a practical one when relying on technology for fieldwork, but is also perhaps the easiest one to prevent and address; having multiple backup options to all technological connections (the computer, Skype, Wi-Fi, and recording devices) will help alleviate potential fieldwork losses due to technology usage. The final limitation is safety concerns, specifically regarding phone and internet tapping due to the sensitive nature of the discussed information. This topic came up repeatedly throughout my fieldwork, with six participants informing me they were positive local police or the FBI tapped their calls and internet usage and that I should be aware of that. Unfortunately, there were three people based in the U.S. who were interested in participating in the research

project, but their concern for their safety kept them from participating via Skype. While this was not an overwhelming occurrence during recruitment, the topic of safety was of great concern for five of the participants who needed extra reassurance that these interviews would be kept anonymous. In one particular instance, where we met in-person, the participant had her partner there with her at the beginning of the meeting to ensure I was not working for the police or any other government agency. With this in mind, I speculate that the fear of policing bodies might have limited participants from reaching out to me to be interviewed.

3.7 Reflecting on my Positionality

It is important here to mention that I share many of the beliefs, values and identities that are discussed throughout this research, but my own way of viewing and practicing feminist peace activism is also different from the participants in this research. My position here is both an insider as a feminist peace activist and an outsider as a researcher who has not shared many of the life experiences the participants describe in this thesis. I was drawn to complete this research because of my own winding path to feminist peace activism, and wanting to learn more about how others found their way. As an activist who is also an academic, I have a platform on which I can shed some light on the lives of the many women who have not been acknowledged throughout the research literature. Although it was important for me to begin this research with this in mind, I also needed to ensure that my own set of intentions did not take away from the experiences described by the participants.

In the last decade, the role of the researcher within the field of peace studies has been discussed in academic literature at a growing rate. This is of particular importance because of the unintentional impact biases, beliefs, and personal experiences have on the research, especially in qualitative research. In order to mediate this, I have used reflexivity “as a means to monitor the tension between involvement and detachment of the researcher and the

researched as a means to enhance the rigor of the study and its ethics” (Berger, 2015). Specifically, the incorporation of ‘radical reflexivity’ prior, during, and after the research process. This form of reflection requires the researcher to position themselves and the power that they hold, both as an academic and their other privileged identities, within the context of the research. Reflexivity can be used to help balance the power dynamic at each step of the research. Through such reflection, the feminist conversation around border crossings become more complex, and the insider-outsider relationship between researcher and participant is made central. With this in mind, the role of the researcher and participants can be approached from a more feminist perspective of research methodology (Pillow, 2003). Researchers can reflect on the importance in acknowledging that community members/participants best know what they most need/want as a community. It is not the outsider’s responsibility to decide that in any way (Norsworthy & Kaschak, 2011). M. Brinton Lykes’ (2010) articles on their Participatory Action Research addresses how this can be understood while at the same time allowing the researcher to put their own voice into the research project. Once again, the rooted and shift method of communication is utilised by the researcher staying true to their own research methodology while also understanding the needs/wants/interests of participants. Reflexivity provides incentive to keep in mind that not only does the body of a peace activist researcher cross borders, but so does the work they do during peace activist research (Norwood & Zahau, 2011).

There are several ways to maintain reflexivity throughout research including supervision, peer reviewing, and support networks (Berger, 2015). One way I facilitated a focus on my research personally, as an activist, and an academic by my use of journaling. Early in the research process, I was encouraged by my supervisor to keep a journal throughout my PhD, particularly during fieldwork. While I was hesitant to keep a journal, I am now grateful I did so. As Berger (2015) suggests, keeping a research journal allowed me a

space for self-supervision, as well as keeping track of my thought processes and emotions. This practice was beneficial during my interviews, where after two to three hours of actively listening to someone and writing notes along the way I felt too drained to begin immediately transcribing the interview. However, I was able to write in my work journal, particularly about how I felt after each interview, big themes or points of tension in the participants' responses, and ideas that came to mind during the conversation. This practice helped me greatly once it was time to transcribe and begin the analysis process. It also served as a place to more deeply engage with my research on a personal level. While I am aware that I kept myself relatively out of this thesis, partially in an attempt to remain relatively objective but due primarily to my comfort level as a researcher, I found through journaling and the insights it brought to my analysis that I was able to feel connected to this work and input my positioning while revealing only the parts of myself I felt comfortable sharing in this type of work. My journaling manifested as the perfect example of my status as both an "insider" and an "outsider" of this research. Through journaling, I was able to reflect at every stage of research in a tangible way, allowing me the space to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of my research process. While at the same time allowing for there to be blurriness or messiness in my research process while still knowing that I was producing credible and valuable research. It took me the majority of my PhD to begin to indeed view reflexivity and vulnerability as a valuable place in the research practice, particularly one that can enrich findings and the interview process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). I came to better understand through my journaling as a feminist researcher, that by further valuing the unique experiences and perspectives I have with my research project I could better analyse and understand my participants' words and meanings.

As a new and unknown academic, there might have been hesitancy for interviewees to participate in my research. There were two instances where the women let me know that they

had contacted the Centre for Women's Studies to confirm that I was indeed a researcher before they agreed to meet with me. Three other women mentioned how I was "hard to find" online (this is due to my limited social media presence) because they wanted to look into who I was before they contacted me. I also had instances of participants sharing details about themselves before the interview including links to their social media or website. Although initially I was unsure of accessing this information, I saw this as a necessary part of the rapport building process. I determined that not accessing the information they shared with me could inevitably impact on the interview in more negative ways than deciding to access it. For example, they might find me standoffish, uninterested or rude if they realised I had not looked at the links they had shared with me. Where looking into this information may have changed the way in which I approached asking questions and the thoughts I had of the person before the interview, not accessing the information they conveyed to me could potentially shut down communication even before the interview began. Within my feminist theoretical approach, I knew I needed to centre the participants as the ones who hold the knowledge and the power to decide what information is given at each point, and I am there to listen and interpret given my own experiences. By sending this information, they made the decision to start the interview from a place where they were more familiar with me, and I was more familiar with them. I also found that for some of the participants whose time was limited, they found this initial sharing of basic information to be a time saving practice. One example of this was Charlotte, a fellow academic, who stated, "I know how much time can be wasted on introductory questions...Let's just jump into the real stuff, shall we?" This spoke to their own limited time for discussion and their awareness of the interview and research process.

Despite some initial concerns, the women and I had a positive experience building rapport quickly and through the internet. This led me to question what it means to connect with people through a screen, and ultimately what this means for an interviewer-participant

relationship. I quickly found out that as a researcher, I felt safer meeting people over Skype than I did when meeting in-person. Although I was not overly concerned about my safety with this population of participants, I still noticed a heightened sense of comfort when conducting interviews online in comparison to in-person. Was it possible the interviewees felt the same? Did this affect how rapport was built? This could be attributed to people's familiarity with video chats and online forms of communication in their everyday lives. I found that even for participants who had never used Skype before they still felt comfortable downloading the software; some participants even expressed their excitement about learning a new skill. Additionally, it might be people's feelings of safety and being comfortable in their own environments that contributed to this, and why individuals chose Skype interviews over meeting in person. It is important to note that all three individuals I met in person commented on their concerns about my identity being false, or that I was in some way associated with the police or government.

An essential part of building rapport with my participants included me sharing and positioning myself within the research project. I found that once I shared my activist background, the fact that my father was an El Salvadorian refugee, and the impact it had on my life, the participants seemed to warm to me and see me as one of them, and not just an outsider. I am concerned that shared experiences and identities can lead to assumed shared knowledge, and therefore gaps in my questions and the participant's responses. I made sure to ask for elaboration, definitions, and examples whenever I thought these oversimplifications were occurring. Hine (2005) found that by sharing personal details before the beginning of online interviews, participants felt more comfortable to disclose more thorough responses to interview questions. I also found this to be the case, since most of my interviews went over the estimated time, and those that occurred online lasted longer than the in-person interviews. The ability to build rapport also aided in the collaborative nature of the interviews, with

participants discussing topics that they felt were most important to their lives as peace activists. My own interview experience is also supported by James and Busher (2006), who argued that a collaborative approach paired with an adaptable interview style also helps build rapport. They said that ‘as the interviews developed, the participants began to take greater ownership of the processes of narrative construction by responding to our questions in unexpected ways and directions’. By sharing the interview process, rather than ‘enforcing’ it (p.11), the participants can share what is important to them about the question rather than just answering the question.

Although some suggest replication of face-to-face interviews online limit rapport, this is not always the case; it has also been found to be a minimal/non-existent concern when approached from a feminist methodology (Fielding, Lee & Blank, 2008). Overall, I’ve found that by following these principles I felt more confident that my research aligned with feminist ideals, was a form of activism, and that utilising online interviews does not have to impede on building rapport, or the validity of the research.

3.8 Coding and Analysis

Prior to my PhD, I had not utilised any coding software; however, I did have experience with multiple recording software and devices and utilised my experience to choose the format best suited for both online and in-person interviews. I completed all recordings through two software devices, Amolto Call Recorder and GoldWave. Amolto Call Recorder was located directly on my computer and was synched with the Skype software to ensure that all parts of the conversation were recording. Whereas GoldWave was a secondary/backup recording that was controlled by me on a separate device. As a feminist researcher, I found it essential to personally complete all transcriptions, ensuring that they were verbatim, and as consistent as possible in the usage/description of tone, laughter, and

pauses throughout the interviews. However, to best ensure the anonymity of my participants, the data output was slightly altered only in instances they provided identifiable information. Additionally, at times where direct quotes appear in the thesis, the condensing and fragmenting of direct quotes will be displayed through the usage of an ellipsis and is done to best display a point, make a statement, or to protect identifying information.

The categories of the participant profiles for this research project include three sub-themes; the location demographics, the types of organisations each were involved in, and an overview of the age and race of all participants involved. Location demographics are divided by regions in both the U.S. and U.K. (see Appendix 4 for the charting of these regions). Organisations types are divided into seven categories based on the descriptions provided from the participants as well as the aim and mission statements of each organisation. The subtheme of age and race is based on self-identification from the participants. These factors aim to display the scope of this research, as well as the gaps in the individuals interviewed.

I divided the participants into one of seven organisational categories based on their most recent experience and most time spent at a given organisation or form of activism (Table 1). Although this was not straightforward: there was much overlap amongst many peace organisations, and many activists are members of or involved with multiple groups or forms of activism. My organisational categories are: nuclear disarmament groups, whose primary focus is the elimination of arms, includes seven participants, four from the U.K. and three from the U.S.; religiously affiliated organisations, whose interests/involvement with peace activism and feminism varied from group to group, but centred around the religion of their organisation, included seven participants, three from the U.K. and four from the U.S.; international peace organisations that focused on peace on an international scale, included six participants, four from the U.S. and two from the U.K.; non-violent national based peace groups, whose focus was on peace activism in general but were not internationally,

religiously, or identity based, accounted for eight of the total participants, six from the U.S. and two from the U.K.; Veteran based peace organisations, made up of people previously in the armed forces, accounted for two of the participants, both based in the U.S.; identity based peace organisations, centred around racial and gender identity, included three participants, two U.S. activists and one from the U.K.; and finally, the last organisation category I have labelled as professional integrated who are women who have integrated activism and peace into their places of work and lives and includes four women, all based in the U.S. who hold careers in one of three fields, medical, legal, or university. Their forms of activism varied, but all four participants made clear connections of how their careers were a form of peace work as well. Although each woman’s experience, organisational involvement, and locations were different, there were clear connections in the structure and form of activism guiding each woman’s peace work.

Table 1: Peace Activist Organisational Categories

	United States	United Kingdom	Total
Nuclear Disarmament	3	4	7
Religious	4	3	7
International Peace	4	2	6
Non-violent National	4	4	8
Veteran	2	-	2
Identity	2	1	3
Professional Integrated	2	2	4
Total	21	16	37

Although not a specific focus of my research project, the age, race, and ethnicity of the participants is a significant part of understanding the positionality of their activism, the

age of the women interviewed ranged from eighteen years of age to eighty-five. I have identified four age/generational categories; the first, women who are between eighteen and thirty-nine years old, meant they would have grown up in the Millennial/Generation Y generation. Slightly under a quarter (9/37) of the participants were within this category. The second age group ranged from forty to fifty-nine years of age and includes individuals from the baby boomers and generation X, again with slightly under a quarter (9/37) participants represented. The largest group was the age range of sixty to seventy-nine years of age, respectively in the baby boomer generation and slightly before. This cohort included nearly half of the participants (17/37) of this research project. The last and smallest age group is that of participants eighty years old and older, with two participants in their eighties at the time of the interview. Having such a wide range of ages represented adds to the depth of this research project and further allows insight into what it means to be a feminist peace activist in the early 21st century at multiple points in the lifespan.

This research focusses on white women, while arguments can be made that this is representative of the lack of diversity in many peace activist organisations, I do not feel this is an adequate excuse for such a mono-racial project and is one of the weaknesses of my research. While all participants were racially white, six women identified their specific ethnicities which included one South African person of Scottish descent, two Italian people (U.S.), one German person (England), one Jewish person (England), and one Irish person (England). Although I contacted a wide range of peace organisations, including those whose membership included people of colour predominantly, this failed to translate in the participants I secured for this study. It is important to note that I chose not to reach out to these peace organisations again to include additional participants for a couple of reasons. First, and most notably, is that I did not want to include someone on the basis of their race, which would result in a tokenistic attempt at growing racial diversity in this study. Second,

this study had reached the limits of its scope with the participants who did respond, and I also did not want to exclude any participants on the basis of race. Both of these actions would have gone against my feminist research values and ethics, and compromised this research in a different way.

For the analysis portion of this research project, I completed a thematic analysis in line with the framework presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) who outlined a six-step process of getting to know the data, generating an initial focus of ideas, determining themes, and then evaluating and reviewing those themes back to the data before finalising and defining what the themes are. With regards to ontology in this research, I have taken a symbolic interactionist approach (Blumer, 1969). This acknowledges that by trying to understand the experience of the participants it is ‘insufficient for us to take an outside perspective upon the “objective” situation they are in’, and consider the meaning of their situation as well. Further, ‘human behaviour or praxis creates a “world” which it then inhabits’ full of physical objects and meanings which are understood through social interaction (Crossley, 2002: pg. 19). Through the research process, I have to make an attempt at seeing how they define their situation, and I can only do this through our collective and collaborative interaction. Although this is an inherently limited lens to understand the participant’s experience, adhering to Braun & Clarke’s (2006) framework provides a theoretical underpinning for this qualitative analysis. I also needed to maintain a feminist methodology within my analysis and did this in a few different ways. I included my position within the context of each interview by taking notes during each interview and keeping a journal throughout the interviewing process. Then, I was able to refer back to these notes throughout the rest of the process. I also kept the participants at the centre of the research and let their own words define the themes of the research. In this, I was aware of keeping my expectations of the analysis separate and allowed me to connect with one of the most

prominent themes; one that I was not expecting prior to analysis. Both of these feminist methods are common within feminist qualitative methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Alongside this framework, N-Vivo coding software was used to help complete a thematic analysis of the transcribed interview recordings. Due to the volume of that data I collected, overall ninety-five hours of recordings and three hundred and eleven pages of transcribed pages, I found it most helpful to use computer software that would allow me to use tools such as colour coding of data and the usage of notes directly imbedded within each transcription. A distinct benefit of utilising computer software is the ability to mark one portion of transcription as two or more themes. Due to the non-chronological nature of the information provided, there were many overlaps where participants made points that could easily be placed amongst two separate themes at the time of initial analysis.

The process of analysis occurred over nine months. Resulting in multiple steps, I first began by looking at the main themes that came up in my critical context chapter, and the questions that I asked in the interviews to be aware of the difference between what I was asking and what themes would come from my analysis. I also looked over my notes and journal to see what words or phrases I repeatedly used throughout the interviewing process. I was able to connect my response and initial analysis to each of the interviews with the analysis process. Then I re-read the transcriptions and pulled out terms and phrases that I thought were really impactful or commonly used. As I read through them, I made notes about how well each interview fit with each of these potential themes to help determine their suitability as well as to refine each theme to fit the interviews best. I then put the terms that best fit with these themes and the synonyms of these terms into N-Vivo to search and began to sort all the quotes out by theme. This process gave me additional opportunity to see how well the themes fit with the interviews by seeing how many interviews and quotes within those interviews supported each theme. Each theme was assigned a colour and description,

meaning that as I continued to read each transcription, I could easily add a segment or portion to an already existing found theme. Once all the quotes were divided by themes, I began to write additional thoughts and reflections about these quotes and began to form them into sections and subsections for chapters.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined my specific feminist methodological aims and explored how these aims were achieved and challenged in practice. While my feminist ideology provided me with the initial framework in which I made decisions for my research, it was the combination of my values and those values and practices already utilised in feminist academia that created the foundation of my research. This practice was most impacted by but not limited to the research practises presented by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007), which asks that five key factors be present in all feminist research. The first is to ask questions that seek to gain an understanding of individuals or group experiences. Second, your research promotes social justice. Third, it promotes social change. Fourth, you remain mindful of power and authority in the researcher-interviewee relationship. Fifth, you continue to be reflexive throughout the entire research process.

Having this guidance present throughout my research influenced the decisions I made throughout the process. In order to make sure I was gaining an understanding that was as similar to the participant's experience as possible, I utilised practices suggested by community-based participatory research and utilising semi-structured interviews. By concentrating on best listening practices, I actively created space for my participants to speak, and minimised the feeling for them of being interviewed. There were twelve times where interviewees commented on their surprise that the interview was over and how they felt like they "hadn't been talking so long". I believe they made such comments due to less focus

being placed on a list of questions to get through and by allowing for moments of silence to exist during the interview, which most often resulted in the participants expanding on their last response, or bringing up a new topic that might not have been shared with me had I rushed onto the next topic. This practice aligns with community-participatory-research because the interviewees were taking the lead in our interviews and thus deciding what issues they wanted to discuss. This way, the interviews were collaborative, and the participants had more say in deciding what was relevant to each of the questions. Then, by analysing the interviews with thematic analysis, I centred what the participants found relevant, further highlighting their voice in the academic field, and allowing unexpected, but significant themes to be included.

Making sure that my research promotes social justice and social change is something that I have kept central since I initially chose this research question. Especially since my research and academic life are linked within my activism. For instance, with some of the women concerned about police monitoring of their phones and internet, it is clear that they are aware that in order to maintain their impact, they have to monitor their voices in interviews or other public forums. I hope that through this research I created a platform where they were able to speak more freely about topics and issues that were important to them without fear of police or legal response.

I was actively aware of the power and authority imbalance inherent in a researcher-interviewee relationship as soon as I chose a semi-structured interview methodology. I found that by using internet interviewing with the use of Skype, I was able to provide a more flexible and comfortable position for the interviewees as well as myself. Interviewees would have more agency to end the conversation at any point which would provide a sense of safety that might not be there within an in-person interview setting. I also found that the in-person interviews on average were shorter than the Skype interviews, which might suggest that

participants were able to disclose more information when they had this sense of agency and safety. I was also aware of different things I could do to build rapport with them, such as being able to share some information about myself within the interviews. I was mindful of staying within appropriate boundaries throughout this, but being able to share about myself meant the interview was a more collaborative process, and less inherently imbalanced.

Remaining reflexive throughout this research process has helped me maintain feminist research practices. It has been vital that I look at how I have structured the methodology for this research, but also making sure what I have been doing throughout the process also reflects my feminist values. Keeping a journal and taking notes about my thoughts throughout the design and data collection has helped to strengthen my research by double-checking the decisions that I make, and also allows me a more precise window of what I was thinking about at each stage of the process. This allows me to communicate the journey within this thesis, by having a better understanding, and by placing myself within the research. By seeing my own journey while conducting this research, I have other chances to evaluate information such as design choices or parts of my analysis. I could try to make my research on feminist peace activists as feminist and as peaceful as possible. My role as a researcher and feminist peace activist was a continuous thread throughout this chapter. It was through this reflexivity that I hope to have best addressed any concerns while practising a feminist research methodology. By thoroughly explaining the process of data collection and the methods of knowledge production, I thus provide a foundation for understanding my analysis.

Chapter 4

Praying “Symbolically with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other”:

The role of Christianity for feminist peace activists

At its core, war is impoverishment. War’s genesis and ultimate end is in the poverty of our hearts. If we can realize that the world’s liberation begins within those troubled hearts, then we may yet find peace...What good has ever come from the slaughter of the innocents?

Kathy Kelly (2002b)

It’s similar to Jesus and Christianity. It was up to the followers to try to implement and adapt the teachings to be as universal and widespread as possible in terms of loving your enemies and neighbors.

Kathy Kelly (2002a)

This project originated in my interest in the role of feminism within peace activism within the U.K. and the U.S. As a feminist peace activist, I thought I knew the main issues and devised my interview questions accordingly. However, I was shocked as almost all (thirty-three out of thirty-seven) of my interviewees made it clear that religion was a central component of their values and practices.⁵ The prevalence of religion is particularly interesting due to both the vast amounts of literature I read on feminism, peace activism, and social justice, and the organisations I approached (eighty per cent of these were not religiously based). What also made this focus on religion unexpected was my original aim of completing an extensive research analysis exploring the ways in which Feminist Peace Activists understand their identity as feminist peace activists including discussions of general issues and experiences of current peace activists. I attempted this through open-ended questions, and by encouraging the activists to discuss anything they felt was significant to their lives as

⁵ The four feminist peace activists who did not discuss religion are still mentioned within the thesis, specifically in Chapter 5: Beyond Themselves: How feminist peace activists are sharing their practices with the world; and in Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks: What I Found, Future Research, Value, Limitation, and Reflection. If you refer to the Recruitment section of Chapter 3: Keeping Feminist Methodology Central: Design, Recruitment, Collection, and Analysis, you will find that I did not explicitly target religious or Catholic women in my recruitment process. The only required criteria was they self-identified as feminist, they were active in their peace work, they were over eighteen, lived in the U.K. or the U.S., and identified as a woman.

activists. Initially, I wanted something ‘more general’ because I thought that most of the research I had seen previously on this topic focussed on only one specific aspect of feminist activism. I thought by attempting a broader research project, I would be able to create a ‘whole picture’ or narrative of what it means to be a feminist peace activist. However, since their most significant focus as a group centred on faith and religion, I did not feel it ethical to ignore my interviewee’s connection to religion. I also realised since most of the participants identified as both religious feminist peace activists, I had an opportunity to explore how their faith interacts with their feminist peace activist identity and beliefs. Therefore, I completed an analysis that primarily centres on feminist peace activists in the U.K. and the U.S., and the influence of Christianity and faith on their work as activists. The religious affiliations of my interviews were Catholicism, Quakerism, Evangelicalism, Atheism, Agnosticism, and Buddhism. Their passionate responses changed my research. It was not just a case of ‘adding in’ a supplementary element. Not only was the role of religion pivotal to many of my interviewees, but I also had to re-evaluate my own beliefs. The interviews forced me to reflect on my own identity navigation not just as a feminist peace activist, but as a lapsed Catholic feminist peace activist; and not just a lapsed Catholic, but a woman who was critical of and disillusioned with Catholicism. The women I spoke to challenged me in so many ways. I realised that not only did I have a clear scholarly duty to try to understand the women, but their dedication to peace activism also challenged my position on religion; especially Catholicism. While I do explore themes and the interviews with all of the Christian women I spoke with, I primarily focus on Catholicism, partly due to my Catholic upbringing and connection to the Church, but mainly due to the significant role it played in the lives of the feminist peace activists. The Catholic feminist peace activists discussed their faith’s connection to their peace work at a much higher rate than the non-Catholic participants. They were the group who described the relationship between religion and feminism as one that was

more difficult to overcome or unite than other sects of Christianity. The challenges described by these participants offered a unique perspective of how a person navigates their multiple identities, including times they do not fit well together.

One of my interviewees identified a vital issue: Jennifer, a twenty-four-year-old peace activist living on the East Coast of the U.S., discussed why some religious-based peace organisations are not publicly feminist. She drew on cultural shifts that have occurred in the U.S. over the past five decades since the women's rights movements of the sixties and seventies (Bailey & DiPrete, 2016). She also suggested that the term feminism "was really sort of taken hostage by particularly conservative politically conservative Christians and used as a weapon...to frame it in such a way that if you were feminist, you were really pro killing babies". Because of this public discourse, Jennifer believes that the word feminism was used sparingly, particularly in the Catholic Church amongst activists. This cultural split separating feminism from religion could be the basis for the difficulties many other participants described being both Christian and feminist peace activists. However, she insisted that this discursive limitation did not result in the absence of women's activism.

While many of the activists' groups are rooted in feminist values, this was not the experience for all of my participants. A minority of my interviewees, four out of thirty-seven, were much less definite about the relationship between feminism and religion. In one of my last interviews, Sybil, a feminist peace activist from the East Coast of the U.S., stated: "I think the biggest sin in the world is patriarchy and it's been misused by religion to enforce it". This blunt comment rang true for my position, that the problem with religion, specifically Judeo-Christian religion, has everything to do with the flawed nature of humans, and not religion in and of itself. Her view came out of environmental concerns – specifically destruction caused by overpopulation. However, the broader context of how religions enforce patriarchy had a substantial impact on me.

As I completed my interviews, I was left with the challenge of how to best approach this important topic of religious feminist peace activists. I began by addressing my inherent resistance and perspectives on this topic through journaling, discussing my hesitations with my supervisor, and searching for research by feminist academics on topics that posed similar reservations. I found journaling particularly helpful by both helping me to move beyond my misconceptions regarding the Catholic Church, and in determining the themes to address in this chapter. Within my journal, I found myself trying to recall what I knew about feminist theology, having taken a course on it in 2013. I went back to my old notes and texts to help me best position this conversation about Christianity with the feminist peace activists I interviewed. To understand some of the relationships of women to the church, I looked at texts that provided an alternative view of women's connection to God. To remind myself of the potential flexibility of Christian interpretations, I reread Lisa Isherwood and Dorothea McEwan's text that described the concept of 'process thought' in Christianity as "a string which enables women to claim, 'our process as our process', and in so doing to experience the living and moving God once more, rather than the fossilized, absolute God of patriarchal religion" (1993:p.72). The fluidity of faith described by Isherwood and McEwan is one that allows for continual change and adaptability for the person practising their faith within Christianity. It also helped guide my understanding and interpretation of the intersection of the participant's identities as feminists as well as participants in a fundamentally patriarchal religion. It made me wonder if there was a difference between Catholicism as a whole, and the way the participants identified themselves within it. In addition to the potential fluidity, feminist theologians have also made it a practice to provide reinterpretations or bring attention to biblical stories from both New and Old Testaments that offer examples of women represented in empowering positions (Brown, 1989; Fuchs, 1999; Anderson-Raikumar, 2004). In regard to reinterpreting the Bible, Fuchs asserts "the issue is not whether the

narrative reflects historical reality, but rather how the narrative constructs in our consciousness as readers what is good and appropriate” (1999:p.463). This understanding focusses less on positivist notions of truth and centres the social experience and impact both Christianity and its texts can have on society which provided me with an understanding of how my interviewees might be engaging with their faith.

Although there is a freedom in a reinterpretation of Christianity, I was most concerned with how this concept is applied to marginalised communities, particularly people of colour. Kelly Brown discusses the methods of survival among womanist theologians and how there is a need for Jesus Christ to be seen and interpreted as someone who liberates all people. She makes the argument that “a womanist interpretation of Jesus Christ must confront those understandings of Jesus which have often aided and abetted the oppression of black women” (1989:p.14). This also connects to the issues surrounding missionary work, often completed by well-intentioned women. Katja Heidemanns addresses this issue in her research: “it will be possible only through the development of postcolonial perspectives on mission [or church leadership] by women who see themselves working together for justice as postcolonial subjects” (2004:p.32). The conversations I had with my interviewees also reflected the awareness of this history of missionary work within feminist theology.

Further, the work of confronting harmful “understandings of Jesus” is one that aided me in my analysis, particularly when my interviewees discussed Jesus concerning his persecution as an example of peace work. Feminist theologian Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza also reminded me of the centrality of the conversation of feminine imagery within religion by addressing this through her discussion of the concepts of “mother church”, “lady liberty”, and “mother India”. She argues these are used to create a mental image of how cultures embody and internalize these feminine symbols (2005). However, I found these texts to be limited in their ability to help me best understand the role Christianity has on my interviewees. What

did become most helpful was continually returning to the transcripts of my interviews and seeing the way their words interconnected with each other and their identities as feminist peace activists.

Throughout my journal, especially early on in my fieldwork, there were numerous remarks similar to, “how can they be feminist and believe this?” However, once I had time away from each interview and began the transcribing process, I was able to more clearly see many of my initial responses in some interviews were emotionally triggered and did not allow for the complexity of the conversations to fully unfold to me. After transcribing, I followed-up on my initial journaling session and added new comments. Once I compiled my new comments, it was clear to me, due to the repetitive nature of similar words, that clear themes could be pulled out from these conversations. I wrote down and circled words such as ‘hope’, ‘practice’, and ‘challenge’ throughout my journal from nearly all of my interviewees that addressed religion. Thus, I began to thematically analyse these transcripts throughout the fifty-thousand words uttered regarding the role of religion in feminist peace activism.

Through this detailed attention to trends and reflection of my complicated background with the Catholic Church, I began to develop two overarching questions for myself to consider while analysing the transcriptions. First: how do these women negotiate their religious beliefs and practices while engaging with peace activism? Second: what kinds of relationships had the women forged between ‘feminism’ ‘peace activism’ and – the tricky one – ‘religion’? These questions relate to my overall research question which asks: how do the peace activists navigate (practice) Christianity and maintain an activist feminist identity? In this chapter I will explore this question by analysing the examples given by the participants which relate to their internal sense of how they see their own identities and how these identities fit together. I also consider how religion, specifically Christianity with its traditional connection to patriarchy, helps the participants as feminist peace activists. By

delving deeper into the specific relationship dynamics formed between identities and activism, I can decipher between instances in the interviews that overlap in themes or are unclear in their positioning at first glance.

As I began to respond to these questions via a detailed analysis of the interviewees, I realised that the women spoke of complex methods of negotiating their identities within themselves and their communities. In particular, these negotiations centre on the personal interconnections that exist between feminism, peace activism, and religion, and how the activists work towards internal peace at each of these levels. This understanding led to the six themes of this chapter: familial connections to the church; harmony and attempting unification; Identifying with Jesus; the role of contemporary masculine figures within the church; how my interviewees 'queer religion', both implicitly or explicitly in their practices as feminist peace activists; and the role of hope in the lives of Christian feminist peace activists.

4.1 Familial Connections to the Church

The role of family in an activists' childhood and adulthood was discussed by nine women I spoke to during my fieldwork. In relation to these familial connections to religion, activism, feminism, and social justice, I am specifically looking at how they influence self-identity and the development of a feminist peace activist. Based on the conversations I had with these nine women, six main themes emerged. The first was how identifying with a specific religion, in this case, Catholicism and the Church of England, are described through terms such as roots, heritage, and culture. Secondly, decisions and methods in child-rearing as a feminist religious peace activist were brought up as a tangible way to see how faith, activism, peace, and family functions overlap in these activists' lives. The third theme, which came from the discussion of child-rearing, is a conversation about how they perceived the

role of social awareness in an upbringing within a religious context during their childhoods and how this impacted their lives as feminist peace activists. The fourth theme looks at how activists raised within the context of religion can connect more deeply to these lessons as they mature, and how this impacted their activist work. This was most commonly done through the development of personal connections to the social injustice that they see within their communities. In the fifth theme, I analyse the interaction between self-identity and community throughout the interviews. The final theme addresses the challenges and negative experiences of being brought up within religious communities and how the activists respond to these challenges.

The identifying as culturally Catholic was one form of connection-forming between the roles of church/activist/family, and was discussed by three separate women during my interviews. When asked about the role religion played in her life, Patricia, a feminist Catholic peace activist from the U.S., was able to sum up her experience with a brief response, “I am from that kind of generation of Irish Catholics, cradle Catholic, very much culturally Catholic as well”. Her answer immediately created an image of the Irish’s historical connection to Catholicism and the persecution they experienced as a result of it. While this was immediately clear to me as an American from the Northeast, a part of the country where identifying as Irish-Catholic is still prevalent amongst 5th plus generations of Irish-Americans, it reminded me of the importance of cultural understanding and terminology as a researcher. This comment could have easily meant very little to me had I come from a different upbringing. Such faith based impetus for becoming peace activists later on in life was also mentioned by Alice, a member of the Church of England, who was from the same generation as Patricia. This potential generational connection to faith and activism was not followed up during my interviews as I had also found similar narratives amongst previous and following generations. This highlights the role of familial upbringing and connections to

activism/social justice focussed churches as being more influential than age. For Ruth, a feminist Catholic peace activist from the U.S. who is a generation younger than Patricia and Alice, such connections to religion, specifically Catholicism, run deep within her identity and the narrative she provides of her family history. This strong connection was initially phrased as Ruth declaring, “I’m pretty clear on that I’m Catholic on my DNA”. This position of being born Catholic harked back to Patricia’s comment on being “cradle Catholic”, meaning someone who is born into the religion, just as clearly as they are born into any other identifying category such as race, gender, or nationality. The language of DNA was not only used by Ruth about her religion, but by non-religious activists when they connected their familial narratives to feminism or activism. Although I find the concept of being inherently something based on DNA potentially problematic as it has historical connections to blood quantum practices, specifically those used to persecute people in the U.S., I am aware that the intent behind such comments made from the activists I spoke with was to make definite or perhaps sweep over the complexities of connection they have to their life path as feminist peace activists. Possibly, this is due to them having not critically thought about their identity as religious activists in this way before, and partially due to the cultural norm of using such biologically based language in our daily conversations. Talking about their identity in this way may also be an indicator that they cannot remember a time which they did not identify like this, meaning these parts of their lives formed early on. Questioning temporarily aside, Ruth went on to contextualise this statement for me, starting with her family’s historical connection to peace activism and its roots in Catholicism on both sides of her family. She began with her matrilineal background, “on my mom’s side, she grew up in the U.S. South where she was persecuted for being Catholic, they had the clan burn a cross on their front yard”. Then she compared this to her patrilineal heritage of religious persecution, “on my dad’s side they were sort of Irish immigrants and were very involved in I guess I would say

justice causes”. Once again, a cultural understanding of Irish immigrants in the U.S. during the 1800s being one of great social oppression, religious persecution, and racism, was needed to understand further why this familial narrative carried weight regarding activism. She summarized these familial connections to religious-based peace activism as a “sort of history of erring on the side of peace, nonviolence, justice” as being “ingrained on both sides of my family”. This familial lineage was then directly connected to her activism. Ruth’s next comment, which was a part of the same response dealing with her family’s history, focussed on her childhood, specifically how she began attending protests with her family from the age of five. Ruth inherently connected her family’s legacy of religious persecution, peace activism, and her upbringing as an activist in her mind and in the story she shares with others.

The inability to separate activist and religious identities from family life carries on in the second theme which discusses the connection parenting has with faith and activism. The decision to raise children within the church while simultaneously raising them with the values of social justice and peace was a topic discussed in detail by three of the women I spoke with during fieldwork. Finding a religious community that is supportive of these values was one of the first steps to take when introducing children into religious life. This theme’s discussions dealt with how to live out their beliefs, both religious and social, in daily life with a young family. All three of the women that I spoke to regarding child-rearing within a Christian context provided reflections from having raised multiple children into adulthood, meaning they had time for reflection on this process, and the decisions that they each made.

Alexandria, a Christian peace activist in the West Coast of the U.S. who became a minister after her children were born, explained that although she and her husband were both raised within the church, they were not involved with church life as adults. It wasn’t until they had children that they decided to return to a church. At this time, it was the early ‘70s and Alexandria had already been active in the peace and social justice movements. When

explaining how she went upon finding a church, she remarked, “we were looking for a socially active church, and we found [a Baptist Church] and one of the ministers there was very involved in resistance to Trident at that point the nuclear warheads”. Such forms of social resistance within the church resulted in Alexandria’s long-term relationship with the church and the continued rearing of her children within this community. Alexandria was able to find a church which aligned with her activist identity, and the longevity of that relationship shows its compatibility and influenced her parenting as well. Not only were her children brought up in the church, but the social justice work of the church also became part of the home life Alexandria created for her children. Specifically, hosting, babysitting, and providing for refugees: “our church was very involved in providing sanctuary to refugees from El Salvador, at that point our government wasn’t very good to El Salvadorians”.

Although the U.S. government is still not ‘very good to El Salvadorians’⁶, I understand the statement is relative to the bombing the U.S. was doing to El Salvador at the time of Alexandria’s church involvement (Bonner, 2016). This fluidity of faith and peace activism within Alexandria and her family’s life was seen as beneficial for her children’s upbringing. Although she noted that her children did not always understand her feminist peace activism, they were still supportive of her personal decisions, and seem grateful for their style of upbringing. Even though Alexandria’s children aren’t feminist peace activists in the same sense that she is (public protests, belonging to organisations, arrestable actions), they are still supportive of the causes and are socially activist-minded. This was not a unique occurrence, for Henrietta, a U.K. Christian feminist peace activist and the mother of three children, raising children both within the church and as feminists did not directly result in her children becoming activists. However, this was not the goal or point for these decisions in child-

⁶ Since his presidency, Trump and his administration have worked towards eliminating essential protections, under Temporary Protected Status (TPS). This puts over 300,000 people at risk of deportation, with El Salvadorians making up 195,000 of that total (American Friends Service Committee, 2019).

rearing. Henrietta explained that although her daughter isn't involved in faith-based activism, she is still an activist, "she's more interested in sort of political feminist sort of angles, she does come along to [religious] things. So, she's much more a very strong feminist I would say". I then asked Henrietta if she believed this was a result of her upbringing, Henrietta laughed with the response of "I sure hope so", and we moved onto the next topic of conversation.

Lilith, a Catholic feminist peace activist on the East Coast of the U.S., discussed how she considers the childrearing method she chose to be the most important thing she has done in her life. Considering she has a long list of accolades and major contributions made in the aim of peace, this is a considerable statement.

If we live in a world where many people and in those years, there were real struggles for liberation from terrible oppression close to the United States, in Central America and South America especially, elsewhere as well, South Africa, and the question we were asking was, "what is the role of white middle-class U.S. Americans in response to the struggles for justice and liberation of people around the world who are still struggling for a decent life?" And so, part of that had to do with, part of the response was, we had to figure out where there were root causes of this in our own society in our policy and laws, that was a piece of it. And then the other part was, how do we change our own lifestyle so that we move closer to a place that we look at life, not from such a privileged perspective but more from the margins.

Lilith and her partner decided that if they were going to be responsible parents, they had to provide their children with a different perspective of life. Most importantly, it had to be in a tangible and life contributing way. Lilith's approach to incorporating religious and social values into her family's daily life was to relocate her family to a suburban location and live on a working farm. Lilith described it as "a wonderful experience of how to do good work that was also life-giving and sustaining and to do it in a way that was...you know we were learning, but in the way, that was most consistent with the values we were trying to represent in the world". From this place of living a life of consistent values, Lilith actively taught her

children that one of the most significant actions in life was to make a contribution to the world, “there’s a big world out there and that we have to make a contribution in some way to changing what we can to make a better world”. This teaching did not end with Lilith’s children, of which she has six, but of her grandchildren as well.

The third major theme is about the importance of social awareness in childhood. The impact of being raised within a religious household focussed on peace, specifically one that taught social justice and how they integrated these experiences into their identities was discussed in detail by four of the women I spoke with during fieldwork. While these upbringings influenced all of the women, they do not believe it is the sole reason for their current activism. The normalisation of social justice work was completed by engaging in social-political conversations while the women were still girls, and in the act of physically bringing these girls to public protests and activist meetings. For the four women I spoke with regarding social justice awareness-raising during childhood, the method of doing so was approached differently within each of their experiences. Normalisation is important here because each participant described how their social justice work was not extraordinary, but a part of life, making it easier for them to develop their identities within this. For Jessica, a Catholic feminist peace activist who was raised in Appalachia, this exposure came in the form of domestic missionary work which introduced her to the extreme poverty that existed in her region of the country. This introduction was seen as normal to her; a family activity, “I grew up in a family where we would go on mission trips... I think that was the start of working on justice work, but it was always kind of like part of my upbringing”. Although Jessica has not always had a positive relationship with the Catholic Church, she still contributes her father’s employment within the church and her own childhood experiences within the church as instrumental to her current work as a peace activist. Such prompting to participate in social justice from the most important areas of her life were then only further

encouraged by some of Jessica's earliest memories of why social justice work was necessary. She detailed a childhood memory that happened at the age of thirteen, making the realities of poverty in the U.S. a part of her motivation to continue with social justice work into adulthood:

My earliest memory of what I identify in hindsight as learning about justice issues is going to Appalachia and learning about the coal mining and learning about how people had such terrible jobs and would risk their lives every day to be coal miners and to provide for their family. And then learning about the company stores where you were paid in scripts and the company store had crazy inflated prices, and I just remember being like, why would people do that to each other? It's already a terrible job to have and then on top of it not even being able to buy food for your family and the corporations benefiting off of basically slave labour.

This childhood recollection demonstrates the type of environments and conversations Jessica's parents must have been having with their children at young ages. Although her parents are conservative in many of their belief systems, their approach to teaching social justice was liberal, if not radical, in their on-the-ground approach to justice work with children.

Physical introductions to peace and social justice work were not only discussed by Jessica, but Ruth as well, who grew up on the West Coast of the U.S. and explained how her "parents were very involved in the anti-nuclear movement in the early '70s and '80s and so I was involved with that along with them.... there were always protests at those bases and so we would go to those as a family to be a part of that movement". This creation of activist protest as a family event to attend encouraged Ruth from a young age to speak her mind and to take actions to support the causes that mattered to her, this resulted in her writing letters to her representatives from a young age. The freedom to apply such activist values to causes that were more relevant to herself as a child resulted in her early activism during primary school focusing on environmentalism, specifically marine life. How this connected to peace activism was when Ruth "learned that the U.S. Navy was using dolphins to attach mines onto ships.

So, they had basically weaponized dolphins. And as a ten, eleven or twelve-year-old I was just horrified”. From this horror at the time, Ruth identified her ability to make the connections between saving marine life and her Catholic faith. She described it as, “I was very interested in marine biology and I sort of had this sense of both that the need to protect creation and a very close sense of, like we would go whale watching all the time and so it was a very sort of intimate connection”.

From this intimacy and ability to connect all of these areas of her life, a forty-plus year span has been devoted to peace/feminist/social justice causes, of which she roots their beginnings to her social justice-based upbringing in the Catholic Church. Lisa, a feminist peace activist who was raised within the Catholic Church but has become a Buddhist in adulthood, provided numerous instances, ranging from their involvement in the church or in their local schools, of how her parents set a foundation of service for her life during childhood. Lisa described her current activism in anti-war and anti-violence work as a natural response to such an upbringing. For Sybil, a Jewish feminist peace activist from the East Coast of the U.S., it was the family discourse of questioning that was most impactful on her formation of a feminist peace activist identity. She demonstrated the encouragement she had to resist and expand one’s perspective on any social issue in a childhood memory, “I remember when I was quite young, them having a discussion about who made money out of the second world war and about arms companies and how they were involved, in what I now know is the military industrial complex, so I began to understand that it wasn’t just about saving the Jews, it was about the politics of power and conflict between nations”. Such conversations are what has set the tone for Sybil’s approach to her lifelong work as a feminist activist, one that takes research and actively listening to all perspectives before making decisions within an organisation. This seemingly level-headed approach to activism was a mirroring of her own father’s approach to politics. She explained how her “father served in

the armed forces” however he always encouraged Sybil to “question things and to understand that wars are more complex than good and bad”. Sybil’s work demonstrated this alleviated binary thinking, and is something she contributed to her upbringing.

The fourth theme looks at how the participants spoke about how their identities changed over time in the context of religion, and how connecting with activism in childhood changed and matured as they got older. Being raised within the Catholic Church, although during different decades and geographic locations within the U.S., impacted Lilith and Jessica in similar ways. The first being the process of reconnecting to the church as a young adult, and how you then need to reflect on its impact during childhood. For Lilith, this happened once she came into young adulthood, “I probably spent the first twenty-five years trying to figure out what that meant”. She was then able to commit to Catholicism’s prominent role in her life. Lilith found support for this in all areas of her life stating, “by my mid-twenties I was pretty convinced...it was confirmed by my education, and it was also confirmed by the reality of both the world and the Catholic Church when I was in my twenties” and from this point onwards her role within the Catholic Church as a feminist peace activist has remained consistent. For Jessica, the process of connecting the emotional impact of being brought up within the Catholic Church and doing missionary work in Appalachia as a young child to her understanding of what this meant for her own life didn’t begin to occur until her late teens. It was from this new understanding that she was then able to go into a career based within Catholic peace organisations.

The fifth theme addresses how the relationship between self-identity and community also changed over time. Along with the deepening of faith as they matured, both Lilith and Jessica were able to make personal connections to the social injustices in which their activism was rooted. Lilith, as a member of a middle-class family, in a privileged area of the U.S., found the fact that there was deep poverty within her community unacceptable. It was during

her early activism work as a volunteer she realised “that there was a gap between my life and the life of even a near neighbour who lived without any kind of security”. It was from this realisation, supported by her religious and social beliefs that she set a goal to “bridge that gap, to try to break through the huge chasm between people who had what they needed for a dignified life and those who did not”. It has been over three decades since she set that goal, and her commitment to it has only deepened as a leader within the peace community.

Jessica’s connection to the oppression she witnessed amongst the communities in Appalachia came from her home life. As one of four children in a working-class family of six, money was not abundant or secure at all times. This led to a feeling of not-belonging for Jessica, “I think socially at school I kind of felt that otherness so I could identify that within myself and connect that with people who were experiencing much more extreme low-income impoverished situations”. This perceived shared identification amongst the communities she was working with as well as her situation was different from Lilith, bridging a gap between those who have and those without.

However, not all experiences with religion the participants described fit with their forming identities as feminist peace activists. Challenges of being brought up in a religious community, and how to manage this is the focus of the sixth and final theme. The connection between family and church was the most personally triggering topic of this research for me. At the start of this research project, I had not anticipated such a significant portion of my fieldwork to include religion, specifically Catholicism. While interviewing the women, I was comfortable being forthcoming about my perspectives and experiences within the church. This was most commonly done when the women expressed their challenges and reservations regarding being brought up in the Catholic Church. Similarly, being brought up with Catholicism presented its own challenges for me. However, as I mentioned to Jessica, “talking with these women and seeing how they navigate it, seeing how they sit with it and

reshaped it to be something workable for them, was really helpful for me”. From this continual reflection both during and after fieldwork, I have seen how these negative experiences have also been challenged for each activist by the peace activist communities they belong to, and in many cases, how this comes full circle. The three activists who discussed this topic in further detail have significantly different relationships to the church, but all see how the path of a feminist peace activist can be improved because of its influence. For Hannah, who was raised in the U.S. in the Catholic Church but left immediately after her confirmation into the church, this decision to leave the church was triggered by an incident Hannah recalls clearly from childhood, “I remember asking my aunt why there were no women priests and she literally, to a little girl, she says to me, ‘men are more holy than women’ and I was like, oh no that’s not true. I knew immediately that was wrong and as soon as I had the consciousness to get out I said to my Mom ‘I don’t want to go to church anymore’ ...so I gritted my teeth and went through confirmation, and I left church”. Hannah then went on to explain how her negative perceptions of the Catholic Church were challenged once she became an adult. Specifically, once Hannah moved to the East Coast, “seeing people who have worked and literally over the decades died for rights of conscience, many of them coming from this faith perspective, to see righteous Christians and righteous people from other faiths have been really eye-opening and really beautiful for me because I felt like Christianity growing up didn’t really connect with me”. She described this new perception of the Catholic Church as “healing of many old wounds”.

Similarly to Hannah, Jessica identifies that she was shaped by Catholicism and was led to a path of social justice work because of it. However, she was clear about her “frustrat[ion] by it in a lot of ways” further declaring that “I have a lot of trouble identifying as Catholic, I call myself Catholic-ish because it’s obviously important in many aspects of my life, but I’m also frustrated”. She contributes these feelings of frustration due to the

conservative nature of her home church and her parents' approach to faith. As someone who identifies as "questioning to a fault", believing the pragmatic and "black and white" perspectives of her childhood church community were not possible for Jessica. She had to reject the identity of Catholic because it could not fit with her underlying values. However, as Jessica became an adult, she realised things were not as binary as she was taught in church and at home. This realization was further supported during her time in graduate school, "learning feminist theology and learning to reflect on my own experience as a woman" helped Jessica better understand her feelings of frustration. Most importantly for her life as a Catholic feminist peace activist, Jessica discovered how she could be a religious person, a feminist, and a peace activist simultaneously.

The experiences of Hannah and Jessica as feminist peace activists raised within Catholic environments still allowed for the opportunity to eventually hold these identities. This was drastically different to the third woman, Imogen, a feminist peace activist from Northern England, who stated her identity towards religion as, "I am completely anti-religious, and I'm Jewish, but I am a total anti-Zionist, and I was brought up to be a very secular person". Although I did not ask Imogen about the role of religion in peace activism, she did bring up this topic when asked if there were any difficulties being a feminist peace activist. For Imogen, the strong presence of religiously identified people can cause her hesitation and a feeling of disconnect from her fellow activists. When asked to elaborate, Imogen described what she perceived to be the contradictory nature of the church, specifically how it can be both "conservatizing and very radicalising at the same time". When asked to provide an example of what she meant by this, she described how "during the wars in Central America, in El Salvador and Nicaragua, it was people from the church who were so instrumental in the anti-war movement and who provided sanctuary and who risked their lives" but then support anti-feminist causes such as the pro-life movement. Observing this

discrepancy solidified Imogen's inability to understand holding a religious identity along side being a feminist peace activist. Although Imogen feels that the church can be contradictory, she also acknowledges how "people get their strength" from their belief in God. She also understands that "people crave community and crave a sense of solidarity with the other people and neighbourhoods. The church provides that". The overall takeaway message Imogen had from her experiences with religiously centred peace activists was that they are doing more good than harm, and as long as faith is encouraging them to be a part of the peace movement, even though they might not be feminists, she sees the overall benefit of their approach.

4.2 Harmony: Attempting Unification

Throughout the interviews, I asked my participants many questions regarding their experiences as feminist peace activists. I often unconsciously formed questions as dualities, as either "positives/negatives" or "benefits/challenges"; however, I found my participants blurring these concepts of duality.⁷ Through their complicating of my rather polarising questions, I realised that many of the instances that could be perceived as "challenges" were often responded to with actions and solutions. By polarizing the questions, I spoke to their experience of being faced with the dualities they held in their identities and how they made them work. Seemingly, the feminist peace activists were providing their experiences of attempting to achieve unification, specifically, through creating a harmony of their identities as religious feminists. This attempt to create harmony was usually presented within the context of religious peace organisations. The level of which the identity of 'feminist' unified or clashed with religiously based organisations varied depending on each activists' position

⁷ Interview questions in Appendix 1: Interview Questions.

within the organisation and their ability to openly communicate their feminist identities with their organisational groups.

The inability to communicate was most pronounced amongst the Catholic feminist peace activists who navigated their way around the perceived resistance of the term “feminism” within their organisations. My interviewees found this was particularly difficult in large part due to their understanding of the Catholic Church as inherently patriarchal and conservative, and therefore incompatible with feminist values. One way the participants managed this was to look at the organisational structure of their faith-based peace activist group, particularly how they dealt with potential discrepancies of their feminist and religious identities. For Mary, a Catholic feminist peace activist located on the East Coast, having a role in the creation and development of an organisation’s value system during the beginning of her activism career partially enabled her to unite feminist and religious values within one activist space. This happened when she was in her twenties, raising a small family on a private farm during the ‘80s. She decided to get involved in local activism and created a Catholic centred peace organisation aimed at getting her community involved in social justice issues, such as the bombing of Central America, and the exploitation of fruit pickers on the West Coast of the U.S. Mary described how before they began any actions or outreach to the community they “sat down and figured out who they were and what their organisation was going to stand for”, which she attributed to the “success and longevity” of the organisation that is still running today. It was from this experience that she realised the importance of those first steps in an organisational structure, how the values, mission, and rules put in place at the beginning can shape an organisation and impact its longevity. She noted her co-founders and fellow organisers “were articulating what they understood to be feminist values and representing those in their way of working, of their way of structuring their organisation of their sort of focussing on inclusion and mutuality and interdependence and so on. And that

had a really big impact on me because it was putting organisational values and processes in... harmony with what I believed". Although this way of incorporating feminist values into religious peace organisations worked for the development and sustainability of the group, it intentionally avoided terminology associated with feminism. For instance, Mary explained how the topic of feminism was brought up in the creation of their mission statement, but the group "felt it [using the word] could be too isolating and taken in the wrong way". Mary was able to put the label of feminist to the side, rather than the label of Catholic, as long as the group retained the feminist values. She was able to create a level of harmony she was comfortable with being a part of an organisation which matched many of the values in her identities, ultimately choosing an idea of the 'greater good' from the "success and longevity" she believed the organisation had partially because of this compromise. It is also interesting that Mary acknowledged that there was something about Catholicism and feminism that required an act of harmonising, meaning that they were incompatible at some level from the start. She has been able to identify as both Catholic and feminist, but she did not think that her organisation could identify as both Catholic and feminist. It is important to note that this process of doing feminist work while avoiding association was discussed by six other of the activists I interviewed. However, I am focussing on Mary as my primary point of reference for this idea because she went into most depth regarding the process or organisational development. Many of her ideas and experiences were also reflected by the other six women who discussed the role of organisational structure on feminist peace activism. Mary dealt with this challenge by acknowledging the impact the organisation was able to make, and how it was never intended to be a feminist organisation. As a leader within a large international organisation, Mary acknowledged this connection between feminism, faith and peace was not always integrated, or indeed relevant to all chapters or individuals within the organisation. However, Mary clearly stated that without this underlying connection and commitment to

feminism within the organisation, “I couldn’t possibly play the role in [the organisation] that I’ve been playing for the last while”. As a long-time leader of this organisation, the connection to feminism and Catholicism within the organisation was secure enough for her to maintain commitment. She was able to have a long commitment to this organisation without compromising her values because she was able to unify both identities and beliefs.

The creation of a sense of harmony was not as straightforward for Rebecca, a member of a national Catholic faith-based group in the U.S., who discussed how her organisation’s efforts to address social justice issues were met with resistance from their constituents. Rebecca detailed how, as an attempt to grow themselves as a Catholic Christian peace activist organisation, her organisation’s leadership decided to focus on issues of social justice, specifically race. She did this through workshops offered throughout the country, educational materials, and through active engagement and dialogue within the community, particularly with people of colour. Rebecca described these actions as “great steps in the right direction”; however, the backlash she felt from their membership was intense, particularly towards her in her role in communications. She perceives these discrepancies between leadership and some of its membership as follows:

And then also I think maybe it’s not something that the organisation emphasizes but something that I am trying to do is point it out to the person I’m talking to and also as the communication coordinator I’m constantly trying to connect war, racism, and poverty in the communications we do. Because I think some people in our membership organisations think our focus is entirely on racism and that it overshadows our peace work instead of seeing it as integral to the peace work that we do. So, I think that’s a lot of the push back that has come. But that’s an important part of communications is constantly linking those three and talking about why anti-racism is so important for me in anti-war work.

The integral nature of acknowledging race and addressing racism within peace work is just one point where Rebecca makes active attempts to challenge the membership’s belief systems. However, she does not stop at challenging others but remains engaged in active self-

reflection and growth. She is aware that the issue of racism, especially in the U.S., is one that is fostered continually. Her organisation, globally committed to addressing issues of race and racism, has thus made it a mission also to challenge their membership to continue moving in a progressive direction as a large-scale faith-based organisation. While this is supported at an organisational level, there is a disconnect between peace work and social justice work for individuals. Rebecca has attempted to bridge this gap much like she has connected her Catholicism and her feminism. She is using the way she has balanced her identities, and the confidence that has come with it, to bring the same kind of harmony to her community of similarly identifying people. While this Catholic peace organisation is not explicitly labelled as feminist, it falls under the category of a non-feminist organisation filled with feminists. These conflicts are a point of internal tension for Rebecca, yet she hopes to see the organisation integrate the term feminist into their mission and identity statements as they have now done with race and social justice. She found that continuing to work within this organisation was only made possible due to her “feminist peers who get it” and who are also working to shift the mind-sets of their membership base. Deciding to continue the work of a religious peace organisation while that organisation doesn’t publicly support a central identity, feminism, that is associated with the feminist peace work they do daily, was described as a challenge by both Mary and Rebecca. However, both women maintained their positions and roles within the organisation due to their freedom and support within the organisation to do the feminist work they value.

Even if an organisation does not publicly state its values as overtly feminist, Mary and Rebecca, indicate that there are often spaces to be open about individual feminist beliefs, yet this ability to coexist is not always the case. Some women had to be more secretive within their organisations and felt pressured into hiding specific issues and beliefs from their peers and leaders. Having to keep a person’s identity secret within a community, and the collective

identity that it holds, is a sign there is something within the values or beliefs of the group that does not fit their own identity. Jennifer, who had experience working for several sizeable Catholic peace organisations, discussed this need to maintain secrecy. In one Midwestern, Catholic peace organisation, it was clear some topics could not be discussed. Jennifer talked about the impossibility of “being able to openly discuss issues that pertain to women, I couldn’t do that...openly talk about women’s ordination or women’s concerns around having...producing life and having choice around choosing to produce life or not, like birth control or even to have the conversation would have been seen as...what’s the word I’m looking for...not blasphemous but it would be like taboo”. I asked Jennifer what kind of response bringing up such issues would elicit, and she offered an interesting insight -- that the response would revolve around productivity. The idea was that feminism was not seen as part of the Catholic organisation’s peace mission and therefore was irrelevant to the work. In this, she speaks to the incompatibility between her community’s identity and her own, and the conflict that arises between them. Jennifer spoke of how she attempts to expand on what is seen as appropriate to talk about within the organisation; a task she sees as essential to her work as an activist because she “knows other people are needing to discuss these issues too”. I asked how she believes such silencing affects the organisation as a whole, and she responded that it impacts “all aspects” and is most clearly seen in the “lack of diversity within the organisation”, particularly in roles of leadership. Although the organisation aims to “have people of colour in leadership and be a multicultural, anti-racist organisation, I just think how they do things is not intentionally racist but is racist, the way they make decisions”. Nonetheless, this aim has not been followed. Considering that Jennifer has experience working for several large Catholic organisations, I am left wondering if she was trying to find an organisation which fit better with her identities. She described having to remain outwardly

secret about her feminist identity and values, but also knew that she needed to find a community where she did not have to do this.

Regarding “diversity”, Jennifer only brought up race as a place where they needed to make improvements or as a policy her organisation is attempting to address. Her deployment of the word “diverse” was utilised in a standard U.S. manner, where “not diverse” can conversationally mean ‘only white’. This focus on race could also be the result of her feminist values, and how she is currently active in anti-racist work in other areas of her life. Jennifer believes this could be the product of many factors, including the failure of open communication and the lack of focus on other minority issues. Her organisation’s failure to implement “people of colour in leadership and be multicultural” can be the result of greater emphasis (whether consciously or subconsciously) being placed on their organisation’s members valuing the harmony of individuals over the non-(racial) diversity of the organisation. If the organisation did begin to employ people of colour in their leadership positions, their work on becoming “actively anti-racist” would be less easily overlooked because they would no longer be racially monolithic. This is one barrier within Jennifer’s Catholic peace activist community which makes it more difficult to bring her collective identity as being a part of this community in harmony with her internal sense of identity.

Clare, a Catholic peace activist, who is a lecturer at a religious-based university, discussed the harmful need of maintaining secrecy as a feminist peace activist as shown through the utilisation of educational spaces and formats. Her focus was on the prison industrial complex, specifically how she has worked with inmates and provided ministry to them. While her challenge to belief systems was not solely around race, it is indeed implied when looking at the prison systems within the U.S. which detain a disproportionately high number of people of colour, specifically Black men (Lynch, 2007:p.168). To best challenge this belief system within a university setting, Clare developed a course explicitly discussing

faith within prison. Not everyone within the university setting welcomed this addition, “So, there are people in positions of, I’ll say power, that might question what I’m about. But I think more of the questioning ... comes from our criminal social justice department because they think I’m naive because I have my students write to prisoners as part of the class. And they think I’m like, ‘you’re making these students think that these are good people’ ... yup, that’s what I’m doing”. This resistance to Clare’s approach to teaching would only be further chastised if she let her peers know that she no longer attends mass or identifies as Catholic. Therefore, she has made a point to keep most of her religious beliefs a secret; particularly to those who she sees as having power over her career. Both instances of secrecy demonstrate the potential career risks associated with identifying as a feminist peace activist, but more explicitly acting in accordance with those beliefs. While these kinds of career repercussions are not surprising in themselves, what makes them all the more concerning is that they are within self-identified peace organisations; places which in theory should be less threatening to their members and employees. Unlike the experiences Mary and Rebecca had as feminists in non-feminist organisations where they were able to comfortably maintain their roles within their peace organisation and their feminist identity, for Jennifer and Clare this feeling of freedom was not available.

Similar to Clare is Charlotte, who is also a feminist peace activist academic located in the U.S. who teaches at a religiously based university, and has hidden similar aspects of herself in order for her identities as feminist peace activist to coexist within her religiously based communities. Charlotte has experienced several negative occurrences within her Catholic peace activist community, and thus far she has been able to tolerate these challenges while still seeing the value of her feminist teaching within this specific academic institution. However, she described how this is still not an easy task, and like Claire, she identified she does not want to “out” herself publicly within the academy to many people as someone who

does not attend church. While her religious practices are not publicly known, her beliefs in equality, the rights of the LGBT community, and her work against the prison industrial system from a place of theology are important parts of her academic presence. It is in these moments that her beliefs and existence within a Catholic academic community are questioned by others asking how she remains active in the church while holding such feminist beliefs. She mentioned a specific incident at a film screening where a member of the audience asked, “I don’t know how you can live with yourself, you’re still a member of the Catholic Church and they can’t stand LGBT people and how can you live with yourself, staying inside of an oppressive system?” However, such polarising perceptions of faith and feminism do not align with how Charlotte approaches theology and her decision to continue working in a Catholic community. Such instances of unabashed critiques towards Charlotte occur from both sides of the political spectrum, creating a feeling of “isolation” and “fear” while existing within activist and seemingly liberal academic communities. Charlotte’s experiences highlight the importance and need to continue the discussion surrounding challenges of being a feminist peace activist. Such a challenge from within the community demonstrates how the dangers of activist work are not always external, or from supposed oppositional organisations or communities. Such conversations can be seen as potentially a form of betrayal within the community but need to be discussed to best move forward as an organisation or a movement. Such feelings of animosity and fear are unsustainable for Charlotte who has found herself needing to switch job and activist locations fairly frequently since she has made her political stance known. Charlotte was the second participant who, like Jennifer, described needing to change her environment, but went into more detail about the way these spaces affected her. Where some participants had been able to match up common values or beliefs between their religious and feminist peace activist identities to create harmony, others were forced to keep them separate or hidden from their communities to avoid rejection. Both Charlotte and Clare

eventually managed this in part by compromising a part of their religious identities through no longer participating in religious practices, however they also maintained the importance of working within their respective religious academic institutions. This could be seen as trying to maintain an aspect of their religious identities, but it could also be viewed as a part of their activism, maintaining a feminist peace activist voice in a space where this may not be represented otherwise.

Charlotte shared various aspects of her feminist peace activist perspective including being an LGBTQ ally while working within a religiously-based university. Another participant who discussed the experience of (un)belonging with relation to LGBTQ issues is Rebecca, a Catholic who is a lesbian, and shared her thoughts on her organisation's attempted progression regarding the LGBTQ community. In both of these experiences, the attempt to create a unification of their identities and a harmonious workspace is made with varying degrees of success. Rebecca's discussion of the transition she has seen amongst both her activist working community and her church. She spoke specifically of her Catholic peace activist organisation in three parts. First, about how they used to the approach to the LGBTQ community from a "love the sinner and hate the sin camp like they weren't going to say anything to me as a lesbian woman overtly" and how this perspective dealt with biblical interpretations. Unlike Clare and Charlotte who had to keep secrets, Rebecca was open about her identity within her Catholic peace activist community. She went on to discuss how currently this has shifted to a form of acceptance and tolerance and her identity is no longer discussed amongst the group. However, she explained how this is not necessarily ideal or helpful, "we are also not quite at the place where we value the perspective of LGBT folk, value that unique part of their perspective... not "what do you think?" from the particular perspective as a lesbian woman or a lesbian Catholic about this particular thing. We're not there yet. That's not happening". In one way, the lack of discussion around Rebecca's sexual

identity could be a sign that the community may be ignoring this part of her as a way of allowing her to remain. However, Rebecca saw this idea of having a beginning in her journey within the activist community, one that was outwardly discriminatory towards the LGBTQ community Rebecca is a part of, and then change seeing the same community become “tolerant”. This shift demonstrates how Rebecca sees hope, or a potential progression to complete welcoming and acceptance of LGBTQ members of society, but she also sees a need for continued growth. For Rebecca, it seems that going beyond tolerance to welcoming and honest inclusion is the next step within the organisation and suggests a sense of three separate phases of belongingness. I argue that the current phase, the middle, can be best described as a form of limbo. While this three-phase understanding of acceptance within a community mimics that of the Catholic Church; hell, limbo, and heaven, it is not clear that heaven (full acceptance and inclusion in this instance) is an actual reality or possibility at the moment. However, this isn’t an important part of Rebecca’s conversation about this topic. What is important is that while she does see the organisations view of the LGBTQ community as a challenge right now, she believes there is room for change, and thus there is hope.

Lucy, a Catholic peace activist located in the U.K., illustrated how her organisation is challenging its membership’s daily assumptions and comfort levels. Her organisation has monthly guest speakers who address its membership. One month, a woman came to discuss climate change and direct actions; she spoke in Arabic, and her friend translated her speech for the audience. It was not that the speaker couldn’t address the group in English, but that she shouldn’t have to do so, “this was sort of to challenge our assumption that we were going to be [addressed in English], some people did in spite of themselves react quite strongly. So, this talk was about how do you include more people because not everybody can hang inside the cooling tower”. The phrase I find most impactful is “in spite of themselves”. For me, it is that these women, who in any other context might identify themselves as liberal, knew that

having someone give a talk in Arabic *shouldn't* be surprising, but this feminist/liberal knowing is challenged by their physical reactions when put in this new situation. Their knowing mentally and their knowing physically were out of sync in that particular moment. There is a need to continue having uncomfortable and difficult conversations if organisations are going to stay inclusive, diverse, and feminist, perhaps Lucy's organisation's approach by encouraging a feeling of discomfort and feelings of (un)belonging is a place to begin this process.

Throughout this section on harmony, there has been a progression from three main sites of unification detailing the feminist peace activists' ability and experiences of navigating these potential sites of conflict and resistance. The first site of attempted unification occurred within religiously-based peace organisations that were not overtly feminist, with varying degrees of success, two of the three activists felt they were able to create harmony both within themselves and with their organisational communities. The second site of attempted unification was discussed as secrets and the role secrecy can play amongst feminist peace activists working in un-feminist spaces. What did prevail through each feminist peace activists' experience of secret-keeping was the practice of pushing forward their feminist values regardless of the popular opinion within their organisations. The third site dealt with the topic of (un)belonging within the context of inclusivity within peace organisations. In each instance, the activist was presented with an opportunity to engage or redirect the conversation or assumptions taking place about who should and should not belong to their organisations, essentially helping to define the collective identity such that their feminist identities are accepted. While each woman still belongs to their organisations, even while they are not as inclusive or liberal as they would like, they were each able to express how these situations move them to question their own beliefs and values within religiously-based peace organisations. These continuous negotiations between feminism and religion within the

context of peace activism have demonstrated that while there were many opportunities to distance from the church towards feminism, the activists instead were able to balance the two potentially oppositional values and in many ways, create harmony between the two.

4.3 Identifying with Jesus

If I was surprised by my interviewee's urge to 'harmonise', I was even more taken aback by their discussions of the strong influence of the figure of Jesus. Specifically, Jesus was discussed as a role model for peace activism by nine of the women I interviewed. By talking about Jesus in this way the participants demonstrated a clear example of connecting their religious and feminist peace activist identities. Although I did not directly ask the women about their relationship with Jesus or his influence on their activism, these conversations came up repeatedly. At this point, I began to question what it was about Jesus, in particular, the women connected with; especially how it related to their feminist peace activism. These conversations diverged into themes of religious identity, leadership, and faith. There are two main categories of how these feminist peace activists identified with and understood Jesus. First, there was the focus on Jesus's death which centred around the idea that Jesus, as the son of God, whose persecution and unwavering love of those he encountered, provided clarity, conviction, and internal peace for the activists whose own activist work is done in his image. The second theme that emerged was Jesus as a leader and a prime model of a feminist peace activist. I discuss how the story of Jesus' life provides insight into why women and other oppressed groups find hope and see themselves reflected within the church. Jenny Dagers (2013) argues that "we have in Jesus the strange spectacle of a Christology which tells us little about Christ, but a good deal about women, about oppression and about 'possibilities of liberation and well-being'" (p.126).

The imagery of Jesus being arrested and publicly persecuted was brought up by one-third of all the activists I interviewed. What I found most interesting about this imagery was

how the activists utilised it during their protests and arrests. While the image of Jesus dying on the cross is particularly prevalent within the Catholic Church (Catholic Online, 2014), I also discussed this with a non-Catholic activist. Harriette, a Unitarian peace activist living within the U.K., considered her own experience with arrestable actions. She is in her sixties and described herself as not “being very successful at being arrested” until recently when she was ‘successful’. Harriette described the experience: “So we did one action during holy week. So being arrested and then being imprisoned, in the cell at the police station, that’s very symbolic for me personally, sort of spending that time there during Holy Week when Jesus was arrested, so sort of following that”. I find this symbolism, and its significance during direct actions, most compelling. However, I do wonder why this particular part of Jesus’ life appears to be most often utilised while these activists are protesting. Perhaps it is not the vastness of Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice for the human race, but his deathly and violent end that feels counterintuitive as the epitome of imagery utilised by the Christian feminist peace activist of whom I spoke. Why not reference the many accounts of Jesus doing radical acts without violent ends? All nine of the activists attributed their lack of fear regarding personal harm during actions to God. Perhaps it is this lack of fear that allows these activists to keep the death of Jesus central throughout their work. In this section, I tease out these questions, and look deeper into ‘how’ and ‘why’ the persecution of Jesus was so vivid in the lives of feminist peace activists and how it impacted on the formation of their Christian feminist peace activist identities.

The participants framed certainty in Christian beliefs as callings from God. Although fear might still exist, this calling provided a sense of being able to survive a dangerous situation. Ruth, a Catholic feminist peace activist in the U.S., acknowledged this conscious questioning, but trust in God. She positioned this questioning and trust process within her recounting of a public action she did several years ago,

When the first tridents came into Georgia and the Georgia state patrol was protecting the base and it was Martin Luther King's birthday and they were pretty violent and for me I just said to myself, 'okay it's Martin Luther King's birthday, and I'm probably going to get beat up, and that's just how it's going to be, and we're still doing the right thing', and there was a group of us and...I wasn't badly hurt but...so it wasn't about safety, it was about doing what God calls us to do and feeling like we'll come through it.

Ruth believed that her actions were God's will, and this belief gave her the strength to be brave. The conviction she demonstrated also reminds me of the confidence that a strong identity is theorised to contribute (Erikson, 1968). After she described this incident, I asked her what she meant by not "badly hurt". She said she was hit in the head and treated in other physically violent ways, but she did not require medical attention. Her story, especially her positioning of Martin Luther King, Jr. within the context of southern America alongside God and nuclear weapons is an informative distillation of how Ruth's social justice, faith, peace, and knowledge were all intertwined within her life and connected on a social level. The connection between Jesus and Dr Martin Luther King Jr. is potentially problematic due to the vastly different positioning of each figure. The implications of making such a connection between the two men are not made explicitly clear by Ruth, which limits my ability to understand her true meaning. However, the narrative that Ruth is drawing on surrounding the topic of the risks social justice peace activist face is intriguing and popular amongst activist communities (Forst, 2015). Specifically, it led me to question the idea of "doing what God calls us to and feeling like we'll come through it" as a white woman in America, and wonder if this same feeling of trust in God and going into a public protest on Martin Luther King Jr's birthday exists for feminist peace activists who are women of colour. While I do not know all of the background information of Ruth, I do know that she is a white woman in the U.S., and as such carries a great deal of white privilege. In retrospect, this could have been a place in

the interview to ask follow-up questions about why this instance was so notable for her. Specifically, her usage of the term “probably” in relation to getting “beat up” during a protest on Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. At the time of the interview, I can speculate that neither Ruth or myself felt the need to elaborate. That there exists a cultural knowledge and awareness of the racism and hatred that still exists in the U.S.; the understanding that on one of the most exceptional civil rights leader’s birthdays there was still a tension and anger that existed towards those who evoked his values or publically reminded society of his existence and demise. Or perhaps this difficult conversation wasn’t had due to her tentative, semi-guilt like tone. Either way, this would have been ideal to get in Ruth’s own words, to have had that conversation that exists in the narrative of social justice activist’s minds, out loud. There is a centring of suffering when discussing Jesus and Dr Martin Luther King, Jr.; however, it is a form of intimate pain that simultaneously occurs as actions for peace are put into practice.

Five of the nine feminist peace activists discussed the idea that Jesus modelled an inconsistency of the coexistence of Christianity and violence. This incompatibility was best expressed by Katherine and influenced her approach to peace activism. As a Catholic feminist peace activist, Katherine found solace and a place to ask questions about living a peace-filled life with her Priest, whom she said was “instrumental in her life as a peace activist”. She found that from questioning, she was able to hold a strong belief in the fact that “Jesus was showing us a way of life that is totally nonviolent...All Christians should be pacifists and should not participate in war”. Although Jesus inspired the idea of being a pacifist, when I asked her what it meant to be a pacifist activist, her comments followed a more Gandhi like approach to peace activism and resistance (Merton, 1965). I am not attempting to relate Jesus to Gandhi, as he was not a Christian, but instead acknowledge the terminology utilised by Katherine, which seems to be culturally influenced by Gandhi values, such as complete non-violence, or pacifism, a term which she referred to over fifteen times in

our interview. The practice of pacifism is followed by Katherine in all areas of her life, not just in public protest. She believes that other aspects of her life, even her voting, should be done in the name of pacifism, stating that people “shouldn’t even vote because it’s like voting for which mafia gangs your favourite, because they all approve of violence and mass murder”, and by voting for these individuals you are partaking in such forms of violence. For Katherine, this was perfectly aligned with what Jesus taught as the solution to ending violence in our world, believing that as Christians you must be “willing to be of service without expecting anything in return and willing to suffer mistreatment without retaliation and even unto death”. When I asked follow-up questions about this message Katherine received from her priest and her interpretation of the Bible, she responded with such a firm conviction, as if Jesus had personally told her his values that day, instead of indirectly from a text that is over two thousand years old. Katherine was confident that “this is what Jesus taught and that’s the solution, that’s the way”. With such a real conviction, she has been able to live her activist life without any ‘fear’. In many ways, the narrative of Jesus as the purveyor of peace and freedom from sin is an extremely violent story, especially one that was repeated and idolised in such a massive way, and was discussed by seven of my participants (Rynne, 2014). It is also an extremely positivistic approach to peace because it is centralising physical violence as the measure of peace. The language of laying down our lives seems more like a call to action and in many ways, a violent act, one that does not align with Katherine’s pacifist nonviolent life. Instead, it seems to agree with John Dear’s (2005) claim that in many ways, Jesus is a feminist peace activist. My participants further supported this belief as they discussed Jesus as a prime illustration of how to live a life as a feminist peace activist and a clear link between their religious and feminist peace activist identities.

When my interviewees brought up their Christian faith and connection to Jesus, I made a point to not directly ask if they believed Jesus was a feminist peace activist. Instead, I

listened and waited to see how, if at all, they would describe and understand Jesus with their peace activism. It was not my intention to make the connection of Jesus and feminist peace activism for the participants, but to see if this was a topic they wanted to address and share with me. What prevailed was the concept of how they understood Jesus to be an exemplar of feminist peace activism and how that influenced their activism and identities as Christians. By viewing Jesus as a feminist, they can create a space and image of Christianity that supports their practices of activism and understanding of who they are and their role within the Christian church. From this position, these women describe a sense of accommodation in their perception of Jesus' connection to peace and social justice issues within the church. When asked what it means when she calls herself a peace activist, Helga, a Catholic feminist peace activist located in London, responded with an all-encompassing answer, saying that it has an impact on all areas of her life, but for her, the most important part is reading the Bible and "believing that Jesus has encouraged us to lead, he's a peace and nonviolent activist himself I guess".

Nine of the participants also spoke about the radical nature of Jesus' actions. His radicalness was seen as an example and an encouragement of their feminist peace work. Abigail, a Lutheran on the West Coast of the U.S., described such a belief held by her fellow churchgoers, "I was in a trial group with a Lutheran minister and the young prosecutor made the mistake of saying, 'well are you a Christian minister?' And John said, "yes" and she said, "well Jesus wouldn't approve of breaking the law, would he? Which gave John the chance to just blow out all the ways that Jesus broke the law". She went on to laugh and explain this was because Jesus himself was a "radical resistor" and thus the Lutheran congregation's arrests could not be surprising. The lack of a clear understanding of Jesus as a radical was also spoken of by Emma, a Protestant peace activist from London, U.K., "what Jesus was really doing was radical and that he wasn't liked, and somehow I think there's this

disconnect, but I try to remind them that this. Being an activist and being peaceful and non-judgemental are all very much so things that Jesus was doing”. Reminding their communities and themselves that Jesus was a law-breaking, radical, and disliked man is one method of taking the work and values of an activist Jesus outside of church walls and communities. By materialising Jesus’ message into physical actions that are for the betterment of society, a shift could occur in the mindset of what it means to be a Christian whereas agnostic/atheist activist communities can also find a point of entry or alignment with religious movements. Monica, a Catholic feminist peace activist located in North Yorkshire, detailed the desire to make the foundational values found within the Christian church more applicable in our current world. While she described her background in activism as rooted in Catholicism and that from this she sees a “strong preferential leaning for peace and for taking seriously an understanding of the gospel of Jesus as sort of radically converting all relationships of domination into ones of equality and justice”.

Activists viewing Jesus as a social justice activist was one way feminist peace activists were able to connect to Jesus and understand his actions and their relevance to the world today. Heather, a Catholic peace activist located in Cornwall, described how she felt inspired by Jesus in this way. Heather explained how such an internalisation of Jesus’ message and practices led her to a life of feminist peace activism and motivated her to take Jesus’ messages outside of Christianity or her faith and identity, and into society at large. She was drawn to “reading about other nonviolent actors, especially nonreligious ones” to best focus and connect to other peace activists she met and worked with, as well as to “encourage non-activists to get involved in the peace movement”. In addition, the desire to bring peace work to a broader non-religious community was discussed as essential to the future of the peace movement by Helga, who said: “it was the only way forward”.

4.4 Contemporary Masculine Christian Leaders

Throughout the interviews, the influence that the church and their leaders had on the lives and identities of the activists was apparent. There were numerous instances of inclusion by church leaders, resistance of oppressive religious values, and incentives to belong to a religious community. What made these instances so valuable to me as a researcher was their repetitive nature amongst my interviewees, with many women providing similar ideas or explanations. It is from these conversations that I started to question how religious feminist peace activists understand and engage with the complexities of Christian leadership, especially within the Catholic Church. Women's exclusion from the highest form of leadership, the Priesthood, is a tangible instance of women's inequality within the Catholic Church.⁸ Excluding women is often justified through religious text, and finding illustrations are not challenging.⁹ The fact that women are categorically denied official leadership roles within the Catholic Church, and the subsequent solely male leadership suggests that many of the ideas and values that make up and direct its collective identity will be in conflict with the participant's feminist identity.

With this in mind, and the participants already having disclosed their Catholicism, I approached the topic of the current leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, inquiring if the participants see him as having a beneficial influence on the role of women within the church, peace activism, or any other social justice work pertaining to the peace activists' own lives and work. In response to this question, Rebecca an activist located in the East Coast of

⁸ The Catholic Women's Ordination (CWO) organisation, aims to challenge institutional sexism in the Roman Catholic Church and has created a campaign based in the U.K. to make this happen. Their website states: "We want to be a part of building a church community that truly lives the justice demanded by Jesus; a justice which demands that women be equal with men. Women equal with men means not only that women have the opportunity to fulfil their vocation, but also that the Church community benefits from their experience and their strengths in the ministerial priesthood". The CWO is only one of the organisations worldwide trying to gain women's ordination rights. (2019).

⁹ The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

the U.S., whose activism takes form in many ways, but primarily working for a Catholic peace organisation, explained the complicated dynamic of the Pope-women-peace-Catholicism as so:

He's one of the most progressive popes we've had on this [regarding women]. But it's so out of sync with much of the modern world that it still seems very far behind, but I see him taking some very practical steps in terms of bringing women in positions of leadership even within the Vatican structure. Getting women in charge of some of the financial aspects of the Vatican. And certainly, the question of opening up a conversation about women being ordained...re-stabilising women in the diaconate... all of those are a positive. And I see him trying to listen and learn, but it's just still a little bit medieval in thinking. In terms of peace, it's completely the opposite. I think he gets it more than... more than any Pope we've had in the past...but from the very day of his being chosen as Pope, choosing the name Francis, from Francis of Assisi, he indicated what his priorities would be, and those would be basically the poor, poverty and the poor, environment, creation, care and peace. We've seen him do a lot of work around the church of the poor and how to address issues of poverty and economic inequality.

This response highlights the complexity of Pope Francis' role regarding women and social justice.¹⁰ More importantly, it demonstrates the way he functions in the ideas and activism of Rebecca. She can express how "far behind" both the Catholic Church and Pope Francis are in terms of progressive values, but she also positions the Pope's new influence relatively within the Catholic Church. While many have claimed the current Pope is the most liberal leader the Catholic Church has had, this is a relative concept, and as pointed out by Rebecca, still liberal within a "medieval" frame of reference (Sciupac & Smith, 2018). However, this is not to deny the change Pope Francis is making by including women in more roles and engaging with women face-to-face more than his predecessors. I particularly found Rebecca's usage of the term "practical" important in the statement, "I see him taking some very practical steps in

¹⁰ Pope Francis was elected pope in 2013, but also received the second most votes in the previous papal election eight years prior. He received nearly all of the cardinal votes from non-western areas (Allen, 2013). His name was chosen because of St. Francis of Assisi who was 'a man of peace, a man of poverty, a man who loved and protected creation' (Pope Francis, 2013).

terms of bringing women in positions of leadership even within the Vatican structure” because it leans towards her perception of the Pope as not someone who is inherently progressive or liberal in his beliefs, but one who is at least able to acknowledge the value and timeliness of making women leaders within the Vatican.

However, her tentative tone shifts when she begins to discuss peace because his name and actions speak to his mission of peace and social justice. Although his actions have not fit with Rebecca’s feminist identity, his work has been particularly progressive in the area of social justice work and making peace a central part of the Catholic doctrine, and Rebecca was not alone in her awareness and conversation around this topic. Jane, a feminist peace activist from the U.K., also stated her feelings of optimism surrounding the new leader: “I’ve been, to be honest, a lot more hopeful with Pope Francis, then I’ve been for a long time before him”. This sense of hope was also utilised as a reason to stay within the Catholic Church, “I stay just because I believe it can, that it will change”. Jane’s belief in the ability of the Catholic Church to change does not mean she ignores the discriminatory practices of the church, but acknowledges their dangers and is working for change from within the institution. She described herself as feeling “both frustrated and disappointed” especially concerning their “exclusionary” practices of any group, “whether it was women or gay people” which reflected the same tentative concern and tone as when I spoke with Rebecca. It is essential to explain that this sense of hope is not only coming from Pope Francis, but from the changing cultural climate Jane and the other activists are witnessing both within the Catholic Church and their outside communities. Jane best expressed this idea when she told me, “I am very grateful that that tone is changing and I hope will bear fruit in many different ways”. It is this belief and the thinking that change is possible that encourages women to stay members of the Church, as well as the idea of not leaving something you belong to just because it is difficult. Seven women I interviewed discussed the belief that change of religious institutions must

come from within, and for that to happen, they need to remain active in their church community and continue to challenge oppressive ideas, values, and practices.

Following the conversations regarding Pope Francis' potential liberal influence on the Catholic Church, I asked each activist to elaborate on their understandings of feminism and women's roles/influence within the church, but found this was not a clear-cut issue. The complexities of women's roles within the Catholic Church were discussed on a spectrum of experiences from extremely favourable to the negative. This was not a surprise in my research considering my own experiences as a young woman/child going through confirmation at the age of sixteen. I had a lovely pairing of teachers during my confirmation course. They encouraged my questioning of the Bible, my feminist ideals/values, and the unique perspective I brought to a group of peers thirty to forty years my senior. The woman who led the group and gave me the most encouragement, particularly during smoke breaks, allowed me to believe that I could find a place within the church. However, this was sharply contrasted on my confirmation day where my first actual conversation with the priest occurred, and I was made to feel ashamed and destined for hell; where it was made clear that my queerness was not tolerated within the church walls. I share this personal anecdote because it was an image that came to my mind at the beginning of my fieldwork when I was interviewing activists, particularly those of the Catholic faith. Reflecting on this personal connection at the beginning of my fieldwork provided reassurance that being Catholic and feminist does not have to be contradictory. The activists I spoke to had found unique ways to marry their values of faith, peace, and activism within an institution they saw as patriarchal and inherently non-feminist. Such experiences would have been helpful to my childhood self and helped provide a point of engagement, especially at a time where being a feminist and belonging to the Catholic Church seemed impossible. Whether or not this would have

changed my role within the church, I am not sure, but it would have altered my understanding and relationship to Catholicism.

Deciding to stay within the church is not always possible, and it is important to note that not all people feel they can create change from within. My participants primarily attributed the need to leave the church to negative experiences with masculine figures in the church. Well into our interview, Charlotte was clear that she was steeped in Catholicism; however, as the conversation delved into her experience within the church, I noticed a change in her voice as it became more tentative. This shift led me to ask: ‘Do you still identify as a Catholic?’ And after a significant pause, she responded with a long and emotional answer. She began by addressing her history within the Catholic Church, which included teaching in Catholic private schools. An incident of abuse from a pastor about six years ago led her to take a break from participating actively within the church; however, it is essential to note that this was not her first experience of abuse from men within the church. She then went on to further explain her decision:

Ordained men are very threatened by educated and capable women. So after about eight months of dealing with his anger management issues, I left the job but did not leave the parish right away. But a year later someone else also had an abusive encounter with this priest, not sexual but very psychologically abusive. And that was like his eighth victim, and I had been his seventh, and I was like, ‘okay’ because I didn’t say anything to anybody at the time, as far as somebody in authority. And again, long story short, I brought it to the attention of someone in the archdioceses, and after several conversations, nothing was done.

Staying with the church or even identifying as a Catholic became something Charlotte still actively avoids. However, it is important to note that this separation from the church did not impact her identity as a feminist peace activist. Additionally, she continued to work in education and developed a social justice program at her religiously-based university. While this continuation of her peace work was a place of solace for Charlotte in this situation, it does show how the Catholic Church is not holding themselves accountable for the

psychological violence perpetrated towards its women. It is not surprising for eight women to approach the archdiocese and nothing to be done given the rate of unreported domestic violence of all kinds (Office for National Statistics, 2018; Felson, R. & Paré, P.P. 2005). It does serve as an instance of how religious feminist peace activists are separating themselves from their churches and finding alternative ways of applying their religious identities to their peace work.

Rebecca recognised the ability to acknowledge that church leaders are trying to make changes in the values of the church while also falling short. She detailed the need for “a lot more overt welcoming and acceptance and support for LGBT folk”, and was able to provide an instance of how Catholicism and queerness are navigating the same space. During one service prior to same-sex marriages becoming legal in all fifty states, a statement was asked to be given within the Catholic Church, “it’s the only church I’ve ever been to that when the cardinal makes a statement being against marriage equality or whatever, that the priest calls me afterwards and apologises for having had to hear it from the pulpit (laughs)”. While this apology from the priest can in many ways seem radical or surprising, Rebecca made it clear that his apology was not enough and did not serve as a solution to this problem. Rebecca stated, “Yes, this is a complex issue, however, apologising to someone for ‘having had to hear’ something is vastly different from apologising for what you have said, or better yet, standing up for active LGBTQ members of your congregation in front of your whole church community”. This lack of accountability and responsibility for the LGBT community is both expected and astonishing. I understand the difficulty of such a suggestion, the potential loss of status or career as an ordained Catholic priest, but these are the steps that need to be taken. On a request from a family member, I too was in a Catholic Church, on a whim, that morning where the priest urged us all to vote for the Godly cause of keeping same-sex marriage illegal in the U.S. All I felt I could do was watch as everyone around me nodded in agreement with

the priest. This event was four years ago; not long enough ago for this response to be considered socially 'appropriate'. Rebecca then went on to explain why these types of situations, both her apologising priest and my own shock within the pew, continue to occur even amongst activists. She used the phrase, "failure of imagination" to explain what she sees happening when "a situation comes up that seems hard to deal with then people don't know what to do". It is this inactive state that she thinks needs to change, particularly amongst "Catholic communities doing this kind of peace action work". Attempting to think beyond the comfort of ourselves or those around us and finding new ways to engage in these critical conversations where oppression or violence are occurring within our church communities.

One interviewee, in particular, explored the complex nature of being a feminist peace activist within the Catholic Church. Meredith, a Catholic feminist peace activist from the U.S., spoke compellingly about women's and men's roles within the church. She began by describing the Catholic Church as a "wily creature", one filled with clashing regard towards men and women: "It's the epitome of institutionalised patriarchy, it's the poster child for it, it's what it lives for, it is elevating men to the position to where they are equal with God and have them rule stuff". Here, Meredith pointed to the strong patriarchal leadership and the near God-like divinity placed upon Priests. Her use of sceptical colloquialisms 'poster child', 'stuff' point to her position on this as obviously problematic, as does her use of the term 'elevating' - the status of such men was to her not justified. She continued: "in the church tradition, there are all of these incredible women saints and movements and women who were inspired by God, by Jesus, by the gospel message to do completely radical things in their time and in their context...so that exists too". This shift from not only recognising the unjust 'elevation' of men, but also the presence of 'incredible' women was also, to her, part of a Church tradition. The difference in her language when discussing men and women is clear, and despite her disdain of the patriarchal structure she suggests: "We've just got this

long unbroken chain of access to really interesting people and a lot of them are women”. For Meredith, then, strong women’s stories were a significant and indeed ‘unbroken’ part of the Catholic Church. After further conversation with Meredith, I found that for her addressing masculine and feminine figures within the Catholic Church was not meant to excuse or explain away women’s absence of leadership. Instead, it was an expression of the duality within the church: “it is both of these things” she said, and suggested that it is perhaps this duality that creates space for women to access the church while still critiquing the lack of female leadership in the priesthood. Although she approached much of this conversation in a joking tone, “So, you’ve got priests that wear dresses and do the dishes at the altar...a strange interplay of feminine and masculine within the context of the church”, the message that gender roles, especially those of the leaders, were more complicated and fraught than it appears at first glance. While Meredith was able to make light of this situation throughout our interview, she was also aware of the seriousness of the situation. She went on to detail how her own experience within the church has been affected by such “idiocy”: “there is this very rigid patriarchy that says women can’t become priests, you know at various points women can’t have their feet washed on Holy Thursday, but you know women can be on the altar, you know women can preach...and that’s real”. Such ‘realness’ came to her when she has attempted to lead within the Catholic Church, “There have been many times when priests told me I can’t do that, that I can’t read the gospel, told me that I can’t preach, told me I needed to leave the altar”. Despite such feedback, she persisted in her role as a preacher amongst her community of Catholic feminists. There is significance in the way that Meredith knows the ‘facts’ of the patriarchal church, and still finds strength from the stories of women. Acknowledging the duality within the church - the good and the bad, the masculine and the feminine – has allowed the space for Meredith to be both an active Catholic in a place of leadership and a Feminist Peace Activist. She has challenged the notions of what women are

allowed to do in the Catholic Church, and found a way of remaining in it as well. In a way, she is developing an alternative account – one of the unbroken narratives of women that operates perhaps at a more grassroots level but is also wholly part of the Catholic Church. Such understandings of the Catholic Church, particularly women’s absence from the priesthood, serve as a manifestation of how feminist peace activists demonstrate their awareness, resistance, and distresses regarding the male figures serving in official leadership.

4.5 Queering Christianity for Peace

Through intentionally challenging belief systems within their given groups, congregations, memberships, and communities; thirteen of the activists I interviewed brought up experiences of when they challenge the common perspective on Christianity or Jesus. While all resistance is not a form of queering, as I thought about how these activists resisted, I found the idea of “queering” helpful in exploring the implications of resistance for the activists’ sense of self. In this respect, I am drawing on Sara Alena Cecavova’s work on the “queering subject” which she defined as “a protagonist who [pushes] through boundary transgressions and destabiliz[es] the character of her/his subjectivity” (Cecavova 2007). Here, the queering subjects are the feminist peace activists who are attempting to push beyond the generally accepted values and beliefs of a specific group/community, by “challeng[ing] the fixity and finality of the socially constructed categories”. I applied Cecavova’s concept of the queering subject to the women I interviewed due to its focus on the individuals’ actions versus their theoretical approach to activism, and after hearing them talk about the conflicting identities they hold. Cecavova develops this argument from a question posed initially by Judith Butler, “How must we rethink the ideal morphological constraints upon the human such that those who fail to approximate the norm are not condemned to a death within life” (1999)? Each of the activists I spoke with were challenging socially constructed norms

through their activism, but for the five women I highlight in this section on Christian feminist peace activists, their focus on transgressing boundaries are strategic and represent the type of queering that appears to be most common amongst all of the feminist peace activists I interviewed. In many ways, this work is done not only to challenge and resist the norms but to create a space for their existence within Christian spaces as feminist peace activists. Despite the potential risks, this work continues to be done because staying quiet for the idea of a peaceful community is equally problematic. Cecavova argues that “the personal costs of (not) succumbing to social pressure and (not) compromising one’s individual identity to one’s identity as a member of a group” are equally, if not more important than maintaining levels of community comfort (2007). This idea supports how the activists I interviewed have not only applied a queered approach to the outside world, within their peer groups and communities, but also within themselves, navigating multiple identities which have conflicting values and beliefs. It is from this perspective of the queering subject that I engage with the women’s efforts to challenging their membership and identity in the name of peace work.

The most common method used by the feminist peace activists I interviewed to queer their religion was through a rereading of the Bible. The activists were able to separate religious practices that they perceived as manipulation of religious scripts from those that were seen to be a more authentic reading of the script. A typical response amongst these religious peace activists was to reinterpret religious texts/practices through a feminist lens.¹¹ The participants reread the Bible in a multitude of ways and represented the identity and political belief system of each woman. For Rebecca, this connection comes into play when asked how she navigates her feminist Catholic identity. She noted there can be many conflicts because the two systems are at times working against each other; feminism’s focus on

¹¹ Specifically, I want to highlight how coming from a feminist perspective can provide points of engagement, whether that is in agreement or disagreement with what the Bible says, would not necessarily be provided from non-feminist perspectives. (Avishai, et al., 2015)

equality and providing all individuals with the full capacity to live, and Catholicism's restrictions of women's place within the church. She clarifies this conflict further, and explains how feminism can interject in these conversations:

But then I think there's for me, then there's the questions around women's place in Christianity and women's experience of their faith and spirituality so there's sort of the faith in feminism part where you've got extremely, at least in Judaeo-Christian cultures, you've got extremely patriarchal, perhaps not an extremely patriarchal text, but definitely an extremely patriarchal interpretation of the texts and so in that space feminism becomes more about allowing the text its full... *unbinding the text from patriarchy* so it can fully empower men and women in the liberation God intended. (Emphasis mine)

What I find most compelling about Rebecca's statement is the phrase "unbinding the text from patriarchy" as it insinuates such separation is possible or that the result of such unbinding would be an authentic and unbiased reading and text. Further, once the Bible is stripped from patriarchal influence, its ability to empower both women and men equally is indeed God's intention. This leads me to ask: where does this knowing Rebecca has about the Bible and God's intentions come from? How are these interpretations more valid or less dangerous than the interpretations presented by priests and other leaders of the Catholic Church? And how, if at all, does this align with feminist peace activism? I do not believe that such unbinding can be achieved. With such an ethereal concept as God and the humanmade nature of the Bible, finding an objective 'truth' seems impossible and unimportant. Rebecca's challenging and pushing of what it means to read and interpret the Bible supports Cecavova's concept of the queering subject, and I argue it is the most crucial part. Through her utilisation of the text and the practice of "unbinding", Rebecca can support and enhance her feminist peace activism by allowing herself to claim a space within the Catholic Church, and see the promise of a changing narrative.

The purpose of rereading scripture is not only meant to reinterpret the Bible or separate patriarchal agendas from the text, but it is also an attempt to provide a space for

women and other minorities to see their own identities reflected within religious texts. While this is a powerful action, this perceived unbinding and reinterpretation of the Bible as a new truth can be equally limiting due to its usage of the same text and figures to create meaning and understanding of our world. This leaves the question: is reinterpreting the Bible in and of itself queering? It is my understanding from interviewing the activists that a relative queering is happening. The relative position that they, women who grew up and continue to partake in religious life, are still taking actions that they know could isolate them from the church, and that the leaders, particularly the priests in the Catholic Church, would disagree with their actions.

These risks were addressed by Norah, a non-religiously affiliated peace activist located on the East Coast of the U.S., who discussed the importance of questioning belief systems, and how she does so with faith and feminism. Such questioning and critiquing does not make these values/structures less valid or important, but acknowledges their inherent imperfections as human-made products. She was aware of the perceived radicalness of this perspective, but still sees the questioning and rereading of the Bible as an intrinsic strength of religious activism. She explained how “with faith, I could get into trouble if I said this in a certain context, but that’s why you have the gospels in the Bible not matching up exactly because they’re different perspectives”. These inconsistencies result from the human-made nature of the Bible. Norah acknowledged the fear that many people might have about such a conversation, but insists on how it can strengthen faith-based activism by being aware of its flaws; by having an awareness that “it doesn’t mean that the Bible has no value anymore, right, it just means that...understand that it’s not like magic”. The position taken by Norah, that the flawed nature of the Bible and our acceptance of it makes it a worldly text, not one created outside of ourselves, is itself a form of queering as it pushes to transgress a mainstream notion that the ‘word of God’ is untouched by man (Gira 2010). By

acknowledging the human made nature and the socially specific context the Bible was created and then interpreted allows for the concept of an untampered or “unbound” text to be impossible and irrelevant to the topic of religious belief and practice. Norah, like Rebecca, is attempting to engage her community in challenging conversations through their rereading of the Bible, however, their aims are quite different from each other. Rebecca is trying to flip the concept of the Bible by one hundred and eighty degrees by taking the same text and notions of truth and applying them to the same community. Whereas Norah is exploring the idea of truth in Christianity and accepting and embracing such a concept does not exist and, more importantly, it does not matter. This is not to say one of these approaches are more or less aligned with the queering of religion, but that they both are attempting to use queer methodologies to engage with their religious communities, their texts, and their ways of knowing. In many ways this understanding of queering methodology mirrors Halberstam’s interpretation, “A queer methodology, in a way, is a scavenger methodology that uses different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behavior” (1998:p.13). Through such “scavenging”, both Norah and Rebecca are able to change and queer their own identity, engagement and understanding of their religion within the Catholic Church.

These conversations are not new: the connection between Christianity and feminism to Catholicism, in particular, have spanned decades in the U.S., with one popular magazine establishing themselves around both the Catholic faith and feminism. Rebecca, who works for this magazine, saw that “there was a strong sense of elevating women into positions of leadership, of biblical exploration of texts from a feminist perspective. We had a lot of feminist biblical scholars who wrote for our magazine, so in many ways, it was sort of radically different”. Working for an organisation whose aim was to bring women into positions of leadership within the Catholic Church brought additional opportunities for

Rebecca to not only write about these concerns, but created avenues for embodying these practices in her life. She brought up a powerful experience while speaking about her faith; she was anointed as a pastor and encouraged to lead and fulfil pastoral duties within her feminist Catholic community, however, these were not condoned by the Catholic Church and were kept a secret from the leadership. Despite Rebecca's leadership within the Catholic Church not being official, her initiative and the support by her community demonstrates how reinterpreting the Bible can also support a restructuring of leadership and understandings of what it means to be Catholic. Ultimately that by queering both the church's and her understanding of what it means to lead and worship within the Catholic Church, she can create change.

Jennifer, a Catholic feminist peace activist who works for a large non-profit in the U.S., also addressed the role of feminist leadership amongst Catholic communities. Jennifer provided specific instances of how two of her colleagues, both of whom are leaders within her Catholic peace organisation, engage with the topic of feminism in their work, specifically, how their methods are challenging the male-dominated rhetoric within Catholicism. The first colleague Jennifer described was a white male, who has made it clear to his peers that his "approach to include feminism is to actively listen to the concerns of women, and to utilise research from women experts as much as possible during his presentations or discussions" versus trying to tell women what he thinks is best for women. Jennifer then contrasted this to her black female colleague's approach, which she sees as vastly different. When speaking of her colleague, Jennifer states, "she does a whole thing about women being made in a divine image of God", that utilises the work of Lisa Sharon Harper whose discussion of genesis and unique interpretation of shalom are well known amongst feminist theologians.¹² "She then

¹² Lisa Sharon Harper discusses the connection that the creation of women were saviours for Adam's loneliness as they were made from the same flesh and bone. This interpretation discusses that each person, regardless of sex or gender, are images of God, and therefore, any abuse on them is directly attacking the image of God. By seeking shalom, it actively ends the suffering in the world.

asks the following question to her audiences, how did that primary equality that God wanted, get broken? And what do we need to do to restore it?” Jennifer brought up these two colleagues to demonstrate how men and women feminist peace activists can and should play a role in queering activists communities, specifically within the Catholic Church.

Rereading the Bible as a form of queering demonstrates one way activists are challenging norms, resisting patriarchal structures, and raising the place of women within the church. The six women I quoted above exhibited such queering through four specific practices. First, they explored how detaching the Bible from the patriarchy can provide a unique understanding of how women function within the Bible and Christianity. Second, they sought to find themselves in such texts. Third, they acknowledged the inherent flaws that come with a human-written text. Lastly, by utilising queer interpretations of the Bible, they were able to make changes that aligned their religious practice to their feminist values. All four of these practices illustrate how queering can be seen as a form of hope, particularly when it is understood as a form of perseverance and a way of looking forward.

4.6 Resistance as Hope

Prior to speaking with my participants, one of the central questions I sought to ask the feminist peace activists was, do you think sustainable peace is possible? In this question, I exposed my perception of peace as something fluid and on-going, and also my sense of hope. Out of my thirty-seven interviews, thirty-five women, religious or not, indicated that they believed sustainable peace was still attainable. However, their reactions varied from an immediate positive response to a tentative pause followed by a semi-pessimistic perspective that resulted in elaboration about the dire state of the world and followed by a “yes” that sustainable peace is possible. In relation to faith, participants saw hope as a part of their religion or spiritual practice, and all but two of the women saw sustainable peace as the

ultimate goal of their work as feminist peace activists. What I found most interesting about the responses were not that they nearly all identified as hopeful regarding sustainable peace, but that there were tentative ‘yes’s’ and even a couple of ‘no’s’, and they all continued with their feminist peace activism. The idea that even with doubt about the human ability to create sustainable peace, they still perceived their peace work as necessary and a good thing to do because it is not the end result that matters, but the creation of a better world for those here right now.

I also wanted my participants to consider how peace could be achieved and what relevant actions they were now taking. In this subsection, I focus on the responses from religiously affiliated women regarding sustainable peace. In doing so, I want to argue for the connections between Christianity, which the women described as steeped in hope, and their feminist peace activism. I consider how their connections describe the concept of hope and possibility, and then explore specific instances of resistance which come from their practice of activism rooted in their religious-based hope that sustainable peace is achievable.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the term hope, especially when taking into account the frequency it came up in my interviews,¹³ is one that is challenging to define or categorise clearly. While I did ask follow-up questions when my participants’ responses were unclear, it still provided me with the task to decipher what each participant was referring to when they used this word. I did this by first looking at the conversations surrounding the usage of the term hope. I then divided them into the categories of actions and beliefs. Six of my participants described the shared belief that a peace community serves as a place of uniting and power and has the ability to join together for large goals, such as sustainable peace, and how hope is demonstrated and seen as a critical strength of feminist peace groups. There were multiple experiences of peace actions provided by my participants; however, not all of them

¹³ The term hope was mentioned 107 times throughout my interviews.

made clear connections between their actions and the idea of hope. What was made clear among all of the participants who talked about hope, was how the internal experience and shared experience of hope within a group contributed to flexible and sustained efforts. Hope was used as a way of putting differences of values and beliefs to the side in order to work towards a single goal. It was used in conversation with the participants as if it was a feeling of possibility, even if the route to get there is unclear, and the willingness to try.

Martha, a non-religiously affiliated feminist located near York, recalled a blockade in the West Midlands of England and explicitly connected it to the concept of hope. She described an instance where she was amongst individuals and groups that were able to “block a military base successfully for days by three faith groups coming together, linking arms, and being arrested together in peaceful protest”. Such a blockade made national headlines and resulted in the city’s inability to arrest all individuals involved. This was in response to 9/11 and resulted in forming a new group. She explained how in one small town located in North Yorkshire, over sixty people came together from various social, political, and religious backgrounds and identities to resist the potential war and invasion of Iraq every week in the town centre. While this was one instance of group formation via political response and with a religious undertone, many groups and networks have formed in similar situations (Crane, et al., 2014). The Northern Yorkshire based group still exists and continues to work for peace on both the global and local level. When I asked Martha what she believed made this group successful in its longevity, she replied, “we were all so angry, but we had more hope than fear”. Even though they represented a range of backgrounds, hope helped facilitate their shared peace activist values into sustained practice, and created a community which supported this expression of their identity. This ability to come together in response to a potential war and attribute it to hope facilitated the creation of this subsection as one that differs from direct actions alone.

However, such unity is not always as easy; compromises might need to be made, but more importantly, boundaries need to be created for each individual or group to stay aligned with their missions and values. For a non-profit, non-religious based peace organisation located in Washington, D.C., boundaries were placed regularly. This particular organisation has been in existence for several decades. Although it is not explicitly religious, due to the anti-war nature of their work they have a history of aligning with, and receiving considerable contributions from, religious organisations and individuals who are primarily conservative denominations that oppose war. A member of this organisation explained how this works for them saying, “those places we don’t step into, it’s not our issue you know, but for them it’s a life issue, the same way war is a life issue, you know, but ours is a conscience and war issue, so we stick to those topics...we find the place of alliance, and we work there together”. The ability to work together through difference is one of the biggest strengths of the peace movement. These vast avenues to work for peace creates the sense that “the global community cares about creating a better world, that’s such a gift”. So, while this individual peace organisation works with these individuals/groups for peace, they, as an organisation run by feminists, diverge when it comes to topics such as reproductive rights. It is the hope and commitment to change that allows for such unity for peace.

When hope is seen as an action, it is easy to make connections between peace, faith, and social justice. By having hope in the peace movement, the women I spoke with are not being complacent in the idea that change will naturally happen or that their religious faith will create such a result. It is a mindful reflection on the world and their position within it, particularly the limitations of the spaces and communities of when they belong. Rhonda, a member of the Unitarian Church, discussed how her religious community is acknowledging its limitations and how they are actively trying to remedy this situation. After several decades as identifying as an atheist, she has recently become a member of the Unitarian Church.

Rhonda has found that of all of the peace organisations she has been involved in over the past five decades, the Unitarian Church is the most “diverse”. I asked Rhonda what she meant by diverse, and she explained her community’s diversity in the following: “because it’s a bigger group, and they’ve made a huge effort, huge, to be more diverse in every way, and it’s paid off in terms of sexual orientation, in terms of race, and in terms of age”. This “effort” was made after the community reflected on the voices and experiences that were absent within their church, and in doing so aligned with feminist values of inclusivity. By intentionally addressing their weaknesses as an organisation, they have been able to not only reach a larger audience of individuals, but become a place that is welcoming for everyone speaks volumes of the impact of communication and collaboration within a community. Such inclusivity was reached through Rhonda’s Unitarian Church being active and supportive of Moral Mondays, which is a Black led social justice grassroots movement that addresses a wide range of social justice issues. It originated in North Carolina, but has spread to several states throughout the U.S. and has resulted in many public protests and arrests throughout the country (Johnson, 2017). Rhonda explained how this type of support and grassroots level work could be most impactful: by making sure it is sustainable. “I think for the peace movement, [sustainable peace] comes most when we work on local violence as opposed to war. But I think it’s just allowing room for all of this to happen and reaching at it in very personal ways is the way to do it. But it’s a lot of work; it’s a lot of work”. By working at the local level, Rhonda has found that maintaining hope and the belief that sustainable peace is possible because one inherently affects the other. For Rhonda, it appears that working to end a big-picture item such as war isn’t possible when at the local level, racism and violence occur every day. This supports the idea that peace activism is not a self-contained effort, but rather interconnected with many other activist causes.

Taking peace work outside of their religious communities also speaks to the role of hope, the potential sustainability of the peace movement, and a shift in the perspective of what it means to do peace work. Feminist peace activists are no longer thinking of the abolition of war as the ultimate goal of peace work and are approaching their activism at all levels of their lives, and is rooted explicitly in social justice. Morgan, a Protestant feminist peace activist from Manchester described how this practice looks for her, “so partly it’s about how I want to live as a Christian feminist peace activist, but the most tangible part of it is trying to live non-violently, and that includes my attitude towards food, the police, racial justice, etcetera, and then it’s how far can you take it and involve other people”. What I found most intriguing about Morgan’s statement was that she described her peace work as the “most tangible”, specifically the idea of finding something more substantial or real through faith, and acknowledging the significance of it seemed to serve as an entry point or place of connection for religious peace activists with secular communities. This concept was mirrored by two additional feminist peace activists, Jessica, a U.S. Catholic, and Zelda, a U.K. nondenominational Christian. When I asked Jessica why she felt Catholicism, feminism, and activism were connected she responded with, “I guess for me it’s about seeing Jesus as...like Jesus was peaceful and he wanted peace, and he wanted justice. And for me, that was one of his most important messages. And that kind of desire for peace and justice, and his love kind of trumps everything. This means we should forever be aspiring to bring his peace and justice and bring his kingdom on earth today. So yeah that really defines my expression of my faith above all others”. What I found most reflective of Morgan’s idea of bringing social justice to the secular community, was Jessica’s understanding that peace and justice were the messages from Jesus and her religion that were the most important, and “define[d]” her “expression” of “faith above all others”. Bringing peace and justice to our world through peaceful actions was also discussed by Zelda, who felt passionate about peace work being a more important

demonstration of faith than attending church. She explained, “Some people would say, I get frustrated by Christians who are very good at going to church on Sundays but then aren’t here on the ground protesting...I just don’t see how that computes, but then maybe they would say I don’t go to church on Sundays so how can I say I’m Christian? You know”. By considering this it challenges a commonly accepted idea of what holding an identity of Christian is, and positions the traditional ritualistic practices of the church community against replicating the actions of Jesus. In an organisation which is generally based on the actions of Jesus, Zelda acknowledges the difference between what is being taught in the church community and what is being done, and notices her own exclusion from the community because she is practicing Christianity in the way she thinks fits best rather than the rituals found inside the church building. Zelda’s understanding that the incompatibility of being a Christian while not actively working towards peace does not speak towards Morgan and Jessica’s experiences specifically, however, her prioritizing of peace action over that of traditional expressions of faith such as attending church or reading the Bible does align with the value of our world and the people in it being more important than faith or religion alone. This understanding and its connection to Jesus, the man, who also focussed on good works on earth reveal how seeing Jesus as a feminist peace activist can have a tangible and positive impact on the peace movement as a whole, regardless of religious affiliation.

Perhaps the most conflicted statement regarding hope, sustainable peace, and faith was given by Alice, a Christian peace activist in the U.K., who framed her hope as a requirement of her faith instead of an inherent belief. “Well, I want to think it’s possible. As a Christian, I am called to believe it’s possible. I have hope, but I’m also frightened”, Alice then continued to process her answer during her climate change conversation and came to the final words of our interview, “So do I believe peace is possible? I believe that I have to believe peace is possible. You know I have to or how do you live if you don’t? And I am a

person of faith and so someday (laughs) but I don't think I'll see it, but I hope you will".

Although she has been an active member of her church for decades, this conclusion was not easy to reach. This active thought process during an interview provided me, a lapsed Catholic, a sense of reassurance. That not all Christians, liberal or not, are accepting religion or faith blindly. The contextualisation of the Bible's message to the realities of our current world (i.e. climate change, nuclear weapons, war) inadvertently addressed points of personal weakness in my own faith journey.

The women also demonstrated the intertwined nature of their faith and feminist peace activist identities through framing hope within physical acts of resistance. Lilith, a Catholic feminist peace activist from the East Coast of the U.S., whose activism and faith is rooted in all of her life choices brought up one form of resistance as community formation. Lilith described a dozen unique communities and identities she feels connected to, all with an overlapping connection to social justice. The community that Lilith described as being central to her life was her cooperative household. She's lived in this shared living space for over twenty years and first moved in when some of her children were still living with her. Not only is this household seen as resisting patriarchal notions about nuclear family and isolated living, but is also one that has the central premise of being religious and social justice based. Lilith described her home life as such:

The community where I live because we are you know somewhere between ten and twenty people depending on a given time living in the same household. It is also for me an environmental statement; we use fewer resources because we share the space that we have. There are a million ways to do that, but for me, it is about lifestyle, it's about faithfulness to what I believe, and it's also that nourishment. We are a community that prays together, if you will, *symbolically with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other*, where we really are bringing together the reality of the world we live in and what we claim to believe. (Emphasis mine)

Within this short passage, Lilith touches on broad issues such as environmentalism, faith, community, social activism, and living one's ideology through practice. It was particularly the imagery of praying "symbolically with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other" that struck me as an encompassing statement for this chapter, a clear and concise summary of how being a feminist Christian peace activist looks. It is the "doing" of both faith and action. For the women I interviewed, there seems to be no ability or need to separate the two because they are mutually enriching. Rebecca also invoked imagery of a faith-based community coming together in an intimate setting, "it's the people that you eat with, it's the people you break your bread with, it's the people that you have that intimate family context of sitting at the table and talking about the issues of life...encouraging one another, taking care of one another". Understandably, such deep connections can create feelings of safety, security, and confidence within the context of peace activism, especially in public spaces where one can be physically vulnerable. In addition to these feelings of closeness, community can also provide a great sense of hope and minimise burnout which is a common occurrence in many social justice fields. The underlying concept was said by Rebecca, "if you have a whole ethos of people that feel the same way and are working on the same issues you are able to continue on with the work and not feel isolated or alone in the struggle for peace". By creating these intimate, focused communities, many of the women I spoke with said they felt more empowered to take resisting actions against church structures. A particularly powerful occurrence was described by two women, one from the U.S. and one from the U.K., who within their Catholic communities performed self-ordination. Their self-ordination was completed by the women of their faith-based communities ordaining other women within the group as priests, thus allowing them to their own liturgies and congregations within their community. Alexandra spoke specifically of what this practice looked like, how it was not only subversive in theory, but in the physicality of the practice. These women gathered in a

circle, and she stated, “it was a communal thing that we put our hands on the person, and as a group, we were the ones that conveyed [priesthood] on to them”. This group form of resistance, of acknowledging the limitations of the Catholic Church and still having faith, but still working for social justice is perhaps the most prominent illustration of hope that was discussed in my participants; mindful, critical, and action-based faith. This act balanced the difference of power between women and men in the Catholic Church, and bridged one of the largest gaps between feminist and Catholic identities. However, this raises the question of, why is this act a form of resistance? The role of the hands, which in the Catholic Church plays a central role in the ordination process, specifically the anointing of the hands of the newly ordained priest by the single male bishop. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops describes the historical and social significance of this process, “by this ritual the ordaining bishop and the other priests invoke the Holy Spirit to come down upon the one to be ordained, giving him a sacred character and setting him apart for the designated ministry” (2019). Taking this into consideration, the role of the women’s hands in Alexandria’s experience to ordain a fellow woman can be seen as an even more significant form of resistance within the Catholic community. Decided as a communal, the women in Alexandria’s community ordained fellow women as a group, versus the individualised process scene within the Catholic Church. They are acknowledging their power and connection to God and each other, and like the traditional ordination of Catholic priests, this power can be given and received through their own hands. The ability to provide such power and title of ordination is significant; it is by “Anointing [the hands] with oil [that] stems from the Old Testament...The anointing of the hands signifies that the hands of the newly ordained priest are being prepared for the sacred duties and vessels which will be part of the priestly ministry”. The hands of a priest are therefore set apart from all others; they hold the power to offer the community the body and blood of Christ and to bless the sick and dying. The idea

that such power is then given to the women ordained Priests despite public acknowledgement, speaks to the importance of hope within Christian feminist peace activism and its ability to intertwine with resistance.

Deciding to challenge actively and engage with systems of power, especially those within the communities we belong and choose to remain a part of, is both a brave and potentially vulnerable act of resistance. Perhaps the most poignant instance of this resistance occurred during one of Rebecca's trips to Rome and the Vatican:

I had never been to Rome before, never been to Saint Peter's. We went to mass, and it was really a very nice mass and went up to receive communion, and the priest was only, there were like ten priests giving communion and the line I happened to be in line with was only giving communion on the tongue and people were going up with their hand extended and he wasn't giving them communion in the hand, and I sort of looked around and there were other priests giving communion in the hand, it was just this one. So I went up with my hands up, and he said "no", and I said "yes, father I want to receive communion in my hand this is how we do it in the U.S.", and he said "no", and I kept putting my hands up, and he said "no, no" until finally he calls over the communion guard and said "get this woman out of the line because the people are backing up here" and I said "father please just give me communion in the hand: and he said "no no no" and he's directing me out of the communion line, "go away go away" and finally I took communion in the mouth. He was turning red; his blood pressure was going up. So, I took communion in the mouth and just said "father, I forgive you. Amen". And walked out.

When I initially heard this anecdote, I was amazed by the participant's bravery and gumption, to directly challenge a Priest in one of the holiest locations for the Catholic Church. Indeed, this shift in mindset for the activist, particularly the idea that it is the priest in this instance that needs forgiveness, shows how this woman has been able to take specific actions and demonstrate her agency within the church. However, when I began to reflect on this portion of the conversation, I could not help but think of the potential cultural imperialism that existed in this story, and my own need to tease out the possible meanings of this encounter.

As a white woman coming from the U.S., demanding to be accommodated in the way she perceives as correct, a ‘this is how we do it in the...’ statement is problematic. This is contrasted by the fact that she is a woman and is confronting a man in a space women are seen (by lack of representation or access to leadership) as inferior. What most strikes me here is not that she might be acting from a place of national privilege, but that there appeared to be little self-reflection on the potential complications of this encounter with the Italian priest. Although I am uncertain about how this woman would reflect on this event or how her privileges and identities influence her ability to do her activist work, what was made clear is that this interaction with the Italian Priest was a moment of resistance she saw as empowering and a sign of hope for women within Catholicism.

4.7 Conclusion

Although before conducting this research I was not expecting religion to become a significant part of this project, through this analysis I have come to understand better the intricacies that the roles of how being a feminist peace activist and member of a religious organisation interact. The six themes: Familial Connections to the Church; Harmony: Attempting Unification; Identifying with Jesus; Contemporary Masculine Christian Leaders; Queering Christianity for Peace; and Resistance as Hope, all discussed how many aspects of both identities are very compatible. That religious teachings do highlight similar notions of nonviolent approaches to peace which are adopted by so many feminist peace activists. However, there are key differences that clash among the identities such as the systematic patriarchal structure of many religions, and the lack of understanding that social justice and environmental issues are directly connected to peace issues. These incongruences make me think about two questions I raised earlier in the chapter: How do you negotiate religious beliefs while engaging in feminist peace activism? And how does religion help in the

participant's feminist peace activism? As discussed in this chapter, the two identities intertwine, with each activist finding their own balance and creating internal peace. In order to negotiate religious beliefs and stay true to their identities as feminist peace activists, each person had to find a way to focus on the similarities each identity held, and create a space to understand the differences to change their perspective. By harmonising and queering, they were able to unify two different sets of beliefs while acknowledging traditional notions of each. Although some participants said they eventually had to leave their communities, specifically Catholic communities, other participants spoke about the importance of remaining and holding onto their feminist values and pushing them forward. Sometimes this was easier to do so as some peace organisations were not explicitly feminist, but were filled with feminists and had feminist values built into their mission statements. There were other times the person would risk their place in the community or their jobs by holding onto their feminist beliefs. In these less accepting communities, participants described having to be secretive, and to avoid 'taboo' conversations, and act in their feminism in other ways within the community.

In all of these situations, the term feminism was either hidden among the values or avoided at all costs in these Christian peace organisations, demonstrating how complex holding these two identities can be. Among all of the women who identified as both feminist peace activists and religious, no one was a part of a religious feminist peace activist group. The fact they cannot fully express this pair of identities openly within their communities, but have remained consistent in both might also suggest how powerful it was for them to find peace between both identities within themselves. Queering the Bible to understand it in a way that would align with their beliefs is a further way they were able to negotiate their beliefs while engaging in peace activism. This process of making space and stepping outside of traditional notions of how the Bible is interpreted allowed the women to have their own more

authentic perception of the Bible even if the actual words never changed. They had to use their own experiences and values and reread the Bible. This in itself is a form of resistance to the patriarchal structures within the church and helped them hold onto their religious beliefs as well as their feminism.

By understanding the Bible in this way, there are stories and aspects of the Bible and Christianity that were also able to help them with their feminist peace activism. In many ways, Jesus lived his life as a feminist peace activist. There are similarities to the messages that he spread, and the ones which the participants used in their practice. They talked about how Jesus was radical in his time, and resisted norms and broke laws regularly in nonviolent methods. The message that he spread also involved a lot of social justice issues such as inclusion and connected these with peace and community. When this is considered in contrast to the exclusion of women within leadership roles like priesthood in the Catholic Church, it is hard not to queer the Bible and separate the faults of humanity away from the ideal message delivered by Jesus. Being able to perceive Jesus in this way provides a great role model who has inspired many incredible women throughout history, including the interviewees.

Thirty-five out of the total thirty-seven activist who participated in this research believed that sustainable peace is possible. Religious participants also spoke about the connection between Christianity and hope. Jesus' story of spreading peace and social activist messages, including nonviolent resistance when he died, was taken as hope for many of the participants mentioned in this chapter. They drew inspiration from the way he did his activism, even when it was incredibly challenging to do so. Hope as resistance was doing God's work in the form of their feminist peace activism even if it was against the norm, or was dangerous in some way. Persevering in their action was interconnected with hope as it takes hope to continue on with peace work, and peace work has to continue for us to feel

hopeful for positive change in the world. I believe that hope is also connected to faith for many of these women as it motivates them to persevere in their feminist peace activism.

Chapter 5

Beyond Themselves: How Feminist Peace Activists are

Sharing their Practices with the World

Absolutely I feel like God is calling all of us to make a world of peace and there couldn't be anything more antithetical to what we are called to do as Christians than nuclear weapons, I mean how could anyone, any ethical person let alone any religious person possibly support the use of nuclear weapons.

Abigail: Reverend, Peace activist, Feminist, Mother, Grandmother

In the previous chapter, I considered ways in which the interviewees understand and navigate their multiple, often conflicting, identities, and my focus was on how the activists look inwards as feminist peace activists. In this chapter the emphasis shifts, and I ask: how do these activists see their identities as affecting their practice? how do the feminist peace activists look beyond themselves and attempt to understand their experience of 'making a difference' for others; what ideas and practices do they draw on to take their values outwards as they endeavour to 'change the world'?

In exploring these questions from all 37 participant's interviews, I identified four significant themes from the interviews: integration, relationships, faith, and social justice movements. First, I discuss how many of my interviewees have integrated their religious feminist peace activism within all aspects of their lives, and how they attempt to share this integration with mainstream society as a part of their activist work. Second, I reflect on how their activism has affected their relationships, specifically the support and challenge they have experienced and how this has impacted their activism. Third, I explore specific examples of how faith affects activism: a) the role of Jesus as a model of nonviolence; b) the impact of social dissent within the Quaker faith, and c) the Buddhist tradition of nonviolence. Last, I examine the links of broader social justice movements to feminist peace activism both in values as well as practice.

5.1 Interconnectedness and Mainstream Integration

The participants described the role of how their interconnections between the values of peace, social justice, and religion were a way to understand how feminist peace activism can function in the world. I then look at how these connections are put into practice, integrated into mainstream society, and described as an expression of their feminist peace activism. All of the religious women I interviewed discussed the interconnectedness of peace, social justice, and religion. For most, religion came first, then peace work or social justice followed, but for a few, the path was reversed. The existence of all of these identities and values on their lives was presented as omnipresent. The ability to detangle one aspect from another became difficult as time went on in their lives. When I asked how their role in their religious communities influenced other aspects of their life directly, four women responded with uncannily similar answers. Specifically, how their spiritual foundations shaped multiple aspects of their activism and feminism. Meredith, a Catholic feminist peace activist in the U.S., responded: “it’s sort of a whole lifestyle, it’s a whole a mission, it’s a whole integrated thing...It’s part of a whole way of being a part of the world and a whole way of trying to relate to other people. The kinds of communities I live in and the choices that I make in the way I live my life... to me it’s all integrated, and that feels like a positive kind of thing in my life”. Meredith was clear to describe this seemingly all-consuming lifestyle of a religious feminist peace activist as naturally “integrated” into her life, and not a process of active decision making. It was useful for her to have these aspects of her life integrated because it meant that her Catholic peace activism was a natural, almost passive, part of her life, making it easier for her to continue her work. Her instinctual response to living as a Catholic activist made it challenging to tease out the intricacies of where her ‘work life’ and ‘personal life’ begin and end. She described her activism as a “lifestyle”, not a hobby or task to be completed in her free time.

The understanding of activism as a lifestyle, not simply delegated to one area of an activist's life, also has theoretical precedence, where the omnipresent nature of activism was its ability to exist in the every day, and the mundane. The idea that "part of the 'movement' in social movements is a transformation in the habits, including linguistic and basic domestic habits, that shape our everyday lives" was repeatedly expressed by the participants (Crossley, 2002, p. 8). Similar to Meredith in this concept, Jessica, a Catholic feminist peace activist located in the U.S., was able to offer more tangible ideas about how her religious, feminist and peace activist values are interconnected. She described in a powerful way how her theoretical beliefs need to match her physical actions, "if I believe and care for creation then I should recycle and buy more eco-friendly things, and if I care about racial justice then I should spend more time with people of colour, and listen to their stories and confront my white privilege, if I believe in peace then I need to vote for the appropriate candidate. So, I just try to not just talk about it but incorporate it in my life". What I find most impactful about this explanation was how she connects and actively approaches a wide range of issues, her environmental impact, white privilege, and her political responsibility, simultaneously. She integrates her theoretical beliefs and interacts with the world differently by noticing and addressing areas in her life in order to align with her activism. For Jessica, this appears to be more of an active decision-making process, whereas Meredith's description emphasizes the organic nature of these overlaps. This difference could be partly due to time spent as activists, with Meredith having approximately thirty-five more years of feminist activism than Jessica, but in both cases the relationship between identifying as feminist peace activists and living as feminist peace activists is clear.

During my conversations with Mary and Lisa, the main topic shifted towards the transitional processes that occur in their working lives as activists, and how interconnectedness developed the further they engaged in their places of work. Mary's career

as a Catholic feminist peace activist began when she was in her twenties. While raising a young family on the East Coast of the U.S., she began to “pay attention” to the world as the “place where her children would grow up”. By “pay[ing] attention” she acknowledged that there were always issues to confront and noticing them is the first thing a person can do to take action. Consequently, she had more conversations with family members about peace and social justice issues and eventually was inspired to help start a peace and justice organisation; one based in an affluent area of the country. She recognised the power of storytelling and information sharing and aimed to continue this in her peace work by seeking community member’s support. She explained: “our goal for that centre was to engage middle-class people of faith, of whatever denomination or tradition, in dialogue about critical social issues, issues of justice and peace, and to do it initially by an encounter, to bring someone from elsewhere to tell their story and to begin the conversation there. And so we brought many delegations to El Salvador during the war to Guatemala, to Nicaragua”. Storytelling has remained central to her peace work now that she has moved to a Catholic specific peace organisation. She noted how her connection to peace and social justice work was deepest when coming from a perspective of Catholicism, and how she could no longer keep the two, faith and activism, separate in her work and life. She even related participating in this research as a continuation of her storytelling within her activism.

Lisa, a Buddhist feminist peace activist based on the West Coast of the U.S., was also greatly influenced by her career in peace activism to intentionally create interconnectedness between peace and faith. Her academic background was in peace studies, but when she began working with her current peace and social justice centre, she described it as “a big eye-opener in terms of what non-violence really is”. This impactful moment connected her academic background and identity as a feminist peace activist to the reality of the world for the first time. Specifically, this is due to her organisation being spiritually grounded in the Gandhian

philosophy of nonviolence. This philosophy encouraged her to expand her definition of peace: “it’s not just not harming, but it’s really love in action, and it’s building the world that you want, it’s not just protesting, I mean that’s part of it, but it’s not all of it”. This understanding has further influenced her life in vast ways as she lives and interacts with the world around her through her peace activist identity. Practices of this interconnectedness include her eating; she is vegan and eats local and organic food and shops at second-hand stores to reduce her environmental impact. She also explained how she mindfully focuses on love within her personal relationships, “a significant way I practice my peace work”. This all-encompassing way of life might seem extreme, but there are methods of utilising parts of this approach with the aim of peace and nonviolence becoming part of mainstream lifestyles.

The participants discussed three specific approaches to integrating feminist peace activist ideals outwardly to mainstream communities as a practice for expanding and increasing the potentiality of sustainable world peace. Five of the women I spoke to brought up examples of this — the first approach related to higher education. Clare is a university lecturer in peace studies in the U.S., and she utilised the university classroom as a space to express her internal connections between social justice, faith, and community. Clare described her own sixteen years of volunteer work within the prison system, from which she has built long term friendships with men in imprisonment as influential to her use of teaching in her activism: “the more relationships I built the more I came to understand the injustices inherent in that system and the racism and all of that”. It was from this personal understanding that Clare began to question her role within this prison system and how to contribute to the solution. One of the ways she integrates her activism in her classrooms to work against a system that she came to see as “explicitly racist” and “implicitly immoral” is through speaking with her students about the impact they can each make by “becom[ing] passionate about something, to really invest in that and you know focus our energy and our

resources and our research and intellect in a direction can sometimes make a small difference”. She also encourages her students to work with the state prison and asks them to write letters to raise awareness of the social injustice that occurs at their local detention centres. Clare further utilises her role within a religious university as a director of student engagement, to encourage students to be socially aware and mindful members of the community. This is done by “taking a very justice centred approach, continually reframing how we do that, and making sure that we do not send students out there with this ridiculous idea that they are out to save the community, instead they are raising cultural, racial and economic issues”. The underlying message of this teaching is the problematic notion of ‘saving’ a community and is connected to the history of missionary work (Simpson, 2017). Instead, Clare is encouraging her students to engage in open conversations and listening, taking as close to a grassroots approach as they can within a university system which was a radical act of bringing feminist peace activism outside of herself and to her academic community.

The second approach aims to bring pragmatic skill sets found within religious-based peace activism to a broader population. Abigail’s approach to such integration of peace activism was best put into practice when her peace organisation made themselves and their direct actions known to the broader community through the use of local media coverage. She described one experience she had with the impact of this approach. She, along with other members of her church were charged with conspiracy claims and were taken to court for a public protest at Ground Zero in New York. Ultimately, she and her church were found “not guilty” by the jury. After the trial, Abigail recounted someone from the jury approached the group to tell them they wanted to find them innocent because they supported their peace activism and stated that “they were looking for some kind of technical out because these people sat on some tracks and stopped a train. So, the jury said, ‘well there were no ‘no

trespassing' signs on the tracks so how were people supposed to know they weren't supposed to sit on the tracks?" Abigail attributes the work they have done with the media as an essential factor in this interaction. She believes it shows how there can be an overlap between the mainstream community (the jury) and religious peace activists, and how it can have a more significant impact. It is also a method which she believes other peace communities can also access to bring awareness to their local communities.

The third and final approach of mainstreaming guides to peace activism outlines how to move beyond redemptive violence using both religious and social contexts. Roseanne, a Quaker located in New England in the United States, said the teaching and learning of peace values are best when "back[ed] up with practical and effective steps for conflict resolution, for justice, for dealing with social trauma or personal trauma, for all of the things that lead to violent outbursts or militarized responses". Here she talks about how important it is to be more explicit in pairing her feminist peace activist values with her actions in the form of teaching others. Roseanne made it clear that peace is not a place to arrive to, but something that needs maintaining, and she described as "an ongoing process". She connected these ideas to her experience as a child therapist and summarised places to integrate peace and social justice skills in a shortlist: "I feel like if we did these three things. 1. Basic education in schools, religious and secular education about conflict resolution, 2. teaching it within the family, and 3. certainly Christian churches, but I think in other faith institutions too". Her rationale is that if more individuals and communities teach alternatives to violence, then there will be more people with effective skill sets to move towards peace when conflict occurs. She was clear that these responses to conflict must not be "based on increasing violence or this idea of redemptive violence" because the idea that it is okay to use violence for a greater good cannot be seen as an alternative to achieve sustainable peace. She has put these ideas

into practice by developing her non-profit summer peace camp, which aims to teach children conflict resolution skills and the importance of non-violent communication.

The significance of teaching nonviolent methods to resolve conflict was shared by Lisa as well. She explained how there is a need to have a complete shift within the social mind-set: “it’s a change that’s a fundamental shift of our frame of reference that assumes that war is inevitable to a frame of reference that believes that there are many tools, non-violent ones, that can be used well to resolve conflict”. While Lisa is aware that this will require drastic changes in social, cultural, and internal spheres of life, she believes it is nonetheless necessary from both within and outside of the church. In order to make these shifts, she mentioned three actions that people can make their own daily lives more peaceful based on her own choices and experiences. The first action focused on challenging the normalisation of violence in the media by mindfully choosing more peaceful options and bringing awareness to the violent messages we consume regularly; this is especially true for children. Second, she spoke about resisting consumer culture by purchasing local goods and seasonally grown food. Last, she described the importance of rewriting history by shifting the focus of typical history classes away from violence to include more peaceful topics. Another way feminist peace activist ideals can intertwine with all aspects of life is through the belief that change must occur from multiple levels. Although these understandings were first presented as personal experiences, they quickly developed into how the ‘natural’ interconnectedness of these feminist peace activists’ values can go beyond just personal experiences and impact the world. This practice of looking outwards and communicating feminist peace activist values is what best unites each of the examples of interconnectedness and mainstream integration detailed by the interviewees.

5.2 Support and Challenges from Peers, Family, and Friends

A more intimate aspect of being feminist peace activist is finding what practices support and maintain feminist peace activist identities and values while at the same time navigating interpersonal relationships; specifically, when peers, family and friends support or challenge the role and values of feminist peace activism. To best explore how feminist peace activists navigate these situations, I draw on a range of experiences discussed by my interviewees. By going beyond viewing these experiences as positive or negative, I consider how the feminist peace activists understand these reactions from their peers, families, and friends. I also assess the perspectives of those providing support to better understand potential reasoning for their reactions. I observe how activism has affected their relationships, and then how those relationships have affected their activism, including ways in which the feminist peace activists manage conflict and maintained peace in their personal lives. There are three instances of ‘positive’ support networks, two that are ‘negative’ experiences, and two experiences that exist in between the first two.

Elizabeth, a feminist peace activist and professor at a university and located in the West Midlands of the U.K., has been involved with her university’s peace organisation since she was a student. Her organisation deals explicitly with the anti-arms trade and comes from a nondenominational religious context. Early on in her organisational involvement, she started getting arrested for public protests on military sites, and has continued this form of activism as a university professor. When I asked her what her most significant impetus was for military and weapon protest, she responded, “well I’m a Christian, so I think that’s a huge part of it”. She went on and stated how her fellow Christian peace activists “pray and campaign together...they are who taught me about the arms trade and now that I am a leader of the group, I feel it is my duty to bring these issues to a new generation of students”. Passing on this information and sharing her values has been an important aspect of her

feminist peace activist identity. What I was most interested in after hearing these comments was how she was able to maintain her academic and anti-arms trade activism simultaneously. As a fellow academic, I am aware of how being politically and publically outspoken can potentially result in institutional ramifications. However, Elizabeth said her colleagues and director of her department, while not activists themselves or similarly aligned politically, “do not appear to have too much of an issue with what I do as long as it doesn’t interfere with my work”. This allowed her space for her activism, but requires her to maintain a balance with work and resulted in her doing most political actions during university break times. I also asked if her family was supportive of her activism, and she happily replied, “Yes, my parents are Christians, so I think they just saw it as connected to my faith and they saw it as one of my expressions of my faith”. What I found most interesting about her parental support was that they were not activists or liberal politically, but their shared faith provided a point of connection and understanding, and as Elizabeth said, “it is good to know I always have a place to land”. Having support from family creates comfort, or joy for the activists, merely knowing they are acknowledged and understood by those in their lives.

Similar to Elizabeth’s familial support, Alexandria, a feminist peace activist located on the West Coast of the U.S., has found that while her family is not physically involved with her activism, their supportiveness creates a sense of “excitement” for the whole family. She best expressed this feeling: “the first time I was arrested and had to go to court, my kids came and a lot of my nephews and nieces, and that was very exciting. It was very exciting that they all came and they all were very interested and asking everybody loads of questions”. Although Alexandria felt much support from her family in terms of their physical presence, she said as the trial went on for an extended period of time she noticed that her family “started to cringe about all the details of the case, especially the religious connection” and they began to show up less to her cases, but still supported her in her decision to participate in

public protests. There was a sense of disappointment in Alexandria's voice as she told me this story, but she still felt "grateful to have a loving and supportive family" and saw them mainly as positive supporters of her work and has made it easier for her to continue her peace activism.

The experiences of Elizabeth and Alexandria exemplify how having a positive support network can benefit and encourage your activism. At the same time, since both women still received tentativeness from their support networks, it complicates the notion of family or peers being naturally supportive, and requires effort to maintain a balance for both. The only interview where the participant felt fully supported in their feminist peace activism in all areas of their lives came from my conversation with Lilith. As a Catholic feminist peace activist who lives in a Catholic community house, which she described as having both a "familial and church connection" within one home. There are many components to living in an intentional shared space; Lilith explained how "for thirty-five years we've been an intentional faith-based Christian community. You know you became a member, and there's a process, there are regular meetings, regular worship, living together in a household, shared financial arrangements, and all that kind of stuff. That's another kind of expression of intentional Christian community that I came out of and of course the Catholic order community". However, then there is a more substantial impact of having such peer support, and that comes "by virtue of having lived here now for thirty years there is this deep level of relationship and connection with people". This deep connection is only encouraged by the fact that the people you live with and are also "asking similar questions and sharing their thoughts and temporary answers with each other". While Lilith's experience is not reflective of the overall experience of feminist peace activists support networks, it does highlight the impact such support can have on women's lives as activists.

Elizabeth, Alexandria, and Lilith did not talk about needing to monitor what they say or how they interact with their support networks. However, it was a method of maintaining familial relationships utilised by two of the feminist peace activists I interviewed. Clare, a Catholic feminist peace activist from the Midwest of the U.S. who comes from a large conservative family, said she was pressured to self-monitor regularly, needing to keep aspects of herself and her actions a secret from her closest family members. As the youngest of five children, she described herself as the “only progressive feminist of the five” and positioned herself against her politically independent sister and her other three siblings who are “religiously and politically conservative”. These relationships were most important to Clare because her parents passed away when she was young, and she does not have other close relationships; she said: “they are all I’ve got”. It was not just the difference in a political stance that created complicated family dynamics, but their inability to discuss issues they cared about without it turning into an argument or resulting in a separation between siblings. This part of our conversation was a stressful topic for Clare, but one she felt was important to share. When asked, “how do you navigate this?” she responded: “Fox News is their Bible, you know? In that setting, it’s a very unsafe place for me to be totally myself and authentically out there with what I feel. Especially around anything that I’m an activist around”. Her usage of the word “unsafe” not only points to the potential danger she faces just by existing in her family but also exemplifies the polarising political climate in the U.S., and can make bridging the gap between the two parties or values quite challenging, if not impossible for some.

Clare has been able to begin engaging in social justice-based conversations with one of her sisters, especially if it is about women. However, she has found talking about topics such as the prison industrial complex more difficult to challenge “the misconceptions that Fox News likes to spew about prisoners, especially among the Black community”. However,

she has found that over time, her sister has “sort of started to listen, and I’m closer to her when I share about the stories of people who are locked up”. Specifically, she made a connection with her sister by sharing her friendships with people in prison: “it’s real people whom I have a relationship with when I tell her about my love for them and the injustices they’re facing, it started to chisel away at some of the dominant narratives”. By engaging in these conversations through the form of storytelling, she was able to make leeway with one sister and find a closer bond; in many ways, this was a practice of humanising people in prison. However, this is not the case for everyone or even all of Clare’s sibling relationships, as one conversation strained her closest sibling relationship and communications cut off for nearly a year. Clare explained: “I just didn’t want to get into it again because this sister is important to me, so it felt like this huge loss, but I didn’t know how to navigate it you know”, with the end solution being to agree to never discuss politics again with each other “because we love each other and we didn’t want to damage that relationship”. Ultimately, she has decided to monitor her words when she is around family for her well-being and continued to remain active in peace work. Clare’s experience shows how difficult it can be to maintain two conflicting aspects of her life, with her identities of feminist peace activist and sister seemingly unable to co-exist in the same space. Although she continues to remain active within her peace work and in her family, she is forced to compromise her feminist peace activist identity in order to maintain the relationships with her siblings, causing internal conflict.

A potential outcome of being open about a feminist activist identity in the workplace was shared with me by Winifred, a Catholic feminist peace activists from the East Coast of the U.S., who also happens to identify as a lesbian. She described a particularly disturbing incident that changed her connection to the church, her community, and her faith. She was a

teacher at a Catholic high school and had been so since completing her Bachelor's degree at twenty-two. She shared the following:

I taught at the high school for twelve years. The beginning of the end for me was when I reached out to the lesbian and bi girls at the school to try to pastorally accompany them. This outreach got misinterpreted and ridiculously distorted. They went as far as to say, "I was a lesbian, and I was trying to recruit". I mean you know the ridiculous narratives around this. There was an inapt principle at the helm at the time, and this was 2005, so maybe four or five years, not even, after the explosion of the abuse scandal within the Catholic Church. The human family always needs someone to be afraid of. It was very awful. Easily the most difficult time in my life. They forced me to resign at what would have been my thirteenth year at the school.

The discriminatory and blatantly homophobic response to Winifred's proactive engagement with the LGBTQ community at the high school is not surprising from a Catholic school in the U.S. As she said, we do "know the ridiculous narratives" around LGBTQ teachers, whether they be to "recruit" or insinuate perversion, they serve as a method of silencing and are rooted in scare tactics. However, I must note that the school was aware of Winifred's sexual orientation as well as her doctoral thesis on the pastoral care of LGBTQ youth.

Whether the school was looking for a way to target Winifred based on these facts, or were able to overlook them as long as it had no connection to their student population is unclear to both Winifred and me. What she was sure of was how the rest of her career and life changed forever. By being active and open about her identities within a conservative environment, she was rejected by a community she was a part of for more than a decade. She attempted to find a balance of both Catholic school teacher and feminist activist through her pastoral care of LGBTQ youth, but was not allowed to do this. With this position being the only job she had ever held, she was not able to list them as a reference for any future jobs, and ended up "in employment flux for six years" following her "resigning" from her post. While she did have friends who were able to help her land temporary part-time jobs, she had not been able to utilise her degree and experience as she had initially intended. She is currently working part-

time at a university, and while she does not have to worry about similar persecutions, she is no longer as forthcoming or outspoken about her feminist peace activism or sexual orientation. Although she acknowledged that “if somebody came to me and wanted to talk, they’d know I’m open and supportive”, but it is not something she actively seeks out anymore within her workspaces and therefore has changed the way she has worked in her activism. This conversation was the one that stayed in my mind most clearly months after my fieldwork. Unlike every other instance of feminist peace activism these thirty-seven women shared with me, this was the only one where there was not a solution, positive message, or deeper meaning presented at the end of a challenging experience. The persecution Winifred experienced altered her hard-worked for career, her freedom to be open about herself, and how she supports LGBTQ youth in need. In order to best protect herself, she decided to hide large parts of her identity from the world.

Outside of these contrasting positive and negative experiences with their family, friends, and peers, a clear understanding of the complex nature of these situations was brought up by two interviewees. Charlotte, a Catholic feminist peace activist from the U.S., acknowledged a critical difference in keeping people in your life that are “toxic” for you versus those who have different values than you, but where love and respect still exist. She stated: “It’s all about finding where you can sit with yourself and where you can kind of handle those things and have those conversations with yourself and just stay true to it. If a relationship is toxic, or somehow drains you of vital energy, then that’s another matter altogether. But if there’s ways that people can agree to walk in the world in peaceful equally respectful ways, then that’s good. But those are two different things”. Her usage of the phrase “where you can sit with yourself” highlights the importance of setting boundaries and having self-reflection about your values as a feminist peace activist. This practice might look different for everyone but can serve as a method for self-care as an activist. Clare, whose

complex family experience resulted in many strained familial relationships also acknowledged how she had overlooked some of her values in order to maintain some family relationships. The importance of preserving these relationships was primarily based on the children in her life: “I didn’t want to lose out on being connected to my nieces and nephews and their children, my little great-nieces and nephews are the cutest people on the planet! I do not want to be left out of that, and their grandparents (my siblings), are conservative people”. I asked her how making such compromises made her feel, and she responded confidently, “well I still want to be in their lives so I make compromises, and it’s a choice I am sure about and would make again”. Ultimately, it seems that for both Charlotte and Clare, it was about setting personal priorities, and if they could maintain familial connections without causing self-harm. They exemplify how having such compromises in values for specific individuals can simultaneously exist while still having a strong feminist peace activist identity and value system.

5.3 Religious Peace Education

In Chapter 4, I showed how fundamental religious beliefs are to most of the peace activists I interviewed. Specifically, how their sense of self, based on a set of values and practices which involves reinterpretation of many traditional religious tenets, gives meaning to their lives as feminist peace activists. In this section, I want to highlight their discussions of how this deep belief system enables them, perhaps even compels them, to engage with others as part of peace activism. When discussing the connections and pulls towards a life of nonviolence and Christianity, the most recurring concept was the understanding of Jesus as the ultimate model of how to live a peaceful life. Seven of the women I interviewed discussed Jesus as a guide for peace activism. There was an underlying belief that Jesus, as the son of God, and whose persecution and unwavering love of those he encountered, provided the

activists with clarity, conviction, and internal peace, doing their work in his image. Juliette, a feminist peace activist who is also an ordained minister on the West Coast of the U.S. and has been arrested dozens of times, detailed an incident where she was arrested and reflected on how her arrest felt symbolic of Jesus' persecution, and generated a deep connection to Jesus. Here she reflects on a conversation with her correctional officer:

I was there because we had done a sit-in at the senator's offices. That was before the Iraq War, and I talked with the guard and he was Hispanic, so I thought maybe he was from a Catholic background and he asked me, everyone knew I was there because of protesting, and the other prisoners thought that was fabulous, (laughs) so I was very well known, so he said to me, 'have you done this kind of thing before?' and I said, 'well I have resisted nuclear weapons for a long time' and he said, "but we need nuclear weapons' and I said. "no we don't, if they burn up our babies we're supposed to burn up their babies? What would Jesus think of that?" and he said, "Jesus is dead" and I said, "no he isn't he lives in you and he lives in me" and he said, "if Jesus were alive today then they would put him in here". And I said, "yes, absolutely right they would" And actually I was in solitary at that point, and it was very comforting to me to feel like, yes if Jesus were alive today this is where he would be because he would be resisting in the same way.

The belief Juliette had that Jesus would be a peace activist and arrested for similar forms of resistance as herself demonstrate a clear mirroring of the image she believes Jesus to have made for the world. For her, the connection with Jesus confirms that she was doing her peace activism in the 'right way'. What I find most intriguing about this anecdote is Juliette's direct engagement with her prison guard, and how her perception of him as 'Hispanic' encouraged her to enter this conversation with the hope of shared faith. She did not disclose if the guard went further into this discussion, but her understanding of rightness and the guards understanding of legality were at apparent odds with each other. Juliette's takeaway was focussed on reaffirming her actions as aligned with Jesus, a fact the guard agreed with, although from a different perspective.

Jesus was not only an example of feminist peace activism, he also encouraged peace activism in others. In the interviews, the participants brought up how they align themselves

with Jesus, and how the concept of nonviolence is a fulfilment of Jesus' wishes. Violence's incompatibility with Christianity was discussed in detail by all seven women, but for Jennifer, this concept was not only central to her life as an activist, but for the lives of everyone. Jennifer, a Catholic feminist peace activist located in the East Coast of the U.S., clarified what she saw as the difference between conflict and violence. This discussion was rooted in Jennifer's understanding that, "in the body of Christ we can't be violent to each other". When asked to elaborate further on what this meant for the life of a feminist peace activist, she explained how conflict and violence are not the same, "not to say that we don't have conflict, but that we have access to a narrative and a model and a higher power...that gives us tools for working through conflict in a way that strengthens community and builds resilience and deepens faith". Such "tools" for her are rooted in her Catholic faith. However, she notes that Christianity is not the only avenue towards this understanding. When speaking to peers, non-religious activists, or strangers who are interested in peace work, she has found it helpful to describe conflict as an "indicator of injustice or abuse to human dignity" and by failing to address this it is unlikely that "you're not really going to solve whatever the tension is". She explained how the failure to address the root of the issue is what turns conflicting beliefs into acts of violence and how this is frequently cyclical. Her understanding of the necessity of addressing conflict before it became entrenched in violence was powerful; I wanted to know what she thinks this approach could mean for society as a whole. Her response was beautiful and connected individual peace to world peace. For Jennifer, 'peace' is about allowing each human to fulfil their maximum potential while understanding that "too often people's human capacity to fulfilment is stunted by violence or injustice and so by trying to move those things out of the way, people can thrive. With the belief that humans' thriving into their best selves is a positive for everyone and the whole earth community". While Jennifer's understanding of peace and conflict is personally rooted in her Catholic

faith, her ability to expand her practices and conversations beyond this demonstrates her connection to peace as something beyond faith.

Catholicism was not the only denomination that was discussed or practised by the women I interviewed. Both the history of dissent in Quakerism and the Buddhist teachings of nonviolence also offer compelling examples for the life of a feminist peace activist. The history of dissent and nonviolence as seen in these faiths are important additions to feminist peace activist practice. Practising Quakers discussed the role of the Quaker community throughout peace movements both in the U.S. and the U.K. and specifically spoke about the role of social dissent in peace activism. Roseanne noted how she had been influenced by the Quaker church to connect faith to a wide range of social issues. The issues she specifically noted were “economic justice, disability rights, ending violence against women”. By “pulling the whole lot together” she has found her identity as a Quaker, a feminist, and a peace activist rather easy to unite. For Sally, a Quaker feminist peace activist in England, it was explicitly the social-political connections to faith within the Quaker communities that drew her to Quaker meetings. She noted how this was especially true when you look at the history of their activism. The Quaker connection to issues such as prison reform and their known ethical practices within business is something she feels are firmly attributed to the Quaker faith. Although Sally is proud of this history of political dissent and her ancestors who “suffered and died for their beliefs”, she was quick to note a current shortcoming within the Quaker communities. Specifically, she noted how she sees the tradition of dissent within the Quaker community as being lost. She put this concern as a series of questions she put forth to a peer when the Iraq war began, “Why isn’t there a statement from Quakers as to what do Quakers think about this? Is this okay? And they did, they put out a statement, but you know it’s a bit careful, I know they have to be careful, and it’s important to be careful and not fly off. But it’s imperative to speak out, where is the Quaker voice?” This tentative approach to public

forms of speech is a drastic contrast to Sally's understanding of seventeenth-century Quakers who were willing to die for their causes. Although Sally was aware of the limitations within the community, there was a strong sense of disappointment with herself and her peers for their lack of public voice.

The frustration Sally experienced from within the Quaker community as someone deeply connected to the Quaker community greatly varied when positioned next to the experience of Hannah, a feminist peace activist from the U.S. who identified as agnostic but has had positive working experience with the Quaker community. This exposure to Quakerism came in the form of facilitation training in a nonviolence program aimed to work with prisoners on the topic and process of interpersonal peace. Hannah specifically addressed how the Quaker way of thinking about peace influences her: "the connection between what we do personally between one person and another and how we communicate to promote peace and the global issues of peace. And you might be coming on to this, but that is something so central for me, you can't have one without the other, there's no good being a peace activist and hating your enemies". This value of interpersonal peace within the Quaker community was also present within a conversation I had with a Buddhist feminist peace activist, Lisa. Although the concept that peace starts from within and is one of the first steps to creating sustainable peace, its relevance to the theme of faith impacting the broader peace activist movement is also important. For Lisa, this introduction into nonviolence began when she first read Tich Nhat Hanh's book, *Peace is in Every Step* while at university almost two decades ago. She is now a committed student of his work, and stated that this text was "a huge influence and that probably more than anything when I set the intention to be a peacemaker/peace activist... seeing that I could make my whole life a work of art and aspiration and intention for peace has deeply impacted me and has continued to". This application of Hanh's work was not confined to her career as a feminist peace activist,

influencing her lifestyle choices such as what she eats, and keeping her commitment to nonviolence daily through the practice of yoga. Both of which she considers a part of her ‘no harm’ life. Although not scripturally based as seen in the Catholic connection between religion and peace/social justice, the profound influence of faith-based practices, whether Christian or Buddhist, are seen as significant and inherent within these faith-based practices.

5.4 Social Justice Practices

Feminist peace activists also draw on social justice practices and their experiences working in the social justice movement as a method of best ensuring their activism aligns with their values. The highest represented demographic amongst the religious feminist peace activists that I interviewed were Catholic in denomination. Due to this high proportional representation, links between social justice-based peace work and Catholicism was a reoccurring conversation throughout several of my interviews. Four women, in particular, discussed how they see the church as directly connected to social justice and how this plays out in their own lives and communities. Winifred has experience working directly with the Vatican, providing her with an opportunity to have a more direct influence within the Catholic Church. Regarding this, Winifred discussed two points. The first was the importance of the Catholic Church to invest in alternative approaches to peace and social justice, and the second is the idea that people want to see these kinds of change. The difficulty is gaining the support of the institutions, including the church. The type of investment Winifred is referring to is not only financially based. Although monetary contributions and commitments are incredibly impactful, she explains how they (Catholic peace activists) are currently “trying to get the Catholic Church to invest creative minds, financial resources, political power, to not only promote active non-violence but to help develop our understanding of what active non-violence looks like”. She provided alternatives to monetary donations such as trauma healing,

civil resistance, and unarmed police force, to name a few. Winifred believes one of the reasons increased investment from the Catholic Church could make a significant impact for non-violence is due to raising awareness. She explained how in the U.S., in particular, is spending around six hundred billion dollars annually in preparation for war. Winifred said that the underlying reason for this is the “assumption that there isn’t any other alternative”, and if the Catholic Church were to provide support, this assumption could begin to be shifted by large amounts of people across the world. Winifred’s second point of people wanting change, specifically the end of ongoing war and perpetual violence, was made more apparent to her during a meeting held in the Vatican:

We invited people from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Pakistan, The Philippines, Iraq. We didn’t have anyone from Syria, Lebanon, South Sudan, The Congo, Burundi, South Africa, the U.S., México, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and on and on. And what we did was listen to what they thought about the possibility of moving beyond the forty or fifty years of violence, I mean look at El Salvador, the heartbreak of having finally gotten past war in 1992 and then watching the street violence and the local violence multiply. I think people are really committed, really dedicated to finding another way. So I believe it is possible if we all sort of put our shoulders to the plough, I think we can do it.

The imagery of peace activists, primarily women at the epicentre of the Catholic Church, discussing how we can move beyond war and violence is impactful to say the least. Her reference to El Salvador was short but poignant. It provided me a moment of pause by mentioning a country that I do not know, but at the same time come from as a multiracial Latina woman, because it is due to this ‘heartbreak[ing]’ violence that I as a person, feminist, activist came to exist. This moment of deep (but unstated at the time on my part) connection to what she experienced in the Vatican surrounded by transnational activists to my personal life magnified the imagery of her statement of people coming together at the plough to make this shift to non-violence resonate all the more for me as a feminist peace activist doing this research.

Patricia, a feminist Catholic peace activist who grew up during the era of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war, stated her understanding of the connection between Catholicism and social justice concisely and clearly. This came from the perspective that “there’s a branch of Catholicism that does look at social justice issues and you know it is, in my opinion, the heart of being a Christian, I mean that’s what it’s all about”. Patricia’s observation links together the actions of being a Christian to that of a social justice activist as being essentially the same. Such a discussion about the inherent social justice within the Catholic Church was not only discussed by Patricia; her statement was mirrored by Meredith and Jane, both Catholic feminist peace activists, the former on the East Coast of the U.S. and the latter in London, U.K.

When speaking to Meredith, it became clear that her connection to peace and social justice work came directly from her Catholic faith, and how the gospel of Jesus related to equality and justice. Meredith explained it as “I think for me a primary grounding is as a Catholic and out of that Catholicism comes a strong preferential option for peace and for taking an understanding of the gospel of Jesus seriously as sort of radically converting all relationships of domination into ones of equality and justice. And out of that comes a kind of stable peace built on human dignity”. Such a direct connection between Catholicism and social justice makes understanding Meredith’s lifework as a feminist peace activist relatively easy. However, this leads to the question, how is this applied to the real world? Specifically, “how do you make that real for the world we are living in today and not just some sort of pious whatever?” It is precisely this ‘pious whatever’ that I am exploring throughout this chapter, how peace activism, specifically religiously-based peace activism can be extended to the masses, and integrated into mainstream life. This connection to Jesus was also made evident by Jane, who was in university when the second Vatican council occurred. This had a significant impact on how she perceived how interwoven Catholicism and social justice

issues were. Specifically, how faith had to be about more than a personal relationship with Jesus within the Catholic tradition, but how this influenced the way you lived in the world. She detailed how this relationship to Jesus also had to include a relationship with others, “that most of this, most particularly had to do with how we related to the people who are most marginalised, either by poverty or by exclusion of any kind from sexism”. Having religion operate within one’s life this way allows for the work as a peace activist to remain rooted with the people and communities it is aiming to help, rather than being missionary-like in service to God.

The utilisation of Christianity as a guiding force for peace activist work was not only discussed by those who were religious themselves or active in the church. Three women who identified as atheists also brought up the topic of religion within feminist peace activism and discussed the impact they saw religion making within the activist community. Hannah, a feminist peace activist in the U.S., whose work focuses primarily with those who identify as conscientious objectors to war, described how as an atheist she has come to see how faith can move people to do great things and be deeply connected to peace work. For Hannah, this call to peace work from a perspective of peace was not just seen amongst Christians, but amongst her Jewish and Muslim peers as well. As a lapsed Catholic turned atheist, she described the impact this realisation has had on her, “that’s been such an eye-opener for me... these people moved by faith to do incredible things for peace and justice around the world has just been really incredible and has helped me a lot to kind of, you know, grow my tolerance and understanding of the place of God and religion in people’s lives and that it can actually move them to do good things”. As a lapsed Catholic myself, I found Hannah’s realisation that faith can produce “good” work/actions within the world to be reasonably understandable. However, I found her usage of the term “tolerance” particularly interesting; especially when placed within the concept of a feminist peace activist. While I did not engage in a direct

conversation after this comment was made to clarify what she meant by the term, I still think given the less than adequate concept of tolerating people or ideas does not necessarily align with feminist ideology and practices. As feminists, are we aiming to go beyond being tolerated as a movement? If yes, then wouldn't we extend the same courtesy to others? However, due to her direct work with conscientious objectors, who historically have come from devout Christian communities, Hannah has seen first-hand how the overlap between faith and peace can be put into practice. After speaking with Hannah, I was reminded of a similar conversation I had with Norah, a U.S. based feminist peace activist who identified herself as 'unchurched' and no longer belonging to a particular denomination. She said her membership with a peace organisation was mainly based on its identity as a secular organisation. Although her organisation is intentionally secular, it does have members who are also Christian, and when I asked her how she felt about their presence within the organisation she responded: "the admonitions that all religions have about love one another, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, that's there...That's the best of spirituality and religion, and I totally respect whose motivation for peace work is that. It happens mine is not". This acknowledgement of respect felt different from Hannah's tolerance. The explanations for this could be vast; notably Hannah discussed her painful experiences within the Catholic Church, whereas Norah only mentioned a lack of engagement with church life.

A theme that emerged when discussing Christian based feminist peace activism was the topic of morality. This was not merely the concept of doing peaceful actions because they are the right thing to do according to the Bible, but a re-engagement with the role morality can or should play in current Christian feminist peace based actions. This concept was first brought to my attention by Rhonda, a Christian feminist peace activist located in the East Coast of the U.S. whose own activist/church communities are actively supporting and

engaging with members of the Black Lives Matter community. From this instance of community engagement, Rhonda began to realise that the Black Lives Matter movement was drawing in people who were not traditionally activists to join actions of peace work. Specifically, within the New England community she lives in, she has found there to be “a huge amount of effort in the schools, which are majority minority-based, and in the community as a whole to really bring people together in any way they can”. Such forms of coming together are tied together with notions of morality due to a movement called Moral Mondays. Moral Mondays began in North Carolina by Reverend William Barber, who is currently the head of the NAACP. What is unique about the movement is that it protests a wide range of issues which vary by location. It is a religiously progressive lead movement that has been gaining momentum since 2013 and has spread to several states across the U.S. Specifically, Moral Mondays are a model for how faith and social justice can overlap. Rhonda had the opportunity to partake in training led by the reverend and later attended her community’s own Moral Monday protests. Her community’s engagement with Moral Mondays consists of two main points; firstly, “that all of these issues are connected” and secondly, “that we should be starting from a basis of them being moral issues”. She deduced from this discussion that “it’s about how everything is interconnected and when we fail to see that, we don’t function the way we should in society” and although this statement of how a society “should” behave provides room for the argument, how can one determine what functions are correct for a society, particularly what kind of judgements are being made. However, the impact of this grassroots movement, and its inherent inclusivity of a wide range of social justice issues (enough to have twenty-six nationwide protests on the Monday following my conversation with Rhonda), are impressive and support her take on the points of engagement her own religious peace community has with this new social movement. Such

national support and immediate community engagement serves as an incentive for Rhonda to keep on making morality a central component of her church's peace activist work.

From this perspective, Rhonda brought up her understanding of what it means to keep morality in the centre of activism, specifically how Reverend Barber has greatly influenced this understanding. She provided a method of how decentring morality has traditionally occurred during her activist career, specifically with her environmental justice work, "I think for so long as a climate person working for the city and as an activist, and I'm...that we have tended to play down the moral issues. We'll say, 'this doesn't make economic sense, we're wasting money, it would be a much stronger economy if we were investing in wind power and not XYZ' and so on, and all of that is true. And then we would say, 'and by the way, it's the moral thing to do'". It is precisely this 'adding on' of morality that Rhonda and those involved in the Moral Monday movement are trying to change. By making morality the centre of the conversation, they hope it can have a more significant impact and influence others to join the cause.

Carol, a Christian feminist peace activist located in London, discussed the morality implicit in direct activism, specifically against the Ministry of Defence. The course they created against violence, through the development of a mindful and researched style of action, was central to the two-year process Carol was a part of during the 1980s. Upon deciding to take on the government directly, and deliberately engaging in arrestable actions, they had to discern how their actions would align with their ideologies and ideas had to be made clear to each member. Carol described it as such, "we were bringing to that a moral perspective, as Christians, when one is threatening or using nuclear weapons, those things are equally evil and need to be challenged". From such an understanding of morality where there is a clear evil, and inherent to this evil (i.e. weapons) there is a presumed good (i.e. peace), the actions of faith-based peace activist groups can be seen as a reasonable and morally just

response to such perceived instances of evil. Having a clear motive to organise around is fundamental to the formation of these activist groups, whether centred around morality, feminism, or community improvement.

Patricia discussed the importance of grassroots work in her development as a feminist Catholic peace activist with a focus on the role of storytelling and personal narratives. What I found most compelling during this conversation was how she was able to integrate the form of grassroots activism within large scale organisations. This is to say she was able to bring two seemingly contrasting entities, grassroots organisations and international governmental bodies, together in her work as an activist. Patricia explained how within her current international peace organisation, “its impetus for the work that we do from our member organisations that are very grassroots and work for peace in very contextual ways”, was greatly influenced by a position she held in the 1990s. The contextualisation Patricia spoke of was a form of engagement within each community she worked, further enhanced by her ability to live amongst poor communities and hear stories, ideas, and opinions first-hand. Although her role at the time was not to immediately work within a given community, she was able to turn her job of “advocacy toward the U.S. government, the United Nations, the world bank, the international monetary fund” into one that, “always out of a story out of the experience at a grassroots level”, and it was from this experience she developed the organisational and work structures of her current Catholic peace organisation.

The role of grassroots activism was also influenced by the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam war movement, and the United Farm Workers Organisation protests during her young adulthood. These specific instances of activism further provided her with concrete ways to engage in peace activist work. The work done around these issues was described as an “awakening of conscious” for her and those around her. She credited this awakening as something “that also gave me and my young family then a very specific way to begin to try to

engage in work for peace and justice. I think for me these were really my first steps to work for social justice”. These instances further shaped her work as a Catholic feminist peace activist by demonstrating how social justice work and her life as a Catholic devoted to peace are inherently connected.

This inherent connection between religion, peace, feminism, and activism was also presented through physical forms of guidance. Two interviewees provided instances where their religious communities offered physical documents as guiding methods to more deeply connect their faith and peace activism, specifically how the former can serve as a best practice for the latter. For Katherine, a Catholic feminist peace activist located in the Midwest of the U.S., physical forms of guidance, in the form of a workbook, were provided. This text was given to her by her Priest and included questions, readings, and guidance to connect Catholicism to social justice further. Upon receiving this, Katherine responded with resistance to what she perceived to be more work, studying, and expectation. To this resistance, her Priest responded with the question, “don’t you think you kind of need to study this?” From this point on, Katherine acknowledged how she was able to take her understandings of religion and its connection to a deeper level, “I always had that tendency, but that was more where I started developing in it, being more grounded in it”. Jane, a Catholic peace activist located in London, who detailed her experience of leadership and involvement in programs that connect faith and social justice, also provided with such grounding work. In one particular group, she leads a nine-month program that aims to deepen one’s commitment to social justice issues. She describes this program as “transformative” and “wide-ranging” in terms of the topics and issues they cover. Such experiences provide me with physical indications of how implementing such a guidance system for religious feminist peace activists is being completed already and how it can be achieved on a larger scale.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I identified four ways in which the interviewees drew on their beliefs and experiences from their lives, specifically how this influenced their practices as feminist peace activists and the way they are bringing this kind of activism to people outside of feminism or the peace movement. In the first theme, *Interconnectedness and Mainstream Integration*, the interviewees drew on their experience of connecting their peace activist values to other aspects of their lives. Points of interconnection occurred in their faith, daily lifestyle, environmental impact, political responsibility, and their engagement with issues of race. Then this tied into mainstream integration, with activists sharing how they are implementing their feminist peace activist practices within institutions such as higher education, churches, and the family. The second theme, *Support and Challenges from Peers, Family and Friends*, identifies how having support or resistance from personal relationships can affect feminist peace activist practices. Negative experiences of living a life as a feminist peace activist can result in a pressure to compromise in order to maintain familial connections, seen as an act of peace act itself, or loss of personal connections and relationships entirely in order to maintain their activist work. However, not all of my interviewees have had such challenging interactions with their support networks. Instead, there have been exceptional instances of support and the development of intimate communities that thrive because of shared religious feminist peace values. Overall, the interviewees found space to maintain both their peace activism and relationships depending on the support they received. The third theme, *Religious Peace Education*, identifies areas of religious origins such as the story of Jesus, history of Quaker descent, and the Buddhist tradition of nonviolence as areas the interviewees have drawn on to find confidence, comfort and perseverance in order to practice in line with these examples. The fourth theme, *Social Justice Practices*, shows the interviewees drawing on broad ideological fundamentals such as

morality and other social justice movements to find alternative ways of practising and connecting their activist groups to mainstream society. What I found most compelling about these themes was the desire to connect their peace activist practices to the world, beyond connection, there was a sense of wanting to share their knowledge and experiences with others. This sharing occurred in many forms, with my thesis being an additional avenue to share their lived knowledge with others. This desire to share reminded me of the last question I asked my interviewees was, “do you think sustainable peace is possible?” because both my question and the generous sharing of their own lives as feminist peace activists are rooted in the idea of hope for the possibility of a more peaceful future.

Chapter 6

Concluding Remarks: What I Found, Future Research, Value, Limitation, and Reflection

This thesis has examined how self-identified feminist peace activists understand their activism and identity as it relates to Christianity and their practice. To investigate this, I conducted a thematic analysis based on semi-structured interviews with thirty-seven peace activist women. I asked questions derived from common themes in recent literature such as community and identity, but I also ensured the participants led each conversation and spoke about the topics they thought were most relevant. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this thesis addresses two related, yet distinct, sets of themes regarding how these feminist peace activists understand their identities and activism in their lives. Chapter 4 discusses how these women understand the development of their activism and how they manage it internally, as part of their sense of self, and in exploring these issues also introduces and focuses on the most surprising and prevalent subject in this research: religion. Chapter 5 moves outwards, asking how their activist ideals have affected aspects outside of themselves, including their relationships to family and community, and how they ‘do’ their activism.

Looking within themselves, as described in Chapter 4, the participants talked about their paths to feminist peace activism and what they drew on as inspiration and guidance through their work. It was clear from my in-depth conversations/interviews with each feminist peace activist that their paths to peace activism were not always straightforward. Yet, participants all described, in some way, the role of peace and feminism as a salient place of interconnectedness. The centrality of community and family was the topic most often addressed, and the most common form of community was faith-based organisations, groups,

and networks. Some participants included a deeper connection to activism linked to their ancestry and the history of activism in their faith.

However, the participants experienced conflicts within both their religious beliefs and their feminist peace activist ideologies, and many described having to find a way to hold onto both identities, actively. Sometimes this depended on how feminist their work or community environment was, and how open they could be in their feminist values. However, even if their values were not accepted, there was a sense that they needed to remain in their community to provide a feminist voice in a non-feminist, or not explicitly feminist, arena. Holding onto both sets of ideologies also came in the form of finding evidence within their religion to support their feminist beliefs. Rereading, or queering the Bible with a feminist perspective, allowed them to find the space they needed to identify with both sets of beliefs and defuse the internal conflict. For some activists, understanding Jesus as a feminist peace activist helped them to expand on this idea by providing comfort in their own radical beliefs and actions, especially under challenging circumstances. Yet even with all the challenges of uniting two conflicting identities, there was an overwhelming sense of hope. This was not just hope for themselves in their activist work, but hope for sustainable peace. It was this hope that helped to motivate a continued effort. They believed that if they were still hopeful, then sustained peace was still possible, and if sustainable peace was possible, then there is hope. Because this process was self-fulfilling, it was more important to believe. Hope thus became more than an emotion, but also an important tool of resistance, as well as a strategy for change, and sustainable peace. ‘Hope’ enabled them to continue their activism even in the most challenging times.

With these internalised understanding of the self in mind, Chapter 5 extends the reach of their activism and ideologies outward to others, and the world around them. For my interviewees, feminist peace activism was not just a specific set of actions carried out, it was

integrated with every part of life. It influenced their everyday choices, such as buying local goods or shopping in environmentally conscious shops. They also took their activist beliefs into their places of work and to their personal relationships. There were times which they received support from their families and friends, as demonstrated through verbal support and allowing space for their activism. Participants also described challenges which had a significant impact on their lives, and I realised that these “challenges” were often responded to with actions and solutions. This highlighted the importance of maintaining peace within their own lives as an essential aspect of their activism. One participant,¹⁵ in particular, exemplified keeping peace within her life through choosing to surround herself with like-minded peace focused individuals.

Many interviewees made purposeful and concrete connections between their activism and mainstream society to create a more significant impact. One person who did this was Clare, who was able to connect her anti-prison industrial complex work into her university classroom setting. She was able to teach her students the importance of anti-racist work and incorporate theoretical knowledge and activism production by having her students write to people in their local prison.¹⁶ Similar to Clare, other participants detailed how they translated ideas from their religious background into points of connection to their non-religious communities. This includes Roseanne, who was able to use her Quaker values as a starting point in creating a secular peace camp for children in her local community. Through this practice, she was able to create tangible resources that people could utilise without centring them around faith or religion.¹⁷ This strategy not only included what they understood as guidance from Jesus but also drew from examples of religiously based activism, specifically from Catholic, Quaker and Buddhist traditions. Other activists forged links to social justice

¹⁵ Example of Lilith is mentioned on page 158.

¹⁶ Example of Clare first mentioned on page 170.

¹⁷ This idea was first introduced on page 172.

movements like Moral Mondays in order to make an impact on the world.¹⁸ The foundation of this idea is based on how everyone's peace is connected, so it is crucial to act on all of the issues in the world.

6.1 Values and Limitations

The most significant value of this research is its centring of activism within academia and the sharing of both the everyday holistic actions and extraordinary experiences of the thirty-seven feminist peace activists I had the opportunity to interview. The centring of feminist peace activist narratives and my listening practices make this a unique compilation of academia, activism, and analysis. This research functions as an activist piece by aiming to bring about social change through increased awareness of the experiences, practices, and goals of feminist peace activists in the U.S. and the U.K. My research strives to not only inform my readers of the significance of feminist peace activism but also functions to identify hope as a tool not just of survival and resistance, but of change. Through active listening, I worked to centre the voices of the women I interviewed and the issues that they found to be most important to their lives as feminists doing peace work.

The relatability of this research to fields of academic study outside of Women's Studies, such as Peace Studies, Religious Studies, Sociology, Queer Studies, Human Rights departments, and Social Justice Studies, is a positive implication of my interdisciplinary research background. My work's ability to influence academics in fields outside of my own aligns with my feminist values and the inherent interconnectedness of the research I have completed. I also perceive the creation of an extensive bibliography related to feminist peace activism as a value that can serve as an additional resource for both students and researchers in the field. While this might not initially seem a significant value, as a teacher, I have seen the impact a thorough reading or reference list can have for budding academics. Although I

¹⁸ This was introduced by Rhonda on page 191.

have aimed to make this research as accessible as possible, the format of a PhD thesis limits its overall readability and accessibility for most people. As I have had significant time to sit with my transcriptions and analysis, I realise that there is still so much more material to draw on and room to expand. This research could turn into an abundance of resources that could be more useful for both activists and academics. As a teacher, I plan to incorporate my research into appropriate courses and workshops that are related to feminist peace activism or research within both academic and non-academic settings. Since my interviewees have expressed their excitement via email about this being published, I am confident that they will share this with their personal networks. While there are the traditional academic avenues for PhD thesis expansion such as writing scholarly journal articles from my research and then referencing the academic work of my peers, I have found myself desiring a more creative approach to this work. Over the past few years, due to continuous encouragement from peers, I have considered creating a public blog or social media account dealing with issues surrounding feminist peace work. However, I have not found a niche or space that felt comfortable or best highlighted the kind of topics and conversations I want to have. Instead, I am now considering creating a podcast; one that would interview activists on their causes, the movement, responses to global events, and serve as an additional teaching platform to share my knowledge and perspectives as both an academic and activist. This creative medium would allow me the opportunity to disseminate the findings of this research to a broader audience; expanding beyond the original scope of this research. What I find most exciting about a podcast is my ability to create connecting online platforms to receive feedback, engage in community discussions, and provide direct links and resources regarding feminism, social justice, and activism in general in one developed and interconnected space.

The most significant limitations of this research are the inability of these findings to be directly applied to all of feminist peace activism. While I do believe many of these

activists' perspectives and experiences will be relatable to fellow feminist peace activists, these are all intimate accounts of their own lives and navigations of their multiple identities while completing feminist peace work. This leads to another significant limitation, primarily the limits my personal financial and emotional situation, and time. While my research was at the centre of my life for six years, this was an entirely self-funded endeavour, one that was completed mainly in isolation (I did receive substantial support, feedback, and guidance from my supervisor), and occurred over a particularly challenging time in my life. Regardless of these limitations, the initial aim of delving deep into the lives of feminist peace activists in the U.S. and the U.K. was achieved, and the connections I formed with my participants were far more substantial than I could have initially hoped.

Another limitation with this research is the lack of diversity represented within the sample of participants. Although forty of the one hundred fifty organisations I approached were BAME lead, the people who responded to my calls for participants were primarily white. Upon reflection, I realised that my inclusion criteria of those who identify as Feminist Peace Activist could have been the primary reason for this. Initially, I thought of the overarching terms of feminist and peace would implicitly include many subcategories, making an all-inclusive call for participants. I realised that these terms are not as all-encompassing as I first thought, and they may have spoken to a white and Christian population. Feminism has a history of being primarily visibly white, and still holds this connotation today (Burgin, 2016). Similarly, the term peace is often connected with religious beliefs, and within the context of the United States and the United Kingdom this was Christianity (Norris, 2014; Danielson, 2017). Had I broken these concepts down into the encompassing beliefs that I had in mind, according to my own definitions, the sample of participants may have turned out different. If I had used terms such as social justice activist, environmentalist, anti-racist - all aspects of feminism and peace, then it is possible that

people who shared these identities may have felt included enough to respond as well. Instead, I have completed research that focuses on Christian Feminist Peace Activists who are white, which is not the representation of the wider peace movement I was hoping to capture.

Although I found important themes related to navigating these multiple identities internally and expressing them externally for this group of participants, the scope of this research was more restricted than intended, and potentially less generalizable without conducting more research which includes these expanded definitions of feminism and peace.

It is essential to note that this realisation and process has created a lasting impact on my process as a researcher, and the significance of language. Moving forward I intend to minimise this exclusion of BAME participation in my research by incorporating demographic information in my call for participants, providing expansive definitions of research terms in this call, and being more forward with my own identity and intention to centre marginalised voices such as my own in my research. Therefore, while the lack of racial diversity is a great limitation of this research, it has served as an impetus for change in my future research endeavours. Additionally, it has provided me with the opportunity to reflect on what this research is and what it is not; it is a complex multigenerational analysis of white Christian feminist peace activists in the U.S. and U.K. whose experiences and identities relate to and explore a multitude of themes/issues such as peace, violence, gender, and faith, but they cannot speak to the experiences of people in the BAME communities, or any other marginalised group not specifically researched in this study.

6.2 My Research and Future Work

There is no denying I conducted this research before a drastic shift in both U.S. and U.K. politics and social climates. The election of Trump and the passing of Brexit directly impacted feminist peace activism, and I believe would have played a large part in my

interviews. While these events were on the horizon at the time of my interviews, and some of my interviewees did mention these issues, there was a sense that they were not a realistic possibility. In many ways, I am glad I conducted my research right before these events. Mainly, because the idea of my entire thesis centring around the 45th President of the U.S. and the U.K.'s decision to leave the European Union sounds less than desirable and potentially less hope-filled than the research I ended up completing. However, the deep connection I have to immigration, particularly of Latino and Mexicano communities in the U.S. would have resulted in an immensely valuable and challenging research project. Ultimately, I was challenged by my research in another way; facing my religious background and my critical feelings towards the Catholic Church resulted in a deeply engaging and healing process that helped me to share the significance of Christianity and faith in the lives of feminist peace activists in the U.S. and U.K.

Shortly after completing the interviews, I knew that I wanted to extend my research on the concept of online interviewing as a feminist research practice. The positive experience for both my participants and me highlighted how this method, which I initially perceived as a 'lesser-than' method in comparison to in-person interviews, as a valuable and perhaps better for some alternative to traditional in-person qualitative interviewing practices. There is significant research on best practices for online interviewing (Bartlett, 2011; Fielding, Lee & Blank, 2008; Hine, 2005). However, the research on online interviewing as a feminist research method is limited, with no in-depth study completed on the connection between online interviewing, feminism, environmentalism, peace, and social justice, and is a link I would like to investigate further based on my own interviewing experiences.

Parallel to research on online interviewing, is the topic of media, mainly social media's influence on activism. Although the role of media was an interview question topic that I asked each of my participants about, the response to this question was by far the most

limited. With twenty-six of the participants replying with one word, or one sentence answers about their usage of or opinions on the role of media in feminist peace activism and with the remaining eleven citing examples of activist work they have heard of positively utilising the media for activist work. Due to the limited response, I decided not to include this information in my analysis. However, with recent trends in mainstream examples of positive social media usage for created social change, I argue that there are space and continued benefit to more deeply researching this topic. Two particularly impactful and public instances are the U.S. congressional democratic campaign and election of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, whose usage of social media as a way to connect and inform her constituency has been both highly criticised and praised (Gold, 2019; Ingber, 2019), and Greta Thunberg, the Nobel Peace Prize nominated environmental activist whose continued school strike for climate change has made international headlines and frequently trends on social media (BBC, 2019). Their connection and different approach to social change were highlighted in a June 2019 article in the Guardian, which suggests that there is a “generational rise” on the forefront that could “change history” (Brockes, 2019). In future research, I would make social media usage for social change the primary focus of my interviews; in particular, I would like to do community participatory research with school aged children who are peace activists. I hope that a refined research topic and question would result in activists’ who have had direct experience with social media activism agreeing to participate.

Due to the significant socio-political changes in both the U.S. and the U.K. since the interviews, I have considered the value of completing a follow-up study with my participants. I envision this continuation project as a reflective practice for the feminist peace activists. To incorporate such reflective practices, I would allow each woman to read their transcriptions from the original interview and share with me how, if at all, their responses would now be different. The addition of new questions such as: has your activism changed in the past six

years? Or are there any issues/causes you are focussing on now that you had not been the last time we spoke? Reflecting on my original interviews and challenges in analysis, I would also find it helpful to ask about specific direct actions and resources they would recommend for people new to social justice work.

Regarding future methodologies, I would like to incorporate into my research photovoice and walking/mobile methods. Photovoice is a method I had originally wanted to incorporate into this research but decided against due to confidentiality concerns. My desire to utilise photovoice is due to its ability to create an impactful storytelling element to this area of research. The incorporation of photographs of both the activists and the imagery they feel best represents feminist peace activist would add an additional aspect to the overall narrative of what it means to be a feminist peace activist in the U.S. or U.K. Walking/Mobile Methodology, which was first introduced to me at the University of York by Dr Maggie O'Neill, and utilises the natural conversations that occur while on a walk with participants, appeals to me as a way to engage my feminist research values further (O'Neill & Stenning, 2014). By encouraging the interviewees to choose a walking path or location, a walking/mobile method would help me also dismantle the hierarchy between the interviewee and the interviewer, and assist in the development of a community-led research project. The incorporation of significance locations to feminist and/or peace movements would also provide space in my research for the interviewees to reflect on their experiences as activists.

6.3 Final Thoughts

It was not until the end of this whole research process that the magnitude of the work I have completed and my relationship to it became apparent. The women that I spoke with all live hectic lives, with a significant portion of their time going towards ending violence. Their decision to talk to me, while humbling at the time of their agreement, feels all the more

significant since I have had such a substantial amount of time to sit and listen to their words. The connections between their unique stories ended up creating a shared narrative that formed the foundation of my research. My connection to them deepened as I realised that I was not only researching feminist peace activists but in many ways discovering my place within academia through this work.

I had moments of despair throughout my PhD, which increased and intensified over the six years, with the last year in particular feeling near impossible to complete. As I write this, I am still filled with trepidation thinking over the hurdles, both personal and academic, I had to overcome to bring the experiences of these thirty-seven women to the world. There were times where I was convinced that academia was no longer a place for me, or “people like me” as I found myself telling everyone. I am acknowledging this here because it feels reflective of both my twelve-year journey of being an outsider within academia and the overall narrative I listened to, analysed, and shared in this research. Most of the women I spoke to shared moments of great personal struggle within the feminist peace movement, but they still believed in their organisations, activism, and the movement. This belief in peace despite the current levels of violence occurring was most often attributed as hope.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, there was a nearly resounding “yes” to the question is sustainable peace possible?¹⁹ It is this possibility, rather than a guarantee, that creates space for the feminist peace activists I spoke with to keep on with their work. Similarly, in the lowest moments, my self-perception, feelings towards academia, and my research itself were apathetic at times and pessimistic at their worst. However, I began to realise that these feelings were rooted more in ‘imposter narratives’ than they were in reality; they were how I felt about myself but not the truth about my prospects as an academic (Studdard, 2002). My value within the academy, particularly the field of Women’s Studies, is not only measured by

¹⁹ On page 151, Chapter 4, I discuss how thirty-five out of thirty-seven women responded “yes” to the question, is sustainable peace possible?

the literature that I produce but the frequently limited (in academia) identities I embody. This centres on my first-generation status (U.S. citizen, high school graduate, and university graduate), my experiences and identity as a teenage mother, Latina, and homeless youth, and a multitude of other experiences, titles, and identities that statistically make my presence in a PhD program less probable (American Council on Education, 2018). All of this is to say, regardless if something ‘comes from this’ research or degree, it was worth the struggle, because similar to my activism, I will continue to participate in feminist peace work and actions regardless of whether they make immediate changes: it is essential to my values, politics, and the narrative of who belongs in the world. This work and my place within the academy has inherent value, and its existence is feminist, radical, and entrenched in social justice work.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Themes	Questions
Biography/Identity	<p>What brought you to peace activism?</p> <p>When did these issues or related issues become important/real to you? When did you get involved with your current organisation? What drew you to this group/issue in particular?</p> <p>What does it mean to you to be a peace activist? How does it, if at all, shape/influence your identity? How does your role/identity as a peace activist influence other aspects of your life?</p>
Peace Activism	<p>What is your definition of peace activism/work? What issues are central to your peace activism? Any that are less obvious to the outside world? How do you think sustainable peace can be achieved? At the individual, political, and social levels. For women who have been peace activists for a substantial amount of time (15+ years), how has peace work shifted and changed over the years in response to each war or political environment?</p>
Feminism	<p>What does feminism mean to you?</p> <p>Is the peace activist organisation/community you work for/with feminist in any way? If yes, how does this affect their activism choices/practices? Are there any difficulties of</p>

	<p>navigating within a peace organisation that does not explicitly identify as feminist, as a feminist yourself, or vice versa?</p> <p>How, if at all, is the term feminism being used or avoided to further the cause of peace activist work?</p>
Community	<p>Are you part of a peace community? If so, what role does this community play in your life? What are the benefits of such communities? What are the negatives? What defines a community? How are these communities formed?</p> <p>Do you think peace organisations are inclusive to minority members of society in general? Yours in particular?</p> <p>What form of organisation and leadership occur in peace activist spaces and are they equitable? Please explain.</p> <p>How are conflicts managed and what role does communication have in ensuring longevity of peace work?</p>
Media	<p>How has the usage of media (social, broadcasts, etc.) benefited and/or harmed peace work? Are there concerns of media portrayal when active in the community? Do you feel that you are competing for media coverage? How, if at all, is the topic of feminism addressed in regard to media portrayal/image in the decision-making process?</p>

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

PhD Research Project: The Peace Activist: Women's Paths to Action

Information Sheet for Participants

About the Researcher:

My name is O'Dessa Monnier and I am a PhD researcher at the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of York. Past research has included interviewing ordained Baptist women and their experience becoming ordained in the United States. For additional information about me or my research, please feel free to email me at bom501@york.ac.uk. The contact details for my Supervisor and my Head of Department are also provided if you have any additional questions or concerns about this project.

My Supervisor is Dr Ann Kaloski-Naylor and her email address is:

ann.kaloskinaylor@york.ac.uk

My Head of Department is Prof. Vicki Robinson and her email address is:

vicki.robinson@york.ac.uk

About the Research:

The aim of this research project is to position the place of feminism within current peace activism within the United States, and the United Kingdom. Additionally, I hope to see if there is a connection between the role of childhood experiences/influences and their current peace activist work and identity. Particular areas of interest include:

- how, if at all, the term feminism is being used or avoided to further the cause of peace activist work
- difficulties of navigating within a peace organisation that does not explicitly identify as feminist, as a feminist yourself, or vice versa
- women who have been peace activists for a substantial amount of time, how peace work has shifted and changed over the years in response to each war or political

environment

- how peace organisations are inclusive to minority members of society
- what form of organisation and leadership occur in peace activist spaces and are they equitable
- how are conflicts managed and what role does communication have in ensuring longevity of peace work
- the concerns of media portrayal when active in the communities and how, if at all, the topic of feminism is addressed in this decision-making process
- how experiences as a child shaped one's path to activism and how this can be applied to additional academic disciplines outside of Women's Studies.

The Participants:

I would like to complete interviews with women who are currently active in peace work; any length of time as an activist will be valuable to this research project. Participants can be active in specific peace activist organisations or do work on an individual level.

It is expected that interviews will take approximately two hours; however, this is dependent on how much participants wish to discuss and share with the interviewer. The location and time of the interviews will be decided with each participant based on their availability. The time frame for the interviewing stage of the project is between June and November, 2016.

Important details:

As a PhD researcher of the University, I will follow all of the University's policies on good and ethical research practice. This project has been reviewed by the University's ethics committee. The following information will help you make a fully informed decision about whether to participate. Once you have read all the information, and asked me any questions, please sign the accompanying consent form.

Interviews will be recorded where participants give their consent (you may still participate

without consenting to being recorded). The benefit of recording interviews is to allow me to have the most accurate account of your responses, this is essential for the analysis portion of the research. The recordings will not be retained beyond this project and will be deleted from portable devices at the very earliest opportunity. For Skype interviews, the portable recording device will only record the voices of the participants, not the video itself. Once the interview is completed all history of the Skype conversation will be deleted. The Skype interview data will be handled in the same ethical way as the in-person interviews.

All transcripts will be completed by me and will be verbatim transcriptions of the interview recordings. No other person will have access to either the recordings or the transcripts. The transcripts will not be published at any time, though some verbatim quotes may be used as part of the thesis. Transcripts will be anonymised, so your name will not appear in the text. I guarantee anonymity and will strictly adhere to pseudonyms throughout, omitting any information that might identify you or a third party, including employment details. No third party will have access to any data collected.

Any personal data collected for this project will only be used for this research, will be securely stored and only kept for as long as required for this project.

Once the data is collected and analysed, I will offer to send you a full version or a summary of the results via email.

No form of compensation will be provided for participating in this research project. There are no intended risks for participating in this study. All information discussed will be at the discretion of the participant. Participants do not have to answer any interview question they feel uncomfortable doing so.

Please note that everything said during the interview is confidential and will be made anonymous by the researcher. However, in the event that you disclose participation in criminal activity during the interview, the researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality of

said information if the research records are requested as part of a criminal investigation. By signing the consent form you are agreeing to participate, however, you may withdraw this consent at any time before, during, and after the interviews before January 1, 2017. When you withdraw consent, you are asking that none of your interview information be included in this research project. All data at this point will be deleted.

Appendix 3: Interview Format

Chart i: U.S. Interview Format

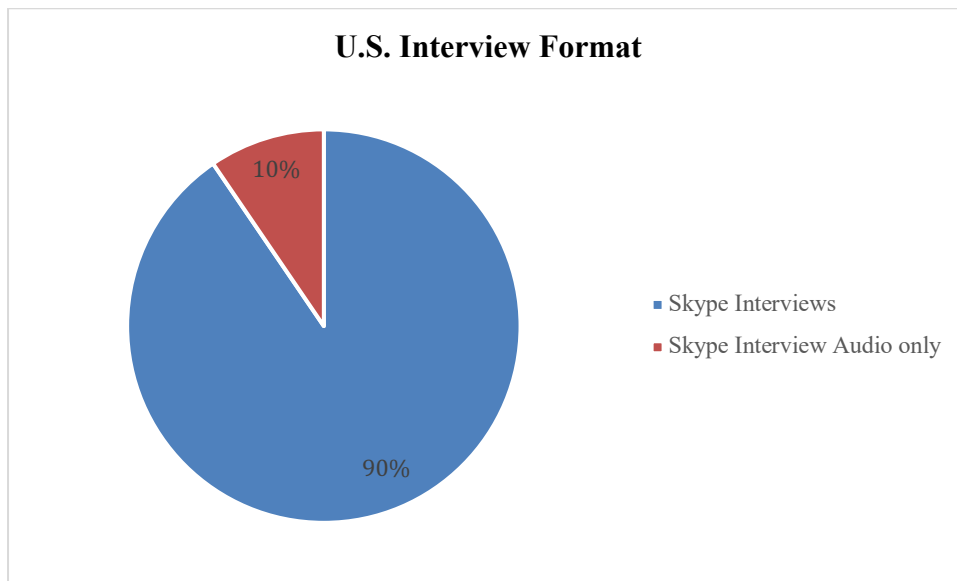
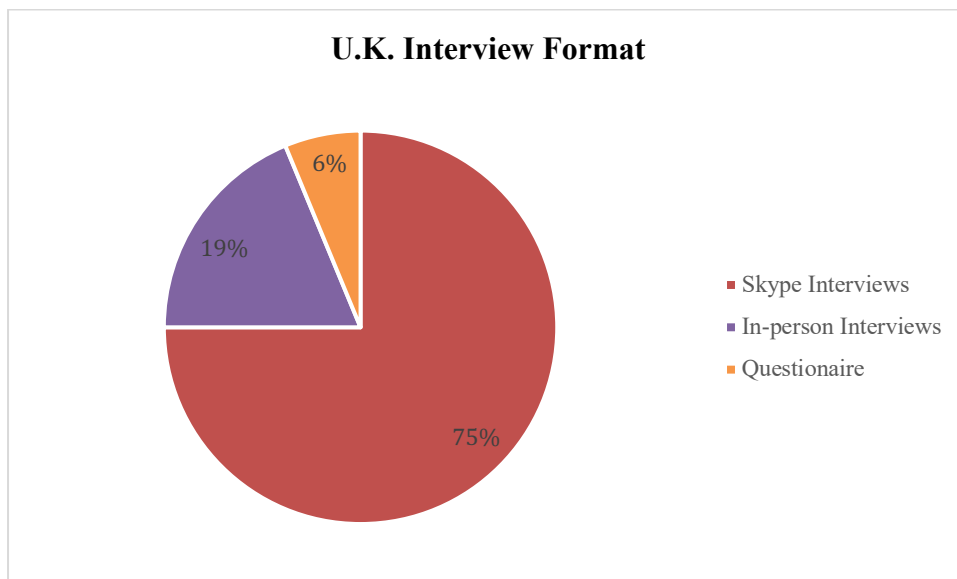


Chart ii: U.K. Interview Format



Appendix 4: Participant Demographics

Although most of my participants are ‘ordinary peace activists’, because of the nature of their work they are often well-known on their local communities or workplace, and some participants could be easily identified. Therefore, for reasons of privacy and security, and as requested by most participants, I do not offer detailed biographies, and have presented full location details as a chart unattached to individuals. As a few participants did not want their local place of residence to be identified, this has been omitted from chart 4: iv.

Chart i: U.S. Location Demographics

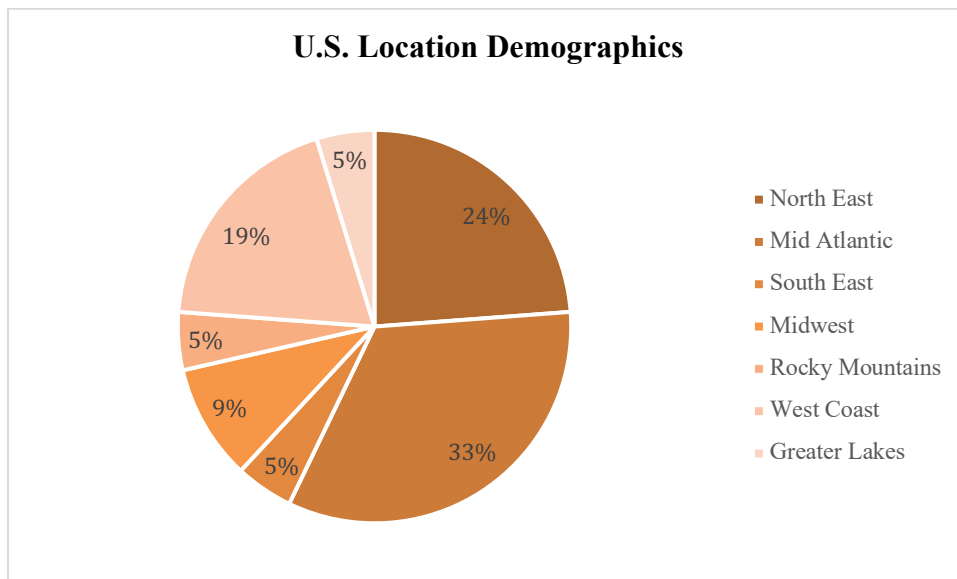


Chart ii: U.K. Location Demographics

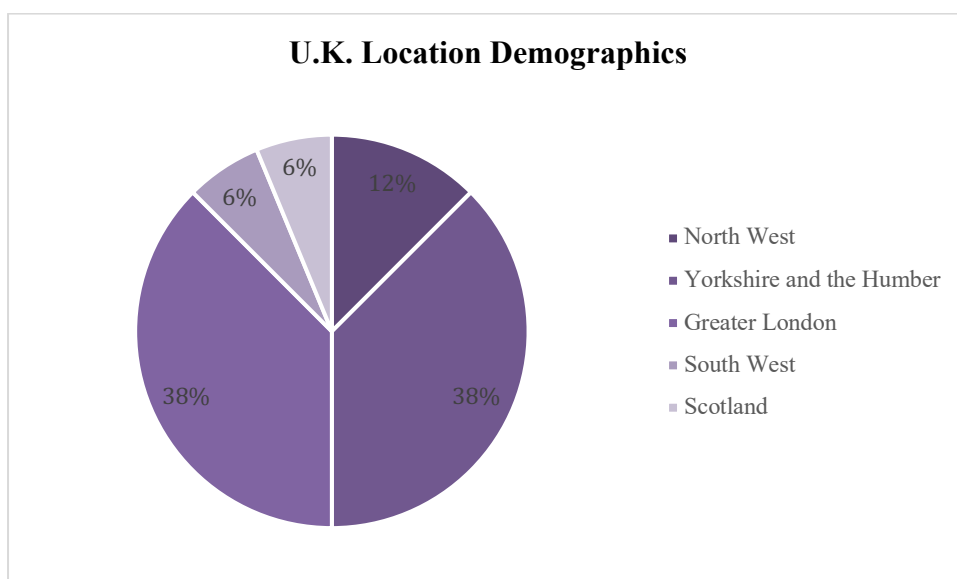


Chart iii: U.S. Religious Affiliation

U.S. Participants

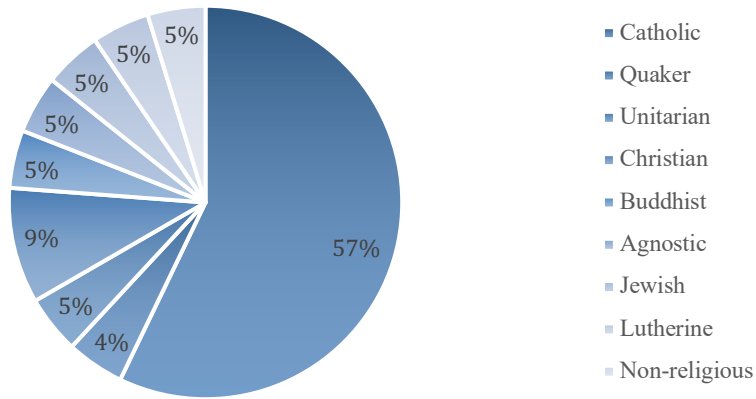


Chart iv: U.K. Religious Affiliation

U.K. Participants

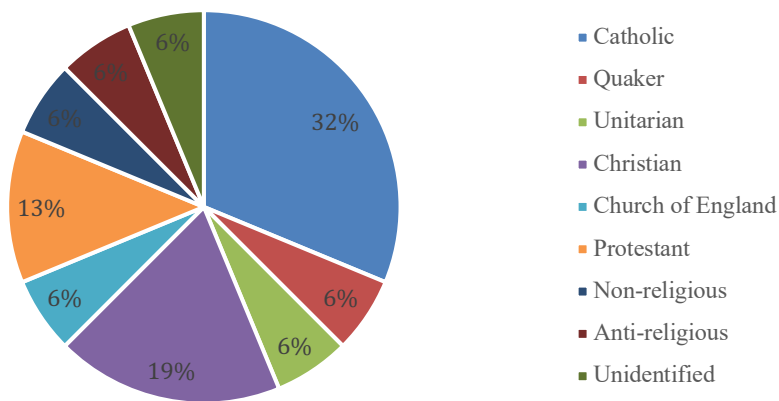


Chart v: Brief Biography

Participant Pseudonym	Brief Biography
Jennifer	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: East Coast, U.S. Age: Under 30
Patricia	Religion/Faith: Irish-Catholic Location: U.S. Age: 65+
Alice	Religion/Faith: Church of England Location: U.K. Age: 65+
Ruth	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: West Coast, U.S. Age: 30-40
Alexandria	Religion/Faith: Christian Location: U.S. Age: 65+
Henrietta	Religion/Faith: Christian Location: U.K. Age: 65+
Lilith	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: East Coast, U.S. Age: 40-50
Jessica	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: Appalachia, U.S. Age: Under 30
Lisa	Religion/Faith: Buddhist Location: U.S. Age: 30-40
Sybil	Religion/Faith: Jewish Location: U.S. Age: 65+
Hannah	Religion/Faith: Agnostic Location: U.S. Age: 30-40
Imogen	Religion/Faith: Anti-religious Location: Northern England, U.K. Age: 30-40

Mary	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: East Coast, U.S. Age: 65+
Rebecca	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: East Coast, U.S. Age: 30-40
Clare	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: Midwest, U.S. Age: 40-50
Lucy	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: U.K. Age: 40-50
Charlotte	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: Midwest, U.S. Age: 30-40
Harriette	Religion/Faith: Unitarian Location: U.K. Age: 65+
Helga	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: London, U.K. Age: 50-60
Juliette	Religion/Faith: Christian Location: West Coast, U.S. Age: 50-60
Abigail	Religion/Faith: Lutheran Location: West Coast, U.S. Age: 65+
Emma	Religion/Faith: Protestant Location: London, U.K. Age: 30-40
Monica	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: North Yorkshire, U.K. Age: 40-50
Heather	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: Cornwall, U.K. Age: 50-60
Jane	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: London, U.K. Age: 50-60

Meredith	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: U.S. Age: 40-50
Norah	Religion/Faith: Non-religious Location: East Coast, U.S. Age: Under 30
Martha	Religion/Faith: Non-religious Location: North Yorkshire, U.K. Age: 65+
Rhonda	Religion/Faith: Unitarian Location: U.S. Age: 65+
Morgan	Religion/Faith: Protestant Location: Manchester, U.K. Age: 65+
Zelda	Religion/Faith: Christian Location: U.K. Age: 30-40
Roseanne	Religion/Faith: Quaker Location: New England, U.S. Age: 65+
Elizabeth	Religion/Faith: Christian Location: West Midlands, U.K. Age: 30-40
Winifred	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: East Coast, U.S. Age: 30-40
Sally	Religion/Faith: Quaker Location: U.K. Age: 65+
Carol	Religion/Faith: Christian Location: London, U.K. Age: 65+
Katherine	Religion/Faith: Catholic Location: Midwest, U.S. Age: 65+

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