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An Exploration of Employment Services for Survivors of Domestic Violence in the Region of Waterloo

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by

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Abstract

The ability of survivors of domestic violence to secure employment once they leave their vulnerable situations has been identified in the existing knowledge base as a significant issue, and one that urgently needed to be addressed. This qualitative applied social policy research study was undertaken to derive recommendations that could improve the current state of employment services available to women who had survived domestic violence residing in the Region of Waterloo. This was accomplished by determining which employment services align with the needs of a survivor as they began to seek employment. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect information from six survivors and six social service providers delivering employment services. A thematic analysis was then used to analyze the data and assign meaning to reoccurring descriptive patterns or emerging phenomenon in relation to the focal research question. It was found that the survivor community operating in this geographic area has developed a high level of resiliency, which has enabled this population to successfully access available employment services to aid their employment search. It was also determined that governmental agencies, large-scale non-for-profit establishments, community-based associations, and other partnering organizations mandated to deliver employment services within the Region of Waterloo have designated significant financial and human resources to support individuals through their employment search journey. Overall, it was recommended that social service providers: integrate additional ongoing support activities into their service-delivery models, provide specialized training to front-line workers assigned who work with survivors of domestic violence, and promote their services on an increasing basis to generate public awareness and foster a more inclusive community.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

The efficacy of available employment services will directly impact the economic security of a survivor of domestic violence (SDV). Economic security can be defined as the availability of a steady and reliable source of income to sustain daily living and allow for strategic planning (Collins, 2011). An employment service, for the purposes of this study, was defined as a program or service that offers: employment programs mandated to assist SDVs, employment related training (e.g. interview skills), employability coaching, writing assistance, career exploration services or job search services. Additionally, domestic violence was defined as unsolicited physical or emotional behaviours used by one person in a relationship to control or harm the other.

Being able to establish economic security is a critical issue that affects SDVs as they weigh the risks of leaving their vulnerable situations and entering an emergency shelter facility. Achieving economic security is dependent on: "the availability of 1) jobs that provide a sufficient wage and opportunities for career advancement, 2) education or job training programs that allow an individual to gain the skills necessary to obtain a job that pays a living wage, and 3) social and economic supports, including child support, child care, housing, transportation and public benefits" (Correia, 2000, pg.4). Thus, as the availability of employment and economic support systems empower a SDV to achieve economic security, employment services should also be readily accessible to optimize their ability to achieve economic security. However, research clarifying the relationship between SDV needs and their alignment with available employment services in the Region of Waterloo has not yet been conducted.

This region is home to a diverse range of communities and industries, including world-leading companies, innovators and key economic clusters such as agriculture-food, autos, finance, life sciences, tourism and information and communication technologies. According to *Family Violence in Canada – A Statistical Profile*, Waterloo Region has a low rate of occurrence of domestic violence, with less than 1 percent of the population reporting domestic violence to the police in 2010. Of the 1,265 reported occurrences, 78 percent were reported by women and 22 percent were reported by men. However, less than one quarter of victims of domestic violence report the situation to the police (Statistics Canada, 2011). Collecting information from the Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region (WCSWR) provides an additional method of tracking domestic violence rates independent of police data. The WCSWR Annual Report for 2012-2013 stated that they received 1376 crisis calls and served 906 women through outreach. A map of the Region of Waterloo has been included for the reader's reference.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this study was to explore the merits and challenges of existing employment services available for SDVs operating in the Region of Waterloo. Through completing this exploration, broader recommendations that could improve existing employment services in this geographic region were produced. These recommendations were informed through the completion of a literature review and in-depth telephone interviews with SDVs and social service providers (SSPs) operating within the Region of Waterloo who deliver these services.

The deliverables of this research study included:

- Promoting knowledge-sharing between SDVs and SSPs;

- Empowering SDVs by operationalizing their stories into recommendations for SSPs; and

- Enabling SSPs operating in the Region of Waterloo to better understand the complex needs of SDVs when developing employment services, programs, and resources.

1.2 Motivations of the Researcher

As a researcher, I believe that research should benefit the public and generate knowledge that benefits society at large. As a public servant employed by the federal government, I believe that the choices that decision-makers implement should be properly informed by empirically supported, research-based evidence. Additionally, the results produced from this study will be useful to me in my professional role working in a regional development agency. I am passionate about establishing processes that enhance the quality of social services available to Canadian citizens and have identified that there is a clear disconnect between the shifting needs of SDVs and adaptive ability of SSPs to respond to these needs.

I have also chosen to pursue this frame of research as a result of my past experience engaging with SDVs. I have personally witnessed the devastating short-term and long-term impacts that domestic abuse can generate and am intrinsically motivated to use this research to help alleviate exacerbated situations. I truly do believe these women desire an opportunity as empowered individuals to reclaim their lives through a rewarding career that improves their economic security.

1.3 Social Location of the Researcher

My journey as a researcher did not begin until I began my graduate degree. I was very fortunate to be granted two different opportunities to work within research centres. My research skills were refined through these incubators and this positioned me well to complete this research

study. I also developed critical thinking capacity through networking with more experienced researchers. I am aware that writing a thesis and engaging in this research process has changed: who I am as a person, how I practice as a professional, and how I engage with others in everyday life. I learned that I derive deep fulfillment through constructing meaning with others. Additionally, although I see value in Western folk norms and values, as an artistic and philosophical person, I sometimes feel constrained by conservative or traditional quantitative research methodologies. I realized through completing a thesis that I gravitate towards qualitative methods as ideas and concepts are socially constructed through collaboration with others.

In terms of my social location, I gained a better understanding of my identity through completing this research study. I recognized that this study would inertly challenge me on both a personal and professional level. I am a Guyanese, middle-class young woman who has never personally experienced domestic violence. I have a great deal of experience working with SDVs but I realized that I did not share their experiences. My social location limited me in this sense as I had the privilege of being raised in a very functional and supportive nuclear family. However, I was exposed to domestic violence and its impact through external circumstances so I have personally experienced what it is like to support someone who has been subjected to domestic abuse.

I also have resided in the Region of Waterloo for 25 years so I have experienced what it is like to live in this community, access social services, and navigate the political landscape that governs economic priorities. I believe that these differences between myself and SDVs actually contributed to the study in an impactful way as it expanded my knowledge base and required me to adopt different ways of thinking.

I have also had the privilege of working in the private sector, federal public service, and academia. These experiences have granted me a broad range of knowledge regarding common

service delivery methodologies and project management processes. As a result, I was familiar with the challenges that SSPs were expressing and was able to relate to dominant discourses. During the interview process, I made a concerted effort to bracket my previously held assumptions and perceptions regarding these areas by using the Robin Gearing "bracketing" process (2004). By using this process, I became increasingly aware of my biases, opinions and subjective assessments. This enabled me to remain open-minded and partisan while conducting the interview with SSPs.

CHAPTER TWO
2. Literature Review

This literature review validated the importance of this study by providing an assessment that establishes the need for SDVs to access employment services once they choose to exit a vulnerable situation. It will also provide relevant information about current employment services that SDVs could access to secure employment.

2.1 Needs Assessment

The current scope of scholarly literature describes the physical and psychological effects of domestic violence, with most studies focusing on the immediate and short-term effects of domestic violence. However, SDVs also encounter long-term emotional and psychological symptoms that affect their ability to effectively perform occupational tasks. Domestic violence generally emerges as a barrier to employment and can be linked to unemployment and dependence on government-based social-assistance (Staggs, Long, Mason, Krishnan, & Riger, 2007). Due to the traumatic experience of violence, in some cases, these women can lack the ability or life skills to live independently in a community, which in turn can limit their ability to pursue various employment opportunities (Staggs, et al., 2007). Domestic violence can occur at all stages of life but for the

purposes of this study I chose to focus on SDVs who retained low economic status as they experience unique challenges as they try to secure employment.

Services available to victims of domestic violence typically include emergency housing, crisis counselling, and legal and financial assistance; however, there are limited services that focus on generating the life skills required to live independently. In a study conducted by Peterson (2004), participants reported three main categories of barriers that might prevent women from seeking help or accessing employment services. These challenges included: pressure to not talk about the situation, self-doubt and low self-esteem, and fear of perpetrator or desire to protect the perpetrator (Peterson, 2004). These psychological barriers suffered by SDVs can have a lasting impact on their ability to manage challenging situations, interact with others, or experience satisfactory career advancement (Collins, 2011). Thus, these barriers should be addressed concurrently as SDVs prepare to enter the workforce.

In a recent study, Brush (2000) completed a series of interviews with 122 participants of a program designed to educate SDVs about moving from social assistance to employment found that those who completed the program still had a difficult time securing employment. An even more disturbing finding was that 11 percent of all participants did not successfully complete the program. This study suggests that SDVs may experience other peripheral challenges that prohibit them from completing programs. In some cases, remaining in a vulnerable situation may prove to be a more fiscally responsible choice than transitioning and accepting social assistance, thereby living below the poverty line within the context of their situation (Bell, 2003). This is simply an unacceptable injustice that this population experiences and should be resolved urgently. Furthermore, research providing mechanisms to resolve barriers and improve employment services for SDVs in the

Region of Waterloo should be conducted as it has been identified as a significant gap in the existing knowledge-base.

2.2 Economic Options for SDVs

2.2.1 Social Service Provider Employment Services

In response to previous research studies identifying the short-term psychological effects of domestic violence, SSPs have established a number of services for SDVs at an economic disadvantage. General services related to developing economic literacy have been developed as a strategy to educate women about economics and finances. The purpose of these services is to increase an individual's knowledge about economic systems, financial planning, and budgeting, and is considered as a first step in working towards individual economic security (Staggs, 2007). As well, general employability or placement programs have typically been used to provide women with training in communication, job searching, writing employment related documents, and interview skills (Staggs, 2007). It is imperative that SSPs are able to access information regarding the impact of domestic violence on employment programs to optimize their service's efficacy for SDVs.

2.2.2 Training Programs

Training and grant-based programs have recently been considered a viable economic option for SDVs considering the current labour market trends and employer needs. Training programs are based on the premise that ongoing learning is one of the cornerstones of an engaged workforce. As a result, this premise is operationalized through providing support for learning activities that enhance an individual's capacity to perform their future role.

For example, the YWCA in Toronto is currently delivering a training program that helps women to improve their employment skills. Women are able to take classes to achieve their high

school equivalency diploma, improve their English, enhance their computer skills, or learn a skilled trade (YWCA, 2013). These types of training programs enable women to reconnect with their interests, abilities, and develop marketable skills. However, there is very little available literary scholarship available exploring the effectiveness of these programs to determine if they generate substantive positive impacts on the lives of SDVs.

2.2.3 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial behaviour encourages individuals to embrace change and capitalize on new opportunities. Changes in the economy and the restructuring of labour markets, in terms of employee qualifications and available jobs, have raised the profile and importance of entrepreneurship within Canadian economy (Nwoye, 2011). Research studies have shown that the participation of women in entrepreneurship is significant, but participation varies significantly from country to country and that women's participation rates across countries is measurable at about two-thirds that of men (Minniti, 2003).

However, women may experience challenges when pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. The greatest deterrent to women pursuing entrepreneurial activities are oppressive stereotypes (Nwoye, 2011). As well, women entrepreneurs may experience a lack of networks, assistance, and mentors. Many financial institutions also display a discriminatory attitude towards women borrowers as they are categorized as high-risk (Nwoye, 2011). Thus, women can be required to meet unreasonable criteria when a business loan is requested. Another barrier experienced by women interested in this field results from lacking the relevant facts and knowledge essential to identify, frame, and evaluate starting their own business as an employment option. Thus, intensive and targeted financial and educational efforts in these areas are necessary for the development of women entrepreneurs and their increased participation in entrepreneurial activities (Zahra, 2009).

Previously conducted research indicates that entrepreneurship contributes in various ways to economic development and job creation (Minniti, 2003). Promoting the entrepreneurial activity of a region should be an important element of any government's attempt to boost overall economic prosperity (Minniti, 2003). Thus, adult women represent a readily available pool of potential entrepreneurial activity that countries in various stages of development, different demographic patterns and different labour force conditions could leverage to improve their economies (Minniti, 2003). This option could be utilized in the Region of Waterloo to provide a diverse range of entrepreneurial opportunities to SDVs.

2.2.4 Social Support Networks

A large body of research supports the importance of social support networks to the well-being and safety of SDVs. Most survivors turn to family and friends before, during, and after their involvement with formal services (Latta & Goodman, 2011). A study of 227 SDVs revealed that feeling support from the community can help to lessen perceived employment barriers immediately following the time they chose to leave their abusive situation (Chronister, Brown, O'Brien, Wettersten, Burt, Falkenstein, & Shahane, 2009).

Social support is the primary protective factor that has been studied in relation to domestic violence. Social support may act as a buffer against stress in several ways, such as enhancing self-esteem, influencing perceptions of stressful events, and increasing knowledge of coping strategies (Carlson, McNutt, Choi, & Rose, 2002). Even minimal levels of social support may have a buffering effect (Carlson, et al., 2002). When SDVs sought professional help and advice from a community agency or other formal institution such as law enforcement, the legal system or mental health professionals, most reported that the long-term support mechanism that truly helps resolve the damages are informal relationships or networks (Carlson, et al., 2002).

Networks are more frequently available to struggling SDVs than most traditional formal services (Levendosky, Bogat, Theran, Trotter, Von Eye, & Davidson, 2004). They can offer mentorship, employment coaching, and promote safety in the lives of SDVs. However, when SDVs turn to network members who are unsure how to respond, unintentional negative consequences may result. Friends and family can respond in a variety of hurtful ways, ranging from telling the victim to put up with the situation to outright victim blaming (Levendosky, et al., 2004). Given their close and enduring relationships with SDVs, establishing networks may be an effective mechanism in which to deliver services as they can tailor interventions to match the needs of the SDV.

Overall, there a multitude of complex and intersecting concepts that become relevant when attempting to improve viable employment services available to an SDV and thus this research project will strive to clarify these concepts.

CHAPTER THREE
3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

The main deliverable of this applied social policy research study was to develop recommendations that will improve the current state of employment services available to SDVs. This was accomplished by determining which employment services correspond best with the needs of a SDV as they sought employment in the Region of Waterloo. The research objectives of this project were to identify which employment services are most useful for SDVs, and provide informed recommendations to SSPs regarding how to improve their services mandated to assist SDVs. I also investigated a series of sub-research questions which served to further explore the intersecting challenges that survivors experience in this context. These questions included:

1. What are SDV and SSP's perceptions of current employment services?

2. What are the self-identified needs of SDVs when seeking out viable economic options?

3. How do SDVs currently access or learn about available employment services?

3.2 Theoretical Framework and Research Design

This research aimed to: gather women's stories to understand the complex nature of their oppression, recognize their needs and create a safe atmosphere for them to voice their experiences. As a researcher, this approach reinforced the notion that SDVs have the both the desire and capacity to successfully obtain and retain employment. By conducting this research, it gave a voice to their resourcefulness and the challenges they face when attempting to secure economic security.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory provided a lens through which this topic was examined alongside Anthony Giddens' adaptive structuration theory. These theories were utilized to generate a theoretical framework to inform the design of the research study. Adaptive structuration theory is articulated as the production and reproduction of the social systems through members' use of rules and resources in interaction (Ruebottom, 2011). This theory deals with the evolution and development of groups while social learning theory argues that humans can learn new information and behaviours through observation (Ruebottom, 2011). I believe that as the Canadian social service sector experiences the impact of a changing economy, SSPs will be forced to pursue new methods to resolve to employment barriers experienced by individuals. This changing economy is a product of shifting manufacturing and technological sectors operating within Canada.

Many forms of qualitative research require gaining an inductive understanding of the participants to acquire an analytic understanding of how they view their actions and the world around them (Turner, 2010). This qualitative research study aimed to understand how the

participants perceive different structures and how those perceptions influence their learning and decision-making process. For the purposes of this study, knowledge was treated as socially constructed as explained in Bandura's social learning theory.

I decided to use qualitative methods to reflect the nature of the research questions. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how participants experience a given research issue. The topics I investigated are abstract and required further explanation as there was little previously generated empirical research or scholarly literature. I believe that by using qualitative methods, I created a safe atmosphere for both SDVs and SSP representatives to speak about their perceptions and experiences freely. I also empowered the SDVs, involved in the study, to speak about their experiences and contribute to improving employment services available to their population.

Within the scope of this qualitative study, I used an applied research approach to meet specific information needs and to derive actionable recommendations. At one time, the use of qualitative methods was seen as acceptable if it was confined to a developmental role for statistical investigation. As research methodologies have evolved, it has become recognized that the contributions of qualitative research are much more substantive. Most significantly, it has a key role to play in providing insights, explanations, and theories of social behaviour. Qualitative research can offer the decision-maker practical principles of social action grounded on the experiences of those likely to be affected by a policy decision or thought to be part of the problem (Walker, 1985).

When an applied social policy research study is conducted, qualitative methods are used to meet different objectives (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). The research questions that are addressed can vary from study to study, but broadly they can be divided into four categories: contextual, diagnostic, evaluative and strategic. Table 1 below outlines this approach to generating interview

questions below (Ritchie, et al., 1994). For the purposes of this study, all of these categories were incorporated into the interview guides.

Table 1: Applied Social Policy Question Categories

Category	Goal
Contextual	Identify the form and nature of what exists
Diagnostic	Examine the reasons for, or causes of, what exists
Evaluative	Assessing the effectiveness of what exists
Strategic	Identifying new theories, policies, plans or actions

When establishing the research design of a study, tools for data analysis should be chosen on the basis that they are the most appropriate to answering a given research question. The research questions I have selected were intended to generate recommendations for SSPs. This is why I chose not to include feminist methodologies since the research design of the study was constructed to produce practical outcomes considering information received by both the SDVs and SSPs. Harnois (2013) states that, "feminist research is distinguished by how the research is done and, to some extent, by what is done with the research." In the case of this study, issues of power, ethnicity, and race are not included in the analysis. As a result, using a applied social policy research approach was used in order to generated the interview questions, deconstruct the information based on the research questions, and generate well-informed recommendations for SSPs.

3.3 Participants and Recruitment Strategies

Since completing this study required working with human participants, an application was submitted to Wilfrid Laurier University's Research Ethics Board for approval. Subsequently, the application was approved and I began my research study. The ethical processes and procedures of this research study strictly adhered to Wilfrid Laurier University's ethical policies and standards for research projects. The participants were required to provide informed consent before acting as a

participant in the research process. The consent form was completed based on the premises of voluntary participation and that there was a mutual understanding of the research study's goals and objectives between the participants and myself.

In terms of mitigating risks, the principle of anonymity was also reiterated in the consent form so that participants acknowledged that their personal information would remain anonymous. All information provided by participants was and still is considered completely confidential. Their name and others names mentioned during their interviews were not included, or in any other way associated, with the data collected in the study. Interview data was coded so that only I was able to link comments or data to participant identities. As an ethical concern, telephone interviews were presented as an option of participation for SDV participants. The rationale of this approach was to provide a safe and convenient way for me to engage women who may have had childcare limitations or mobility barriers that might otherwise prevent them from participating in the study.

SDV participants were not asked directly to revisit the circumstances of their situation. However, they could have chosen to disclose aspects of their personal experiences that caused emotional distress due the traumatic or sensitive nature of the material. Discussing their experiences or other personal matters in some cases could have caused the participant to feel a sense of lost privacy or regret. As well, though participation in this project did not involve physical exertion, there may be a heightened physical risk for survivor participants, particularly from a former abusive partner if their participation in the project was made known. A list of previously complied support services *(Annex I)* offered in this geographic area was provided to the participant at the end of each interview if required.

In terms recruiting SDVs, they were recruited through the Social Innovation Research Group (SIRG) Survivor Advisory Board and the Small Steps to Success employment program.

Many of the participants had been providing input on research projects for SIRG for over a year. Inclusion criteria for SDVs included: currently operating in a situation of economic disadvantage within the Region of Waterloo, recovered from a domestic violence situation, and had accessed employment services from SSPs. Approximately 6 SDVs were recruited to complete in-depth telephone interviews. A Permission to Contact Letter (Appendix A) was given to SIRG and Small Steps to Success graduates to provide to potential SDVs. Once a SDV had granted permission to contact them a Letter of Information (*Appendix B*) was provided. Once a SDV had agreed to participate in the study the Informed Consent From (*Appendix D)* alongside the Interview Guide for SDVs (*Appendix H)* was mailed or e-mailed for their review prior to the interview. Before a telephone or in-person interview was conducted, a Consent Form (*Appendix D and F*) was completed by the participant. A stipend consisting of a $20 gift-card was provided to the SDV upon completion of the interview.

The research participants selected for this study were leaders or representatives of SSPs delivering employment programs within the Region of Waterloo to various populations. Thus, the selection of SPPs participants was purposive based on the questions guiding the research. As well, since there is very little research available and few SSPs currently operating in the Region of Waterloo, a purposive snowball sample method was utilized to generate an increased number of SSP participants. SSPs were recruited by soliciting interest in acting as a participant in the study. Six (6) SSPs were recruited to complete in-depth in-person interviews. A Letter of Information (*Appendix C*) was sent to pre-selected SSPs. If no response was received by the SSPs a follow-up phone call was conducted. Once interest was confirmed, an Informed Consent Form (*Appendix E*) and the Interview Guide for SSPs (*Appendix I*) was sent to the representative of the SSP

participating in the study. The interview was then completed in-person at a locating determined by the SSP representative. No compensation was provided to SSPs for their involvement the study.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Systematic Literature Review

The systematic literature review focused on the background and historical context of the topics under investigation. For the purposes of the research study, it was not be a major part of data collection process but it enabled me to: classify demographic data, become more aware of my biases, identify important historical details, and set realistic parameters for the interviews. The raw material for the literature review was only gathered from academic sources. Inclusion criteria included the following four themes: domestic violence, employment services, social service providers, and service-delivery models. The electronic databases Medline, PsychoINFO and Pubmed were searched according to the core themes identified above. Articles published in languages other than English were excluded from the review. Searches adopted a Boolean procedure to locate relevant articles.

3.4.2 In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews allowed me to understand the intricate meanings that everyday activities held for the interview participants. For this study, it was imperative that I conveyed that the participant's views were invaluable and incredibly useful as primary data. Interview guides for both SDVs (*Appendix G)* and SSPs (*Appendix H)* have been included in the appendices following the thesis. The interviews were recorded with participant consent, transferred into digital files and then transcribed using transcription software (Express Scribe) to allow for easy analysis. The interviews were facilitated using applied policy research principles.

However, the interviews did have limitations. Interviews involved personal interaction and cooperation was essential (Turner, 2010). In some cases, interview participants may have been unwilling or uncomfortable sharing specific content. As well, in some cases I may not have properly understood responses to the questions or various elements of the conversation. These limitations were addressed through researcher debriefing sessions.

3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis focuses on detection, defining, categorizing, explaining and exploring concepts. As a result, methods selected for this type of analysis should facilitate such tasks. This is why a thematic analysis was selected to deconstruct the data. Before beginning the process of categorizing the data generated, I underwent a process of familiarization. This required me to become familiar with the range and diversity of the stories collected. I became deeply immersed in the data by: listing to audio files, completing transcription, and reading completed transcripts. During this phase, I began to identify recurring themes, key message and gained an overview of the depth and richness of the data.

Since the data generated from the interviews underwent a thematic analysis, there was a clear methodology for analysing the data. Each interview was transcribed and then open coding methods were used to identify common and contrasting themes. Through careful examination of the text, I organized the data (words, phrases, or ideas) into a set of broad themes based on the dominant discourses identified in the data. I created a thematic framework and as each new interview was analysed it was cross tabulated with previously analysed interviews. When I was constructing this framework, I drew on a prior issues, emergent issues raised by the participants themselves, and themes arising from the recurrence or patterning of particular views or experiences. This method of constant comparison allowed for new or complex themes to emerge.

As I compared the data across interviews I was be able to recognize gaps in understanding and knowledge. These gaps were then the basis for clarifying questions in interviews with subsequent participants. I found developing clarifying questions difficult as it involved a combination of both logical and intuitive thinking. I was required to make judgements about meaning, the relevance and importance of issues, and about implicit connections between ideas. Since I used an applied social policy research design approach it also required me to ensure that the original research questions were fully encompassed in the framework.

Computer software was heavily utilized to analyse the data produced from this study. The data produced from the literature review, audio files, and transcripts of the interviews were stored on my computer using an encrypted storage system. This allowed me to manage the data easily in terms of filing and coding. As well, the computer software (e.g. N'Vivo, Express Scribe, etc.) and word processing programs allowed me to easily categorize, transcribe, and code specific data-sets.

3.6 Strategies for Ensuring Quality and Trustworthiness of the Study

3.6.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is a technique that increases the validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources (Koch, 2006); this process has been naturally built into the data collection processes of this research study as the literature review and interview data was cross-tabulated. By combining multiple theories, methods and empirical materials I was empowered to recognize participant biases and address them in my analysis.

3.6.2 Researcher Debriefing

Another measure that was used in this study to enhance the quality of the data was researcher debriefing. This allowed me to gain an understanding of how my lived experiences and understanding of the world influenced the research process. Researcher debriefing required me to

work together with several colleagues who had neutral views of the study. In order to ensure validity of the data, these colleagues examined interview transcripts (with all identifying information removed) and the draft thesis paper. I believe that through this reflexive process that I was able to more specifically identify my personal biases and then remove them from the analysis of the data.

3.6.3 Audit Trail

The physical audit trail concept stems from the idea of the fiscal audit where an auditor authenticates an organization's accounts and examines them for the possible errors (Koch, 2006); this concept will be used to enhance the trustworthiness of this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that by implementing an audit trail a third party could review the study's decisions or analytical processes and replicate its conclusions. I chose to complete an audit trail since I am process-oriented. Completing an audit trail served to help me manage information effectively and allowed me to quickly access information. In order to develop a detailed audit trail I documented all collected data, analytical procedures, and decisions that occurred during the research study. For example, after careful consideration, I chose not to engage in member checking activities with participants to ensure safety and confidentiality of the SDV and SSP identities. This was documented as a decision that was made during the research process. Overall, I realized that maintaining an audit trail could help other researchers determine whether the study's findings could be used as a platform for other research or as a basis for decision-making.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Results

4.1 Social Service Providers

4.1.1 Participant Demographics and Employment Services

I interviewed six SSPs who had a combined 35 years of service or program delivery related experience. Participants' age ranged from 35 to 56 years old. These SSPs currently provide an incredibly wide range of employment services that consider the needs of different populations. Identified employment services included: training options/programs, life skills training, workshops, referral services, access to a voicemail, assistance with job searching, programs for the elderly, programs for youth, programs for immigrants, programs for Aboriginal individuals, providing print materials, mobility support, employment coaching, resume and cover letter development, self-employment support and crisis services. It is important to note that no SSPs within the Region of Waterloo with the exception of Small Steps to Success program contracted by the Region of Waterloo have customized employment services to specifically support SDVs.

From the large number of services that have been developed, it is clear that the Region of Waterloo has designated significant financial and human resources to support individuals as they seek employment. The SSPs expressed that they believed it was critically important to offer these types of services, as assisting SDVs to develop economic security is paramount. This view is validated by the scholarly literature, as having access to employment services is a foundational component of being able to develop economic literacy and employment options (Correia, 2000).

All of the SSPs were located in urban centers of Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge. This geographic placement is logical since the SSPs want to ensure they are located in a geographic area that is easily accessible by public transit and where the population is most dense. These two factors

increase the likelihood that an individual is able to access their services or programs. I also noticed that the SSPs chose locations that were strategically placed in order to be able to access other similar types of resources. This proximity increased their service coordination ability and overall productivity disposition. Table 2 summarizes the demographic information collected from SSPs during the interviews.

Table 2: Summary for SSP Demographic Information

Item	Results
Age	Range: 35 - 56 Average: 47
Locations	Urban centres within the Region of Waterloo
Employment Services Offered	Services: Training options, workshops, referral services, access to a voicemail, assistance with job searching, providing print materials, mobility support, employment coaching, writing assistance, self-employment support, and crisis services Programs: Life skills programs, programs for the elderly, programs for youth (15-29 years old), programs for immigrants, and programs for Aboriginal individuals

4.1.2 Perceptions of Survivor Post-Abuse Employment Search Journeys

After speaking with SSPs I learned that intake processes for employment services are primarily governed by referrals from government-based programs such as Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. This means that many clients have already undergone a rigorous screening process and have been recommended to access these employment services. This screening process could be perceived as exclusive, as there may be a SDV who requires access employment services but does not require government assistance. Many of the SSPs are currently funded by the provincial government to provide employment services. As a result, it is logical to

conclude that their clientele would focus on individuals who are currently receiving funds from government social assistance programs as there needs to be a mechanism in place to transition individuals from receiving social assistance to contributing to the economy. This ideal is what informs the overall mandate for the SSPs delivering employment services, as they exist to facilitate this transition, which in turn contributes to the economic prosperity of the Region of Waterloo.

SSPs also indicated that other participants learned about their services from past participants. This infers SDVs have developed an informal support network within the Region of Waterloo. This was an interesting finding, as it is generally perceived that SDVs do not disclose personal information readily with other individuals. The analysis of the data indicates that SDVs are comfortable speaking to each other about their employment experiences.

The SSPs recognize this idiosyncrasy as they expressed that social support networks are critically important to nurturing a SDVs resiliency. In many cases, the SSPs actually helped to facilitate the creation of social support systems. One SSP stated that, "Support just isn't one person. It is bringing in as many supports and agencies that you can. I would like to think that most definitely would create resiliency and strength." Another SSP expressed that, "we all do better with people…what the studies have shown, is we need each-other as human beings."

I also asked SSPs what their perceptions were regarding what needs a SDV requires to be accommodated before they can successfully pursue, secure, and then engage in fulfilling employment. Many of the SSPs believed that service navigation needs were paramount to ensure SDVs functionality and ability to access applicable employment opportunities. The SSPs were aware that a "one-window" approach to delivering employment services has not been adopted within the Region of Waterloo and that locating the appropriate services can be very difficult. This lack of the coordination weakens the SSPs capacity to meet the needs of SDVs since their services

are fragmented and delivered within functionalist institutions. Other SDV needs identified by SSPs included: childcare, legal support, mobility support, and safety issues. SSPs operating in this geographic area are knowledgeable regarding the needs of a SDV and have taken action to alter their employment services. However, the SSPs still require a deeper more complex understanding of SDV needs to improve the efficacy of their employment services.

In terms of SSPs perceptions of SDV challenges, there was a wide range of differing perspectives. Some SSPs focused on alleviating personal challenges while others focused on addressing structural issues. Examples of personal challenges that were mentioned included: mobility issues, personal finances, parenting problems, employability, the ability to cope with past abuse, and weak communication skills. A SSP stated:

> [SDVs] may find themselves on edge or feeling down while in the
> workplace as a result of the physical and emotional strain they are under.
> They may be less able to focus because of what's happening or worries
> about their children, worries about the safety or wellbeing of their pets or
> worries about threats to their family members. I also think it…creates
> profound effects on people's ability to fully show up to work if they are
> holding a secret.

Structural challenges identified included: the impact of poverty, unseen barriers, and struggling to access employment services that are available. Another SSP expressed:

> Poverty is a huge barrier. It has a look, it has a smell, it has a walk and it
> has a taste. As well, just the inability to move forward sometimes because
> of unseen barriers are challenges because their brain plays a lot of tricks
> – mental health, depression and everything that extends from being in a
> domestic violence relationship.

Overall, there was a high level of concern expressed from the SSPs regarding how to address these issues and a number of them have structured their services specifically to accommodate challenges

that SDVs experience. It was demonstrated in this study that approaches currently being implemented manage personal challenges while structural challenges have been left unaddressed.

4.1.3 Performance Measurement Strategies

This section of the results focused on analysing the governance structure of employment services. There were a number of strategies that SSPs implement on a daily basis to ensure the validity and success of their employment services. Success is measured by meeting pre-determined targets deemed as appropriate by the funding agency (e.g. provincial government). However, it was expressed that it is important that strategies governing the measurement of success correlate to outcomes that SSPs can feasibly generate. The SSPs stated that having a performance measurement strategy enabled them to: continuously monitor and assess the results of services, make informed decisions and take appropriate, timely action with respect to service, provide effective and relevant departmental reporting on services, and ensure that credible data is collected to support evaluations.

All of the SSPs used statistics generated from manually collected data to substantiate their success or performance indicators. These statistics were based on the: number of referrals completed, number of employment coaching sessions completed, assessments done, workshops facilitated, and number of participants that secured employment. Additionally, the SSPs collected client feedback on a regular basis and completed rigorous annual evaluations of their services. Constructing an annual report served as a mechanism for demonstrating their statistical results as well as highlighting key client success stories. This in turn helped to generate support from stakeholders and partners when attempting to garner support for changes to existing employment services or future projects.

SSPs also considered development of self-esteem and social support networks as a measure of success. In order to capture qualitative data or participant anecdotes, the SSPs drafted success

stories to demonstrate the impact that the service had on the participant descriptively. A success story is a simple description of a client's progress, achievements, or lessons learned. The SSPs stated that drafting success stories were an effective means to illustrate performance and move beyond the numbers by connecting funding agencies, stakeholders and partners to a to a cause they could relate to and desire to support. These stories are able to capture the perseverance, dedication, and positive attitude demonstrated by the participants throughout their journey trying to secure employment.

4.1.4 Merits of Employment Service Delivery Models

Structurally, the Region of Waterloo, alongside for-profit, non-for-profit, community and academic organizations have built a infrastructure that is well-equipped to assist a variety of different populations. The Region of Waterloo's Social Services Plan for 2011-2014 states that:

> The Social Services Department and its many community partners plan and deliver a variety of human services that sustain individuals and families in Waterloo Region. These services are designed to help residents enhance their participation in the community and ultimately improve their quality of life. Residents in need are provided financial assistance to cover the costs for food, shelter and clothing and a variety of other items such as vision, dental and medical services. Those in receipt of social assistance are provided a variety of employment services through three directly operated employment Resource areas. Financial assistance is provided to eligible low income families with child care costs.

As a result, the current suite of employment services available within the Region of Waterloo is uniquely positioned to support SDVs. SSPs described the main strength of their employment services as their ability to refer clients to the appropriate organizations or provide service navigation assistance. The Region of Waterloo offers a number of other social and non-social services that could be beneficial for the SDV to utilize. SSPs work diligently on developing

partnerships with shelter, housing and counselling agencies to provide the highest level of support possible to their clients.

Other SSP strengths include the design or service-delivery model of their employment services. Many of SSPs carefully consider needs of their target populations and determine methods to meet these needs. For example, one SSP notes that:

> The province is changing the software that will administer social assistance through out the province…as part of the initial screening, the domestic violence questions will be asked. Are they in an abusive relationship – of course people will say no, but okay, at least the message that they are getting is that it is okay to answer yes. We do care and we do ask the question.

Two SSPs have also constructed their service or program levels at a high-level to ensure that guidelines are translatable to the work that front-line workers complete. This allows front-line workers to exercise discretionary measures if necessary. Indeed, program guidelines are created to provide clear direction to employees regarding the delivery of the employment service. SSPs recognized that fundamentally, policy directives and program guidelines should not defeat the operationalization of delivering meaningful employment services. This viewpoint is further validated by Stapleton, as he emphasizing that society should, "build public- facing institutions based on trust in those whom the institutions serves, government by intelligent rules that are administered with positive discretion" (2010, pg. 26). Ultimately, he states that using this approach would help those in need to, "build a life of minimum dependence and maximum dignity" (Stapleton, 2010, pg. 26).

Additionally, the SSPs play a role in developing employer partnerships. This means that in some cases, that the SSP may have developed a relationship with an employer to grant clients an opportunity to work within a corporate setting for a specific duration of time. This gives clients

real-world exposure to the current landscape of the job market. SSPs indicated that more of these types of partnerships need to be fostered, as obtaining employer buy-in for these types of services is critically important. Essentially, the SSPs objective is to assist SDVs to assert their fiscal independence; however, without employment experience, these women may not be able to achieve this independence. Being able to secure employment is the ultimate goal for the SDV and unless an SSP can lead them to various employment options, the efficacy of their services will decrease.

4.1.5 Employment Service Delivery Models Challenges

Although the SSPs work tirelessly to deliver employment services effectively within this region, they identified that there are some areas that require improvement. Specifically, the SSPs stated that many of their services rely on funded contracts from the provincial or regional government. This foreseeable lack of continuity concerned SSPs as they want to ensure they will be able to provide ongoing support to their clients. They all recognized that providing ongoing support is a critical component of being able to support SDVs; however, since they have limited financial and human resources available, mechanisms to provide ongoing support may not be feasible in some cases.

As well, though these programs are readily available, SSPs indicated that there is hesitancy for SDVs to identify themselves as survivors. The SSPs believe that this is a result of the high level of stigmatization these women receive from their employers and their communities which is then internalized. A SSP explained:

> That [experiencing domestic violence] isn't a private shame, it is the responsibility of the community to provide care and support to both those who are being harmed and those who are causing harm. If care and support services aren't provided to those who are causing harm it doesn't change and if those who are experiencing harm are shamed and blamed it also doesn't change.

This issue is something that the SSPs try to address on a continuous basis by promoting their services in community centres and generating public awareness about the impacts of SDVs. Another SSP passionately stated that:

> I would change the barriers that we have as a program to getting outside companies on board. I would change the perception that sometimes people that I know can have over what this program is – it is not charity. Hiring somebody from our program is not charity. These are people, these are women, same as your mother and your sister. That is one of the most frustrating things…dealing with unspoken biases. To not be able to get the message out right and for people to really recognize that investing in women is an investment to make our community incredibly healthy. These women are contributing factors – they are definitely great workers.

Integrating work practicums into employment services and programs is a critical piece of developing a SDV for the workforce. SSPs work closely with employers to generate practicums that are mutually beneficial to both parties. However, overcoming the stigma that employers associate with SDVs has become a barrier as stated by one of the SSPs in the above quotation.

Additionally, the SSPs recommended that more training be provided to front-line or social workers who provide employment services to SDVs. This recommendation was based on the fact that some front-line workers apply their duty to report very rigidly without carefully assessing the situation. In some cases, one SSP explained that a SDV might not identify as a survivor for fear of being reported to Family and Children Services. They stated:

> I can think of one situation where somebody did identify and the staff immediately jumped to reporting…and they didn't but it required an intervention with a member of our leadership team to say, why are you calling Family and Children Services? Have you actually determined that they are still living with their partner or there is an imminent risk? I think sometimes social workers are quick to act on that duty to report without using good common sense and without checking things out in more detail. They are nervous and they could do with a bit more training around how to work with women and how to have those conversations so as to not to also cause panic in the women. Thinking that that their children may be at

risk. I think they are very vulnerable and I don't want our front-line staff
doing anything that would further exacerbate the situation.

Increased training this is area could provide front-line workers with knowledge and practical tools regarding how to respond effectively in these types of situations.

SSPs also realize that there should be an increased amount of resources designated to address mental-health issues. The main piece of contention revolves around the fact that these SSPs are mandated to provide employment services, not clinical support. Many of the SSPs do refer to clinical facilities in order to meet this need. However, it was stated that SSPs recognize that SDVs may suffer from mental-health issues on an ongoing basis and as such require ongoing clinical support.

Another problematic discourse arose about the geographic location of various services. Often survivors must travel to multiple offices to obtain the services they need. However, the SSPs do work diligently at building internal and external networks to coordinate their services. One SSP stated that, "the system is really confusing and [the SDV] is not in any way deficient because they can't navigate it and we will help them to do that." These type of challenges are experienced on a daily basis by SSPs while delivering employment services.

4.2 Survivors of Domestic Violence

4.2.1 Participant Demographics

All participants interviewed for this portion of the study resided within the Region of Waterloo and are currently using employment and other social services. The majority of the SDVs have been living in this community since childhood while others moved to this area to access certain services for their children. I spoke with 6 women from this population whose ages ranged from 26 to 58 years old. I wanted to ensure that a wide range of ages was selected in order to obtain

a representative scope of perceptions and experiences. Women with varying ethnic backgrounds were selected as participants to ensure a diverse sample.

Women who were selected for this study reported being in good health and had successfully recovered from abuse. A SDV was considered as being successfully recovered from abuse if they had secured housing, was no longer threatened by their abusive partner, was engaging in some revenue generating activities, and had established a platform of safety from which to operate. The women contributed perspectives from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and different ethnicities. In terms of current income sources, one participant received compensation from being employed in a private sector position. However, the majority of the SDVs had become dependent on government-based social assistance as their main source of income. This income breakdown was also found in a study conducted by Staggs that explored employment for SDVs in the post-welfare reform era (2007).

After experiencing abuse, the SDVs expressed that their most pressing concern was developing a safe atmosphere within which to operate. This operating vision consisted of meeting basic needs such as locating housing and sources of nourishment. As a result, further government assistance programs were utilized to meet these basic needs. It was demonstrated that the SDVs in this study relied heavily on government-based programs and assistance in order to develop this safe living environment. Table 3 outlines the demographic data collected from SDVs.

Table 3: Summary of SDV Demographic Information

Item	Results
Age	Range: 26 - 58 Average: 45

Source of Income	Private sector (1)
	
	Government assistance
	  • Ontario Student Assistance Program (1)
	  • Ontario Disability Support Program (2)
	  • Ontario Works (2)

4.2.2 Post-Abuse Employment Search Journey

The SDVs had various perceptions of this community, employers and employment services. They also had varying experiences during their post-abuse employment search journey. The term "post-abuse" is being used to depict a chronological stage and in no way is meant to undervalue the SDVs experience. It is fully recognized that SDVs may undergo severe trauma and overcome a substantive amount of adversity to escape their abusive situation. These experiences may cause long-term negative outcomes that could impact the SDVs functionally for a number of years.

Overall, the women believed the community within the Region of Waterloo to be either non-supportive or non-responsive. Many of the women did not reach out to their neighbours or community members for support. One woman, after being asked if she felt the community supported her as she pursued employment opportunities stated, "no, it was more that I had to be the engineer of my own success." Another stated, "it wasn't great. Nobody leads you anywhere, nobody gives you information." This finding is concerning as it demonstrates that communities in the Region of Waterloo struggle to practice inclusivity. There is a clear connection between the adverse

perceptions that community members hold of low income SDVs and their ability to willingly associate with women who exhibit financial and complex needs.

When SDVs spoke about employer's feelings of resentment and contention were triggered. The SDVs expressed that their employers had been difficult to work with, in terms of granting leave requests or understanding the seriousness of their needs. Many of the SDVs also felt heavily stigmatized by their employers or believed that future employers would be difficult to work with as well. This perception caused the SDVs to doubt themselves and question their ability to obtain and retain meaningful employment. This type of behaviour by employers is problematic as it marginalizes the SDV and may further exacerbate mental health issues.

It was noted that some employers did not have a practical understanding of how domestic violence can impact an individual's life. For example a SDV expressed:

> It is difficult having to explain to employers that sometimes, you know,
> I might react badly to a certain type of situation or that there are certain
> Security parameters that I need to ask about. I wanted to work more
> behind the scenes, not in the front-line and [employers] always have
> questions about that.

This lack of understanding or compassion is very prohibitive to a SDV being able to seek accommodation in a current job or to be comfortable with accepting a job offer as well.

SDVs had both positive and negative perceptions of and experiences with social service providers delivering employment services. The women were able to successfully learn about these services through: using the internet, referrals, cold-calls, print materials and promotional signage. Some women did struggle to learn about these services as a result of not having access to a computer or the internet. These women depended on social support networks to inform them about available employment services.

In terms of accessing these programs or services, many of the SDVs visited large-scale non-for-profit agencies initially and were then referred to community-based agencies through their designated Ontario Works officer or another government-funded outreach/social worker located within their community of residence. One SDV explained that she learned about employment services through, "…a billboard, on the websites that you go to in order to search for a job. I learned about this program through my outreach worker. If I didn't have my outreach worker I do not know where I would be today!"

Services accessed by these participants included: employment coaching, training workshops, writing assistance, and learning how to use the internet to search for job openings. Many of the SDVs expressed that retaining the services of a government-funded outreach/social worker was invaluable to them in terms of learning about other available social services (e.g. housing support) as they progressed through the stages of their job search. This wrap-around approach that integrated additional support empowered SDVs to take control of their situations and work towards establishing economic security. After accessing a variety of different employment services, some women used temporary-hiring agencies as a Band-Aid solution until they were able to secure a job. They expressed that this approach was not effective due to the uncertain nature of the jobs available and the inability to predict when one would be asked to work.

SDVs stated that the services provided by social service providers required completing a large number of self-directed activities. After visiting a government funded large-scale non-for profit agency mandated to deliver employment services, one participate stated:

> Largely it was like a sit down. You go in, they sit down, they ask some
> questions about your education, training, work experience, past experiences,
> what is that you're looking to do and then they made a couple of recommendations
> about courses that I could possibly take to further my ability to get good employment
> and then you know, they recommended certain areas to look into. They had the name

of a couple companies but other than that it was largely like you are on your own. They were willing to review my resume and help critique but it was more like, here you go, now go find work.

The SDVs also enrolled in the Small Steps to Success program offered by the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank. This program is specifically catered to support a SDV and provide individualized services for each woman that undertakes the program. A participant praised the program by stating:

> It helps with your self-esteem. It helps with your anxieties and your discomforts of looking. It helps to have somebody in your corner and know that they are there to be there for you. You feel that you somebody is caring about you and then you care more about yourself and you care more about doing what it is you need to do and making those next little steps. To me it was a very positive thing and just because even though the group is done, I know I still have all the ongoing support. The support system is still there and I think that is what a lot of women especially really need.

After analysing the participant responses it is clear that SSPs should provide emotional support and ongoing encouragement to SDVs accessing their services to increase uptake and return visits.

The SDVs were able to access short-term training opportunities such as workshops or taking high school courses at St. Louis School for Adult Education to upgrade educational credentials, enhance employability, improve a resume or other develop other basic skills. It was expressed that without additional financial or childcare support that it would be extremely difficult to utilize the full potential of a training opportunity. In terms of childcare or being able to meet other financial responsibilities, most of the SDVs did not have the financial support required to complete a full re-training program and support other financial commitments.

Other women were offered an opportunity to start their own business, but in some cases this undertaking intimidated SDVs or the commitment in terms of time or finances was unfeasible. However, it is possible for a SDV to begin a business if that is an interest. One SDV recounts:

[A social service provider asked] why don't you open your own business?
So I was like sure, but for my own business I wanted to open a driving school
but to open a driving school I have to take an instructor course which was in
Mississauga and which was almost two thousand dollars. So I went to that [social
service provider] and I talked to them and I told them that this is my way and I
want to get back into the force but I want to open my own business and I give them
my resume and gave them my reasoning. After a few months they gave me not only
two thousand dollars, but they gave me money for commuting as well...that was
really good help. I could have never forget that because due to that money I went,
I paid my tuition fees and then I commuted to Mississauga every morning for three
months. I did the driver instructor course and I came back and I opened my
driving school so it was a really good positive experience.

This support from the SSP made it possible for her to pursue fulfilling employment and further

empowered her to build a thriving career. In the current context of the Region of Waterloo as

growing start-up business and information communications cluster, providing support to an SDV to

begin their own business could become an appealing employment option. Owning a business grants

the entrepreneur the flexibility to complete work at their own pace, allows them to benefit more

directly from any revenues generated, and presents an opportunity to reconnect an individual's

skills and abilities. This is an ideal situation for an SDV in many cases, if the support was readily

available and accessible.

In general, although SDVs communicated that they were satisfied with the employment

services they engaged but expressed that there is an urgent need for increased ongoing support and

for SSPs to integrate a more personal approach into their service-delivery models. One SDV

thought that, "some employment agencies are so big, they have so many people that they don't want

to – they don't care." A couple of the SDVs stated that the large-scale social service agencies used a

functional approach based on eligibility, which in turn was demoralizing. A SDV explained that:

> I attended one seminar where they talked about different programs that
> were available for people either through the government or the region.
> They told me I didn't need to stay because I didn't qualify for anything.
> They said you can sit if you like but there is really no need because there
> is not one thing you qualify for. That was really frustrating.

Another SDV expressed, "when you get to the bigger staffing agencies they are not personal I find. You are just a number to them…I personally just didn't feel comfortable enough working with a lot of them so I don't."

The SDVs also stated that much more awareness should be generated publicaly about the employment services and programs that are available within the Region of Waterloo. Another participant stated that:

> The world needs to know a lot more these services because there are
> so many people who still don't know about them. I think…there needs
> to be more knowledge because there are so many families out there that
> are suffering because they don't have the help because they don't know
> about the help.

Many of the women felt as if there were disadvantaged when starting their employment search solely because they weren't aware of what resources were available. This finding demonstrates that SSPs need to do a better job of promoting their services to all geographic areas, both urban and rural, within the Region of Waterloo. It is a SSPs prerogative to increase their services' uptake and SDVs to access these services. This breakdown in communication is an issue that is easily addressed by increasing outreach or promotional activities.

4.2.3 Needs for Employment

In order to perform well in a job, the SDVs identified that various needs need to be meet. These needs included: the ability to be mobile, access to affordable child care, health benefit packages provided by the employer, assigned regular hours of work, retain legal counsel, and

maintain support systems. Each SDV indicated that they must be able to travel to their place work relatively easily. Some of the women did not have access to a car due to poverty so they utilized the bus as their main avenue of transportation. This can become problematic in rural areas as public transit is not readily available.

After securing a position, in order to ensure their economic security, obtaining health benefits and regular hours of work were key needs that were expressed. These needs were generated from a desire to ensure that children were adequately supported both physically and mentally. One SDV stated that, "it is important to know how to support children in these things because I now have a very troubled seventeen year old." These types of experiences weighed heavy on the SDVs as they felt guilt regarding their ability to protect their children.

Additionally, the SDVs communicated that legal counsel served as an invaluable resource as they continued to distance themselves from their abusive partner. In terms of dealing with employers and abusive partners, legal counsel enabled the SDVs to establish protective factors. For example, if a restraining order was required, than the lawyer would facilitate the completion of this process. One SDV described her experience below.

> I started looking into avenues to make sure I was protected legally because
> I didn't know how that person was going to react…I looked into getting a
> lawyer who was willing to help make sure that from a business perspective
> that I would still have my job and be able to do it without distractions.

Mental-health issues seemed to impact a couple of the SDVs interviewed as well. Each woman had experienced mental health difficulties through a different lens. Some women perceived their mental distress as a barrier to finding employment and others believed it motivated them overcome adversity. This reinforced that each SDV is a unique individual with different experiences and perceptions to share. The women had experienced: hyper-vigilantism, anxiety, post-traumatic

stress, depression, and substance abuse. Though each woman found methods to cope with their mental health difficulties, they stated that an ingrained sense of fear remained that could potentially impact their performance at work. As a result, SDVs need SSPs to recognize the both short-term and long-term impact that the mental health consequences of exposure to violence can re-occur. If SSPs delivering employment services had a better understanding of how mental health impacts an individual's functionality this would foster a more collaborative service-delivery culture.

The participants also emphasised the need of volunteer practicums where they partner with a company to complete certain tasks. Certain SSP programs integrate a co-operative term into their training programs and the SDVs found these experiences invaluable. This not only gave them the opportunity to gain practical work experience but to rebuild their self-identity as a working woman. One SDV stated that:

> I know that if I had a chance to show [the employer] what I could do from
> my previous experience that I would be employable. If I could go there for
> a month or two moths and even if I just made minimum wage or had the
> opportunity to go there without being paid I would've done that as well.
> Just to have that chance.

In some cases, these companies upon completion of their co-operative or practicum placement hired the SDVs outright. This mechanism of bridging a volunteer placement into employment seemed to be effective as it granted the SDV an opportunity to prove their capabilities as an employee. It is critical that SSPs are knowledgeable about these needs if they wish to progress forward adapting their services to meet the needs of SDVs.

4.2.4 Challenges Securing Employment

SDVs also spoke about different structural and personal challenges experienced trying to secure employment as well as after they had obtained employment. After escaping their abusive

situations, a couple of the SDVs underwent a severe duration of poverty. Overall, their economic stability was deeply disrupted. In terms of personal challenges, the SDVs struggled to: secure fulfilling employment, generate employer support, attend counselling sessions, or disengage from their abusive situation completely. SDV also recognized they were at a disadvantage since they had not worked for a number of years and the majority of jobs presently require at least an undergraduate degree. One participant explained that, "I found a lot of those full-time positions you have to have university degrees in order to work…that is what companies are looking for so it can be very frustrating if you don't have it." SDVs often struggled to locate jobs that compensate them enough to cover their everyday living costs. Once employed, the survivor had to take time to address any mental-health issues and work alongside their employer to negotiate a mutually beneficial working agreement. A participant said, "in every case of domestic violence, you walk away with post-traumatic stress disorder. Most employers don't understand that."

SDVs also experienced a multitude of structural challenges including an inability to navigate social service networks and access to various employment services. This perpetuated a feeling of hopelessness that discouraged women from seeking further support or assistance. SDVs stated that there were unsure how to begin searching for employment until a government funded agent or outreach/social worker referred them to the appropriate service provider or provided them with service navigation assistance. Once this support was secured, the SDVs were able to continue their journey seeking employment. The main challenge that was emphasised by SDVs revolved around learning how to navigate the system that the Region of Waterloo has put in place to assist survivors and being able to successfully travel to these locations.

4.2.5 Survivor Resiliency

As a researcher, after speaking with these women, I was deeply inspired. Each of them had experienced horrific and violent traumatic events but were still able to re-focus and develop an incredibly high level of resiliency. When each of them was asked if they could change anything about their experience, none of the women indicated that they would remove the traumatic experience from their lives. They each believed that their experiences had contributed significantly to the development of concept of self. One participant confidently stated, "I believe my experience made me who I am…without that I wouldn't be who I am, and I like who I am today." Another expressed that, "I think we all need to go through some bad experiences in order to grow." Many of them fought through intense adversity to develop practical solutions to address both their needs and challenges and now are moving forward with a positive attitude and proactive disposition.

In spite of navigating a complicated employment service system, each survivor was very grateful for the support they had received from SSPs and now provide guidance to other women who have undergone similar experiences. They recognized the SSPs added value to their employment search and believed that they were useful preliminary employment search services. These SDVs shared a spirit of compassion and motivation to now contribute back to society in a meaningful way.

Lastly, as indicated above, SDVs experience a wide variety of challenges when pursuing employment. For example, some of women had children they were supporting as they were job searching and were able to successfully manage multiple competing priorities. In my opinion, A person who excels under pressure or in adversarial situations is very rare. This ability to multi-task and prioritize is a marketable skill. It was demonstrated through SDV responses that these women are very skilled workers as a result of overcoming challenges as a result of their abusive situations.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Discussion

5. 1 Discussion of Findings

5.1.1 Discourse Alignment

There were a number of similar discourses that arose from both SDVs and SSPs; these discourses included: issues involving disclosure of information, integration of community support, generating employer support, and meeting SDV personal needs. Both SDVs and SSP explicitly emphasised the importance of survivors disclosing their abusive experience early in the job search process. SDVs also stated that they wished they had asked for help earlier, or spoke about their situation to SSPs sooner. This study linked a SDVs inability to disclose due to fear of further stigmatization. SDVs experience a high level of stigmatization from both the community and employers within the Region of Waterloo. This was also proven in a study conducted by Benett and Rigor in 2004 that focused on implications for evaluation of domestic violence programs that maintain victim safety as a guiding principle.

Domestic violence is a sensitive and stigmatized issue, and women are often blamed for the violence they experience. As a result, they are fearful of disclosing their situation as this may result in further stigmatization or marginalization. SDVs in this study have generated protective factors that enable them to function within society without having to speak about their situation. Many developed a high level of resiliency as a result of these protective factors. However, this behaviour directly impacts SSPs since they are unable provide tailored support services if they are unaware of the current situation. This breakdown in communication is detrimental to both the SSP and the SDV and brings into question the nature of the relationship between the two parties.

The SSPs motivation is to deliver an effective service to the SDV and the SDVs motivation to utilize the service to secure a job. Unless both parties are honest and open with each other, the service being provided and the service being received will remain mediocre. There is a clear power imbalance generated within the relationship generated between a SSP and SDV as the survivor must adhere to the policies and instructions dictated by the SSPs in order to be granted services. SSPs should recognize that this power imbalance exists and work diligently to foster a more open and inclusive atmosphere within their intake or screening processes to create a safe space for disclosure.

Both SDVs and SSPs labeled their communities as non-supportive. This was a concerning finding as studies have demonstrated the informal social support networks play an instrumental role in assisting an individual to re-integrate successfully back into the community (Latta, et al., 2011). The SDVs did not feel adequately supported by their community and many did not seek support since they felt heavily stigmatized SSPs felt that one of their most difficult challenges laid with generating community support for their programs. SSPs realized that their services, due to a number of limitations, could not fully provide the support required by an SDV and in turn relied on community members or organizations to provide an additional level of support. However, community members seem to have a strong fear and sense of unease when it comes to supporting SDVs.

In order to effectively transform the community's sense of unease, SSPs should generate more public awareness about the challenges that SDVs experience. Building a world without stigmatization requires creating frameworks that confront how public and private fears and feelings of safety are circulated, absorbed, felt, and acted upon (Jackson & Meiner, 2011). Shifting the paradigm of public safety, moving from an oppressive state, to a definition of safety that incorporates positive relationships and community building, requires people engaging with and

reframing what it means and feels like to be safe (Jackson, et al., 2011). Safety is often defined as a space or a feeling or by the absence of strong negative feelings such as disgust, anger, pain, and fear (Jackson, et al., 2011). When public disgust and fear are projected onto SDVs, these feelings are then manifested as various types of stigmatization. Dialogues about public safety often begin with the question of what needs to be done. SSPs should actively try to facilitate these discussions in the community and empower SDVs to contribute to these discussions as well.

SDVs and SSPs also struggled a great deal in terms of social interactions with employers. Overall, SDVs felt like employers were difficult to negotiate with and felt hopeless in their pursuit to negotiate a mutually beneficial work agreement. This issue is incredibly difficult to navigate in terms of how employers choose to manage their employees. Generally, employers aspire to treat all of their employees equally and fairly. In addition to this mantra, there is also a large amount of legislation in Ontario governing how employers are required to operate. These pieces of legislation make it difficult for an employer to discretely offer alternate work arrangements to one employee. Often SSPs will negotiate with employers to establish a viable work placement or practicum for an SDV to offer as a part of their employment services. SSPs in some cases have been successful with this approach though they indicated there is much more progress that could be done in this area.

It is also difficult to predict how an employer will react to a SDV who discloses their situation. This challenge occurs as a result of the power imbalance between the SDV and their employment supervisor since the survivor may be dependent on their job for a variety of financial reasons. This naturally develops a corrosive relationship between the employer and the SDV as the survivor may feel trapped or forced to comply with an employment contract. SDVs who are in the process of seeking employment share a similar experience. Overall, there are many intersecting factors that survivors consider when approaching current or potential employers but their social

interactions are embedded in a foundation of fear and self-doubt. Both SSPs and SDVs should work together to develop healthy and nurturing relationships with employers to enable survivors to perform well as an employee.

There was a good awareness of SDV personal needs by SSPs. The information that SDVs provided in their interviews aligned very well with the responses that SSPs identified. This was a reassuring finding since the SSPs delivering employment service within the Region of Waterloo have made a concerted effort to be well-informed of the needs that SDVs deemed as essential on a day to day basis. Many of the SSPs provide bus tickets, childcare options, and financial support for various items through government mandated programs along with case managers who are designated to support clients. They used reports from other geographic areas in an attempt to accommodate SDVs needs. In terms of performance metrics, it was clear that the SSPs had put mechanisms in place to ensure they aligned with the outcomes that a SDV could feasibly produce. The SSPs continuously displayed a can-do attitude and positive outlook on the ability of an SDV to obtain and retain employment by supporting as many personal needs as possible.

5.1.2 Conflicting Discourses

After completing my analysis I noted that there were conflicting discourses that were apparent between the two populations. One of these conflicting discourses included different perceptions or experiences with social support networks. SSPs believed that social support networks are invaluable to SDVs and concurred with Carlson's (2002) view that the support mechanism that naturally helps to resolve the damages are informal relationships or network members. These social support networks are meant to provide ongoing support to SDVs on a regular basis. Ongoing support could include assistance with transportation, childcare assistance or just knowing mentally that that support is easily accessible in the case of an emergency.

The SDVs in this study reported that they did not have access to these types of informal relationships or networks through family or friends. This type of isolation is problematic as SDVs must be able to address challenges which arise or they may prevent them from securing or retaining employment. However, many of the SDVs learned about available employment services through another survivor, which suggests that there may be an informal network of SDVs emerging within the Region of Waterloo. The SSPs operating within the Region of Waterloo delivering employment services have established partnerships with each other. They could further explore this informal network of SDVs or designate resources to empowering the members of this existing network. This informal network could potentially be harnessed as a social support network for other SDVs who are not able to easily access their family or friends.

The SDVs also seemed to lack an understanding of SSPs governance policies and structures. This lead the SDVs to have a misinformed opinion of SSPs and the employment services they were providing. SDVs expressed that employment services seem to use a very bureaucratic approach, with the onus being on the SDV to have a clear understanding of eligibility criteria and service requirements. It became apparent that survivors identified a separation between the SSP's ability to meet policy objectives, which are mandated to empower clients, and their actual implementation of policy directives, which in some cases currently serve to disempower clients. A powerful message that arose during the interviews with SDVs was that SSPs sometimes use policies to renounce accountability of their practices. Instead of promoting policy objectives outlined in these policy directives and asserting a reasonable level of discretion, it was perceived that these governance documents were being used as tools to objectify and de-humanize individuals while justifying unfair or negative outcomes.

Though SSPs try their best to communicate effectively and support SDVs, as stated above, in some cases, they are limited by their governance structures and operating budgets. Many SSPs are government funded and as a result, must adopt practices and directives created by their funders. In most cases, this can force the SSP to operate within restricted parameters. This means they may not be able to exercise their discretionary expertise when faced with a case of domestic violence; however, as a practitioner they may be well equipped to manage the complexities of the case. In these types of situations, practitioners should identify the exact issue and potential solutions and raise awareness about the problem to their colleagues and superiors. It was demonstrated that SSPs have become more resilient over time to apply these government-mandated directives fairly and achieve the greatest level of utility for their clients.

In my opinion, the federal, provincial and municipal government have so many priorities to consider, that the process of creating directives for services and programs has become convoluted. The metaphor of a juggler with too many balls to juggle can be used to illustrate this concept. The SSPs recognized that as the provincial government or employees at the Region of Waterloo create high- level policies, the rationalization of those policies at the working-level can become less meaningful and unfeasible when applied in practice. A participant spoke about a "collective sense of selfishness", in the sense that the government wants to create policies that cater to the majority of the population in which all clients, based on their assessments, receive the same amount of funding; although this does not take into consideration the individual needs of the client. The SSPs agreed that social policies should be created with a "baseline" approach that would cater to the majority of the target audience but grant flexibility to those implementing the policy to allocate additional funds or claw-back funding where appropriate. This would enable SSPs to support SDVs through the use of anti-oppressive practices. In considering this approach, it would be beneficial if there was a

central agency that could provide or coordinate a "one window" service where SDVs could visit and learn about all available employment services and their eligibility criteria. This would provide a unified approach to service coordination and navigation that does not currently exist in this region.

5.2 Recommendations for Social Service Providers

These recommendations were generated to provide SSPs with a framework for enhancing their employment services within the context of domestic violence cases. All of the recommendations were designed to respond to opportunities that would enhance the efficacy of employment services being offered within the Region of Waterloo and further enhance the economic position and prosperity of the region.

In order to be effective these recommendations should be implemented using informed service-delivery model analyses and collaborative principles. In order to move forward with a change, an organization must have a thorough understanding of existing service-delivery models and their actual outcomes. An organization should be able to identify areas of merit and difficulties and be able to constructively articulate these areas using both quantitative and qualitative tools. This will allow a SSP to make informed decisions regarding current service-delivery practices. A SSP should also be able to apply these service-delivery practices within the wider context of their organizational mandate and alliances.

Collaborative practices should be used thorough out the development, implementation, and evaluation stages of these recommendations. Incorporating partner organizations, experts in the field, relevant stakeholders, and members of the survivor community will enrich the effectiveness that recommendations will instigate. As a result, an increased amount of knowledge sharing will occur, existing strengths within the SSP network will be leveraged, and ideals of community building and inclusivity will be promoted.

Recommendation # 1: Implement mechanisms to provide ongoing support

The first recommendation is to integrate more components of ongoing support into service-delivery models. It is clear that in order to secure employment, SDVs need to access ongoing support to achieve their goals. Due to their abusive situation and economic disadvantage, they may have developed low self-esteem or mental health difficulties that often preclude them from actively pursuing employment opportunities. SDVs need to establish a supportive connection with a SSP in order to ask for additional support since they struggle to trust individuals as a result of their previous abuse and a current unsupportive environment. Components of ongoing support could be actualized through SSPs making follow-up calls, providing transportation support, advice on how to dress for an interview or verbal coaching or encouragement through challenging periods of self-doubt. These additional activities could be integrated into the SSP's performance management strategy to tangibly demonstrate a commitment to service excellence.

After securing a position, being able to access ongoing support is even more important to women as they may experience continued feelings of self-doubt as they begin to re-assert their independence in a professional community. Despite external evidence of their competence, SDVs can remain convinced that they are frauds and do not deserve the success they have achieved. SDVs may need assistance to realize it is their choice to perform well in their job, and that they are able to meet assigned tasks and mange other competing priorities as well.

Recommendation # 2: Provide specialized training to front-line workers

The second recommendation is to provide specialized training to front-line or outreach/social workers assigned who work with SDVs. This group of professionals has already undergone a significant amount of training to be qualified to work with diverse individuals and groups. This specialized training about SDVs could also integrate information about other

vulnerable populations as well. SDVs are a unique population in the sense that they are very capable of performing well as an employee and in many cases are striving to become economically secure and less dependent on government-based social assistance. However, they require understanding, empathy, and appropriate responses from SSPs in order to complete this transition. SSPs delivering employment services have already deployed training programs for front-line employees, so it is logical to conclude that this training session could be easily integrated into existing training frameworks.

SSPs could roll-out this training in whichever format is most applicable to their agency, whether it is offered as an online course, delivered as a half or full day training session, or as a professional development seminar available to all practitioners working with these populations. The initial portion of the training could review findings from previously conducted studies as well as policy reports or sector profiles. Additionally, it is paramount that the training integrates consideration of different economic issues that impact this region, gender discrimination/inequality concepts, and theories of anti-oppressive practice into the training modules. The training must also provide a mechanism for practitioners to confront and overcome their own biases, fears and stereotypes regarding abused women. Many practitioners have internalized the victim blaming attitudes that permeate this community, which is likely to undermine their ability to get full and honest disclosure from the women they interview. Once a strong understanding of SDV needs and challenges is built, then the SSP's strategic plan for assisting SDVs could be communicated. In order to operationalize these strategies, case studies, role-play situations, or situational-based questions could be used to generate a practical understanding of how to manage domestic violence cases. This would help front-line workers to have a unified approach to managing these cases and in turn, exemplify service excellence values.

<u>Recommendation # 3:</u> Increase promotional and public-awareness activities

The third recommendation is for SSPs promote their employment services on an increasing basis to generate public awareness of available services and foster a more inclusive community. This recommendation is critically important as it will help to bolster SDV social informal support systems and enable the SDVs in the community to learn about available employment services. Many of the SDVs expressed that they did not know how to begin their job search, or which SSP offered employment services. Another powerful message that arose from the SDVs was that they know other women in similar situations who are suffering as a result of not knowing where to access support. This situation would be easily rectified if SSPs banded together to complete an increased amount of promotional activities in areas accessed by vulnerable populations. This would give SDVs the opportunity to learn in a familiar space, anonymously, without having to disclose any information about their abusive situation. This adds an additional level of safety so that SDVs could ask questions in a pubic and inclusive forum where others are learning as well. Moreover, in order to increase uptake of employment services, SSPs should complete additional promotional activities in both urban and rural centres of the Region of Waterloo.

Increasing the number of promotional or outreach activities being completed will also serve to remove stigmas associated with SDVs from communities. This is a large problem as identified by both SSPs and SDVs. A more inclusive and accepting community could be fostered if community members had additional opportunities to learn more about domestic violence and how it impacts survivors. If SSPs are willing to step outside their area of expertise and speak to community members about their services, than naturally, individuals will be inclined to either engage in that service or ask for more information. Indirectly, SSPs will act as a convenor to facilitate knowledge

sharing between themselves, SDVs, and community members to create potentially fruitful relationships. Graphic 1 illustrates the information stated above as a visual aid.

Graphic 1: Framework for Recommendations

OUTCOMES		
- Development of employment services that meet the needs of SDVs - Development of a more inclusive and well-informed community - Facilitate growth and retention of existing SSPs delivering employment services - Ensure a sustainable and healthy growing economy		

Recommendations	Increase Ongoing Support	Increase Training for Support Staff	Increase Promotion of Services
Foundations	Collaboration		
	Informed Service-Delivery Model Analysis		
	Organizational Evaluation		

5.3 Limitations of Study & Recommendations for Future Research

While this study significantly enhances our understanding of SDV needs while seeking employment and SSPs who are currently providing employment service within the Region of Waterloo, there are three specific limitations that should be noted. These limitations included the analysis of academic articles selected, applicability of the recommendations to all SSPs, and the transferability of the SDV sample. Although an extensive search was conducted to locate relevant publications meeting the inclusion criteria for the literature review, some relevant publications may

have been overlooked. In addition, although I carefully reviewed and documented each core themes, it is possible that aspects of the publications were misinterpreted.

The recommendations outlined may not be applicable to all SSPs within the context of their organizational structure. Findings from large-scale not-for-profit organizations, community-based organizations, government agencies, and contracted services were used to generate these recommendations. Thus, feasibility of the recommendations may be dependent on the current state of governance directives influencing a particular SSP. However, recommendations were framed within a broad context to grant as much flexibility as possible. Additionally, all SSPs selected for this area were operating within urban centers within the Region of Waterloo. Thus, information reported in this study may not be applicable to those SSP who are operating in rural areas. Further research could be completed to further explore specific types of organizational structures to developed specialized recommendations.

Finally, it should be noted that the sample of SDVs selected for this research study was small (6 women), all women experienced a precarious financial situation, likely suffer from additional experiences of abuse, and as a result the findings are not transferable to the whole population of SDVs in the region. However, this is not a primary goal of qualitative research, and this study offers a unique perspective from an understudied group of women. As Creswell notes, "The intent in qualitative research is not to generalize the information... but to elucidate the particular, the specific" (2013, pg. 157). In terms of age, the women ranged from twenty-six to fifty-eight and thus results may not be transferable to other age cohorts or other financial situations. In order to increase transferability of the results, future research could be conducted to further investigate the needs of SDVs while pursuing employment services with a larger more representative and diversified sample.

5.4 Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to explore employment services available for SDVs within the Region of Waterloo. The focal and sub-research research questions were successfully used to complete this exploration. Anecdotal evidence and data captured from the interviews were framed within the context of the existing literature. The findings of this study demonstrate the complexity of the factors that can impact an SDV in precarious financial situation as they embark on their post-abuse employment search journey. The experiences of the SDVs demonstrated that personal needs are being considered; however, structural challenges have remained unaddressed. Despite having overcome violent and traumatic experiences, women demonstrated a desire to be economically independent and productive, which was apparent in the areas they prioritized as needs in this study. I was surprised that their traumatic exposure did not diminish their desire to establish environments more conducive to their functioning. Cynthia Occelli stated that, "for a seed to achieve its greatest expression, it must come completely undone. The shell cracks, its insides come out and everything changes. To someone who doesn't understand growth, it would look like complete destruction" (2014, p. 45). This quotation beautifully captures the process of growth that the SDVs experienced and the implicit depth of understanding that SSPs exhibited of this process.

In terms of the SSPs, there was a wide range of accomplishments and challenges that were investigated. They currently have designed their employment services to alleviate personal needs but struggle to address structural challenges since they are constrained by varied governance structures. Though they are limited in some area, SSPs employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to meet their performance metrics and have demonstrated substantive results. This approach is commendable as measuring success is usually completed using quantitative methods only. It was clearly demonstrated through this study that SSPs operating in the Region of Waterloo have distributed substantial financial and human resources to support individuals. Overall, I was

deeply inspired by the level of perseverance, compassion, and commitment that the SSPs exhibited when sharing their stories about their service-delivery experiences.

Becoming engrossed in this research has increased my awareness of these issues significantly. As a public servant, I continually strive to meet high levels of service excellence. As a service provider myself, I understand what it is like to be subjected to a high-level governance structure and then work alongside my colleagues to analyze the structure to determine practical applications. I believe that all practitioners should actively engage in these types of activities to ensure their values and ideas are incorporated into working-level policies.

The findings and recommendations developed in this research study will be useful to me in my professional role as I am employed by an economic development agency that creates and delivers social economic services and programs. I am passionate about establishing services that are meritorious and enhance the overall ability of a client to achieve their goals. This research study demonstrated that there is a clear disconnect between the shifting complex needs of SDVs and adaptive ability of SSPs to respond to these needs. Analyzing this information has given me a more holistic perspective about the challenges that SDVs experience and the types of activities that would better support them to alleviate these challenges. This will enable me to better advocate for certain clauses or content when creating policies to ensure they will be applicable and meaningful at the working-level for front-line staff. While this research project has provided some insight into the SSPs and SDVs issues of in regards to employment services, it has also left me with additional questions which has led to my desire to pursue further research. This study has renewed my commitment to use research as a tool to advocate for SDVs.

In conclusion, SSPs aspire to provide relevant and meaningful services to support SDVs; however, further improvements can be instituted to enhance these employment services. Until this

occurs, practitioners, like myself, can: advocate on behalf of SDVs, be informed of current social issues, participate in political activities, critically analyse polices that impact our work, and actively seek opportunities to contribute to service-delivery forums. Additionally, SSPs, if feasible, can adopt the recommendations outlined in this study. The implications of implementing the recommendations are significant because they create an awareness of tangible ways in which SSPs can further support SDVs. As the Region of Waterloo economy continues to grow, we will increase our capacities to truly develop a local population, not necessarily only as resources, but as contributing, empowered, fairly supported members of society.

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Appendix A – Permission to Contact Letter

Re: In-Person or Telephone Interview for Research Project

I am currently a Masters of Social Work student at Wilfrid Laurier University completing a research project titled: **An Exploration of Employment Services for Survivors of Domestic Violence in the Region of Waterloo.** This research project will allow social service providers operating in the Region of Waterloo to understand the needs of women who have survived domestic violence and develop appropriate employment services for these women after they leave vulnerable situations and re-enter the community. The project will be led by myself, a MSW Candidate at Wilfrid Laurier University under the supervision of Dr. Ginette Lafrenière, who is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. Your decision to participate will not impact your request for support currently or in the future.

□ Yes   □ No   Do you grant permission for Alishau Diebold to contact you about this research study?

If yes, please provide your contact information below:

Name:

E-mail address:

Phone #:

Signature:

Date:

You will be contacted to explore your involvement as a participant in the study. Your contact information will remain confidential and will only be used to contact you about this research project.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

- Alishau Diebold
MSW Candidate, Faculty of Social Work
Wilfrid Laurier University

Appendix B – Letter of Information for Survivors of Domestic Violence

Dear [enter research participant's name],

Thank you for agreeing to be contacted for a telephone interview about your experiences seeking employment in the Region of Waterloo. The enclosed letter explains what is involved in the interview. If you are chosen for an interview, I will contact you within the next few weeks to arrange an interview time and day that is compatible with your schedule.

We find that doing interviews with participants can provide different information. By having an interview that is like a conversation, we can understand on a more personal level your experience in your own words. This interview will take between 30 to 45 minutes. If you are selected for an interview and you agree, we will send you a $20 gift-card to express our appreciation for your time and knowledge.

Thank you again for your participation and for reading the attached information.

Sincerely,

Alishau Diebold
MSW Candidate, Faculty of Social Work
Wilfrid Laurier University

LETTER OF INFORMATION REGARDING INTERVIEWS -
SURVIVOR OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXPERIENCES FINDING EMPLOYMENT

An Exploration of Employment Services for
Survivors of Domestic Violence in the Region of Waterloo
Researchers: Alishau Diebold, MSW Candidate, Ginette Lafrenière, PhD

INFORMATION

If you are contacted and you agree, you will be asked questions about:

- Your perception of current employment services;
- What your needs are as a SDV in terms of securing employment;
- How you sought out employment;
- Which employment services you have previously accessed;
- What your experience was accessing these employment programs or services;
- What challenges you faced trying to access these organizations/programs/services;
- Which type of employment options were available (e.g. starting your own business); and
- How your personal support network may have assisted you in finding employment.

With your permission, Alishau will audio record the interview so that the researchers can transcribe your comments and be certain that we understand your experience accurately. To express our appreciation for your time and assistance, we will send you a gift-card for $20.00 after completion of the telephone interview.

PARTICIPATION

Each woman who grants Alishau permission to contact them will be asked to participate in an interview. Your participation in the interview is voluntary, and you may decline to participate or you may withdraw from the study at any time without loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, the data you have provided will be destroyed. You may decline to answer any question. You may also agree to be interviewed but choose not to have it audio recorded, in which case the researcher will keep written notes of the points you make. You will be asked if we can quote your words if the quotations would not identify you. You can choose to participate in the interview but decline to have your words quoted. Your quotations will not be used in any publications before they have been reviewed by you and receive your approval. Additionally, this research project (tracking # 3834) has been approved by the university research ethics board.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

You will not be asked directly to revisit the circumstances of your situation. However, you may wish to disclose aspects of your personal experiences that may cause emotional distress due the traumatic or sensitive nature of the material. Discussing your experiences or other personal matters may cause you to feel a sense of lost privacy or regret over the revelation of information to a researcher. Though participation in this project will not involve physical exertion, there may be a heightened physical risk (e.g., bodily harm) for survivor participants, particularly from a former or current abusive partner if their participation in the project was made known. Every possible measure will be taken to remove directly identifying information from research material and maintain the anonymity of the research participants following the procedures outlined in the section of this consent letter titled "Confidentiality."

BENEFITS

You may benefit from being able to express, in your own words, important aspects of your experiences regarding employment. Your valuable insights and knowledge will be used for the development and enhancement of survivor of domestic centered shelter and community services and programs.

Since there is an information gap concerning services and resources in this area available for survivors of domestic violence, it will be highly useful to service users and service providers to have the opportunity to better understand the complexities of these issues. New knowledge provided by this project will thus enhance local communities and society at large regarding survivor concerns. In addition, knowledge gained will be of benefit to the education and training of professionals working in this field.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information provided by participants is considered completely confidential. Your name and others' names you may mention during your interview will not be included, or in any other way associated, with the data collected in the study. After your interview has been transcribed, all identifying information will be removed. Interview data will be coded so that only the researchers are able to link your comments or data to your name. You may participate in this study without being quoted. However, with your consent, it is possible that quotations from your interview will be used in the study report, presentations of the results, and articles submitted to relevant academic publications.

FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION

If you wish, you may receive a copy of the transcript of your telephone interview, and you will be given an opportunity to add to or clarify what you have said. Additionally, a focus group will be conducted to further explore themes identified from the in-depth interview. This focus group will service as an opportunity for interview participants to learn about the early findings of the study. Findings may be reported in conference presentations and journal articles.

WHO TO CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS

If you have questions about the study or the procedures (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in the study), you may contact the project manager, **Alishau Diebold,** by telephone at (519)-569-9392 or by email at abdu9810@mylaurier.ca.

<u>**Appendix C**</u> **– Letter of Information for Social Service Providers**

Dear (insert Executive Director's name):

Re: Interview for Research Project

I am currently a Masters of Social Work student at Wilfrid Laurier University undertaking a thesis research project. I would like to invite (interest organization's name) to participate in this research study, which will focus on improving employment services for survivors of domestic violence in the Region of Waterloo. Your organization has been specifically selected to be involved in this research study based on the social services it currently delivers. This interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

This research project will enable social service providers operating in the Region of Waterloo to understand the needs of women who have survived domestic violence and improve the employment services available for these women once they re-enter the community. The ability of survivors of domestic to secure employment once they leave their abusive situation has been identified as a significant gap in the existing knowledge base, and one that urgently needs to be addressed.

The project will be led by myself, a MSW Candidate at Wilfrid Laurier University under the supervision of Dr. Ginette Lafrenière, who is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. Additionally, this research project (tracking # 3834) has been approved by the university research ethics board.

Before you agree to the interview I can confirm that:

- A copy of the interview questions will be sent to you seven days before the interview;
- Your anonymity will be maintained at all times and no comments will be attributed to you by name in any written document or verbal presentation;
- The interview will only be recorded with your consent;
- Quotations from the interview will only be used with your consent. If a quotation from your interview is selected to be used all identifying information will be removed;
- A transcript of the interview will be sent to you after the interview;
- You can withdraw from the interview/request the transcript not be used at anytime; and
- A copy of my final research report will be made available to you upon request.

I sincerely hope that you will be able to assist me with my research and would be pleased to provide support in any way possible to assist your organization's participation in this project. If you have any questions concerning the nature of the research or are unclear about the extent of your involvement please do not hesitate contact me by phone me at (519)-569-9392 or e-mail me at abdu9810@mylaurier.ca.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

- Alishau Diebold
MSW Candidate, Faculty of Social Work
Wilfrid Laurier University

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT – Survivors of Domestic Violence

Title of Project: An Exploration of Employment Services for Survivors of Domestic Violence in the Region of Waterloo

Thesis Supervisor: **Dr. Ginette Lafrenière, Associate Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University**

Project Manager: **Alishau Diebold, MSW Candidate, Wilfrid Laurier University**

You are invited to participate in a research study mandated to improve the current state of employment services for survivors of domestic violence in the Region of Waterloo. This study will enable social service providers operating in the Region of Waterloo to understand the needs of women who have survived domestic violence and develop appropriate employment services for these women after they leave vulnerable situations and re-enter the community. The ability of survivors of domestic to secure employment once they leave their vulnerable situation has been identified as a significant gap in the existing knowledge base, and one that urgently needs to be addressed. The research project is led by Alishau Diebold, a MSW Candidate at Wilfrid Laurier University under the supervision of Dr. Ginette Lafrenière, who is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University.

INFORMATION

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Each woman who grants Alishau permission to contact them will be asked to participate in an interview. If you choose to take part, you will be asked to engage in an individual, telephone interview. All interviews will be conducted by the project manager, Alishau Diebold, who has been trained in research ethics, interviewing practices, and confidentiality protocols. As a participant, you will be asked questions about your experiences in regards to securing employment. You will be asked to discuss these issues only to the extent you feel comfortable.

The interview will be audio-taped with your permission. You may refuse to have the interview audio-taped if you are not comfortable, and you may also ask to have the audio recorder turned off at any point during the interview. You may stop the interview at any point. You may choose to omit any questions you do not wish to answer. Furthermore, the interview questions are open-ended, meaning that you may choose to provide as much or as little information as you wish. You may also withdraw from the study with no repercussions. Individual interviews will take approximately 45 minutes to complete; however the length of participants' responses and therefore the duration of each interview will vary.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

You will not be asked directly to revisit the circumstances of your situation. However, you may wish to disclose aspects of your personal experiences that may cause emotional distress due the traumatic or sensitive nature of the material. Discussing your experiences or other personal matters may cause you to feel a sense of lost privacy or regret over the revelation of information to a researcher.

Though participation in this project will not involve physical exertion, there may be a heightened physical risk (e.g., bodily harm) for survivor participants, particularly from a former or current abusive partner if their participation in the project was made known. Participation in this project may also involve social risks (e.g., loss of privacy, social stigma associated with victimization). Every possible measure will be taken to remove directly identifying information from research material and maintain the anonymity of the research participants following the procedures outlined in the section of this consent form titled "Confidentiality."

The atmosphere of the interview will be relaxed, allowing you to speak of your experiences in your own words and to speak as much or as little as you feel comfortable. At the time of reviewing the consent form, all participants will be provided with up-to-date information regarding local support services. Should you experience distress at anytime, during or after the interview, we strongly encourage you to seek help from the list of support services that has been provided to you.

BENEFITS

You may benefit from being able to express, in your own words, important aspects of your experiences regarding employment. Your valuable insights and knowledge will be used for the development and enhancement of survivor of domestic violence centered community services and programs.

Since there is an information gap concerning services and resources in this area available for survivors of domestic violence, it will be highly useful to service users and service providers to have the opportunity to better understand the complexities of these issues. New knowledge provided by this project will thus enhance local communities and society at large regarding survivor concerns. In addition, knowledge gained will be of benefit to the education and training of professionals working in this field.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information provided by participants is considered completely confidential. Your name and others' names you may mention during your interview will not be included, or in any other way associated, with the data collected in the study. After your interview has been transcribed, all identifying information will be removed. Interview data will be coded so that only the researchers are able to link your comments or data to your name. You may participate in this study without being quoted. However, with your consent, it is possible that quotations from your interview will be used in articles submitted to relevant academic publications. If a quotation from your interview is selected to be used all identifying information will be removed.

HANDLING AND SECURITY OF DATA

Every effort and various precautionary measures will be taken to ensure that all data collected remains protects and in a secure location. However, if an unforeseen circumstance occurs the data may become compromised. Data collection can never be guaranteed to be completely secure. However, every effort will be made to ensure that your privacy and confidentiality is protected throughout the study. Tape recorded interviews will be downloaded onto a password-protected computer and the original recordings will be deleted. All transcripts and any notes taken will be stored on a password-protected computer. Interview data will be kept for five years after it has been published in academic research journals and then destroyed by Alishau Diebold. Any of the data gathered from you that has been publicized to a website or in a newsletter may become public record and remain publicized for the life of the record.

COMPENSATION

For participating in this study, you will receive a $20 gift-card. If you withdraw from the study prior to its completion, you will still receive compensation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about the study or the procedures (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in the study), you may contact the project manager, **Alishau Diebold,** by telephone at (519)-569-9392 or by email at abdu9810@mylaurier.ca.

Additionally, this research project (tracking # 3834) has been approved by the university research ethics board. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact **Dr. Robert Basso**, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, by telephone at (519)-884-1970 ext. 4994 or by email at **rbasso@wlu.ca.**

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study, every attempt will be made to remove your data from the study, and have it destroyed.

Participants will have all questions about the study answered to their satisfaction before commencing the interview. You have the right to omit any interview question(s) you choose. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research. Researchers may contact you through phone or email to answer your questions or to provide you with requested feedback.

FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION

The data collection and analysis for this study will be complete by December 2014. The results will be written up in a report and may be submitted in the form of journal articles to relevant scholarly publications. If you would like to receive a copy of the thesis based on this study, it will be available by April 2015, please provide us with your email/mailing address below.

Would you like a summary of the results?   □ Yes   □ No

If yes, please provide your email/mailing address: _____

_____

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I understand the risks and discomforts involved. I have had my questions answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

□ Yes   □ No   I agree to participate in this study

□ Yes   □ No   I agree to have the interview tape recorded

Participant's signature:_____   Date _____

Person obtaining consent:_____   Date _____

□ Yes   □ No   Do you give permission for research to use personal quotations from your interview, provided all identifying information is removed?

Participant's signature:_____   Date _____

□ Yes   □ No   I have agreed to receive a $20 gift-card for my participation

Participant's signature:_____   Date _____

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT – Social Service Providers

Title of Project: An Exploration of Employment Services for Survivors of Domestic Violence in the Region of Waterloo

Thesis Supervisor: **Dr. Ginette Lafrenière, Associate Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University**

Project Manager: **Alishau Diebold, MSW Candidate, Wilfrid Laurier University**

You are invited to participate in a research study mandated to improve the current state of employment services for survivors of domestic violence in the Region of Waterloo. This research project will enable social service providers operating in the Region of Waterloo to understand the needs of women who have survived domestic violence and develop appropriate employment services for these women after they leave their vulnerable situations and re-enter the community. The ability of survivors of domestic to secure employment once they leave their situations has been identified as a significant gap in the existing knowledge base, and one that urgently needs to be addressed. The research project is led by Alishau Diebold, a MSW Candidate at Wilfrid Laurier University under the supervision of Dr. Ginette Lafrenière, who is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University.

INFORMATION

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your organization has been specifically selected to be involved in this research study based on the social services it currently delivers. If you choose to take part, you will be asked to engage in an individual, telephone interview. All interviews will be conducted by the project manager, Alishau Diebold who has been trained in research ethics, interviewing practices, and confidentiality protocols. As a participant, you will be asked questions about your experiences working with survivors of domestic violence who are engaged in the process of securing employment. You will be asked to discuss these issues only to the extent you feel comfortable.

The interview will be audio-taped with your permission. You may refuse to have the interview audio-taped if you are not comfortable, and you may also ask to have the audio recorder turned off at any point during the interview. You may stop the interview at any point. You may choose to omit any questions you do not wish to answer. Furthermore, the interview questions are open-ended, meaning that you may choose to provide as much or as little information as you wish. You may also withdraw from the study with no repercussions and notify the principal investigator of this at any time. Individual interviews will take approximately 45 minutes to complete; however due to the length of participants' responses the duration of each interview will vary.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Discussing your experiences working with survivors of domestic violence who are engaged in the process of securing employment may cause you to feel a sense of lost privacy or regret over the revelation of information to a researcher. You may feel you must answer questions asked during the interview, despite being told that you may decline to answer any questions you wish.

Every possible measure will be taken to remove directly identifying information from research material and maintain the anonymity of the research participants following the procedures outlined in the section of this consent form titled "Confidentiality." The atmosphere of the interview will be relaxed, allowing you to speak of your experiences in your own words and to speak as much or as little as you feel comfortable.

BENEFITS

You may benefit from being able to express, in your own words, important aspects of your experiences. Your valuable insights and knowledge will be used for the development and enhancement of survivor of domestic violence centered employment services and programs.

Since there is an information gap concerning services and resources in this area available for survivors of domestic violence, it will be highly useful to social service providers to have the opportunity to better understand the complexities of these issues. New knowledge provided by this project will thus enhance local communities and society at large regarding survivor concerns. In addition, knowledge gained will be of benefit to the education and training of professionals working in this field.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information provided by participants is considered completely confidential. Your name and others' names you may mention during your interview will not be included, or in any other way associated, with the data collected in the study. After your interview has been transcribed, all identifying information will be removed. Interview data will be coded so that only the researchers are able to link your comments or data to your name. You may participate in this study without being quoted. However, with your consent, it is possible that quotations from your interview will be used in the study report, presentations of the results, and articles submitted to relevant academic publications. If a quotation from your interview is selected to be used all identifying information will be removed.

HANDLING AND SECURITY OF DATA

Every effort and various precautionary measures will be taken to ensure that all data collected remains protects and in a secure location. However, if an unforeseen circumstance occurs the data may become compromised. Data collection can never be guaranteed to be completely secure. Every effort will be made to ensure that your privacy and confidentiality is protected throughout the study. Tape recorded interviews will be downloaded onto a password-protected computer and the original recordings will be deleted. All transcripts and any notes taken will be stored on a password-protected computer. Interview data will be kept for five years after it has been published in

academic research journals and then destroyed by Alishau Diebold. Any of the data gathered from you that has been publicized to a website or in a newsletter may become public record and remain publicized for the life of the record.

COMPENSATION

You will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

CONTACT

If you have questions about the study or the procedures (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in the study), you may contact the project manager, **Alishau Diebold,** by telephone at (519)-569-9392 or by email at abdu9810@mylaurier.ca.

Additionally, this research project (tracking # 3834) has been approved by the university research ethics board. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact **Dr. Robert Basso**, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, by telephone at (519)-884-1970 ext. 4994 or by email at **rbasso@wlu.ca.**

PARTICIPATION

Participants will have all questions about the study answered to their satisfaction before commencing the interview. You have the right to omit any interview question(s) you choose. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research. Researchers may contact you through phone or email to answer your questions or to provide you with requested feedback.

FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION

The data collection and analysis for this study will be complete by December 2014. The results will be written up in a report and may be submitted in the form of journal articles to relevant scholarly publications. If you would like to receive a copy of the thesis based on this study, it will be available by April 2015, please provide us with your email/mailing address below.

Would you like a summary of the results?   □ Yes   □ No

If yes, please provide your email/mailing address: _____

_____

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I understand the risks and discomforts involved. I have had my questions answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

□ Yes   □ No   I agree to participate in this study

□ Yes   □ No   I agree to have the interview tape recorded

Participant's signature:_____   Date _____

Person obtaining consent:_____   Date _____

□ Yes   □ No   Do you give permission for research to use personal quotations from your interview, provided all identifying information is removed?

Participant's signature:_____   Date _____

Appendix F – Verbal Consent Form for Survivors of Domestic Violence

This interview will take place in a private room with only the interviewer present.

□ Yes   □ No   Have you received and read the Informed Consent statement that was mailed to you?

□ Yes   □ No   Do you understand the risks and discomforts involved in your participation?

□ Yes   □ No   Have you had your questions answered to your satisfaction?

□ Yes   □ No   Do you agree to participate in the study?

□ Yes   □ No   Do you agree to have this interview tape recorded?

□ Yes   □ No   Do you give permission for the research to use personal quotations from your interview, provided all identifying information is removed?

Would you like a summary of the results?   □ Yes   □ No

How do you prefer us to communicate with you?   □ Email   □ Regular Mail

Please confirm that I have your correct email/mailing address:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Mailing Address:

_____

_____

For your participation in the one-hour interview, we would like to mail you a gift-card worth $20 as a token of our appreciation for your contribution to our project.

May we have permission to send this to you by mail?   □ Yes   □ No

Person obtaining consent_____ Date _____

Appendix G – Interview Guide for Survivors of Domestic Violence

My name is _____. I am a social work researcher/student from Wilfrid Laurier University who has been trained to conduct research for this project. Thank you very much for giving your time to participate in this research project. We value your input and hope it will help to improve the employment services provided to women in this community. Before we begin, I would like to answer any questions you might have about the study or the informed consent statement you have reviewed. (Use verbal consent form for phone interviews). During this interview, I am hoping you will share with me some of your experiences searching for employment. You do not have to share the events that brought you to seek employment unless you would like to do so. As outlined in the consent form, nothing identifying you will be included in the study data, and I want to emphasize that you have the right not to answer any questions you wish, to stop participating in this interview at any time, and to contact me to withdraw from the study even after the interview has finished. Any information you share with me in the interview will be kept confidential. However, if you tell me about any current mistreatment of children, by law I have to report this information to the appropriate agencies.

A. Transition to Community Living   Age: _____

1. Which community do you live in currently?

2. What is your perception of the employment services currently available to you?

3. What are your needs in terms of securing employment? For example, flexible hours, benefits?

4. Thinking back to the first time you sought out a job, how did you go about trying to find employment or what steps did you take?

5. What would you say have been your most significant personal challenges trying to find employment?

B. Exploration of Employment Services

6. Which organizations or agencies have you receive employment services from? Please tell me the agency name(s) and the community in which they were located.

   - Probe: Can you tell me how you first learned about these employment programs?

   - Probe: What kind of assistance, if any, did you receive that first time?

   - Probe: What kind of assistance, if any, have you received since then?

7. Please tell me about your experiences in with these programs. First, what about the programs did you experience as positive? Second, what about the programs did you find negative?

   - Probe: Can you give me an example of this?

8. What opportunities were there to start your own business?

   - Probe: What supports or knowledge would make it easier to begin your own business?

9. Were training opportunities available to you? If yes, please explain what type of training activities you participated in.

- Probe: Did you find them helpful? Why or why not, please explain.

10. There may have been other people or groups in your personal life you spoke to about your situation. If you did speak to anyone else, who would you say offered help?

- Probe: [If applicable] How were these people or groups helpful to you?

- Probe: Did you share your situation with anyone who turned out not to be helpful?

11. Based on your experience, what about these employment services be improved?

- Probe: Can you give me an example of this?

12. Do you feel that employment services played a role in helping you to achieve stability or security?

C. **Overall Perceptions**

13. What would you want someone else to know who is trying to secure employment after leaving a difficult situation?

14. If you could wave a magic wand and change anything about your experiences what would you change?

15. Is there anything we haven't discussed today about your experiences you would like to share?

Appendix H – Interview Guide for Social Service Providers

My name is _____. I am a social work researcher/student from Wilfrid Laurier University who has been trained to conduct research for this project. Thank you for giving your time to participate in this research project. We value your input and hope it will help to improve the services provided to women in this community. Before we begin, I would like to answer any questions you might have about the study or the informed consent statement you have reviewed. (Use verbal consent form for phone interviews). During this interview, I am hoping you will share with me some of your experiences working with survivors of domestic violence trying to find employment. Please do not share the events that brought them to your agency. As outlined in the consent form, nothing identifying you will be included in the study data, and I want to emphasize that you have the right not to answer any questions you wish, to stop participating in this interview at any time, and to contact the researchers to withdraw from the study even after the interview has finished. Any information you share with me in the interview will be kept confidential. However, if you tell me about any current mistreatment of children, by law I have to report this information to the appropriate agencies.

A. Basic Information

1. Which agency are you affiliated with?

2. How long have you been affiliated with this agency?

B. Survivor of Domestic Violence Transition in Community Life

3. What general or specific barriers do you perceive that survivors of domestic violence experience when trying to find employment?

4. What social service employment programs do survivors of domestic violence commonly pursue?

   • Probe: Are there ways to address these barriers?

5. What opportunities are there for a survivor of domestic violence to start their own business?

   • Probe: What support or knowledge would assist a survivor of domestic violence to begin their own business?

6. What opportunities are there for a survivor of domestic violence to access training programs?

7. Do social support networks impact the level of resiliency of a survivor of domestic abuse?

C. Employment Service/Program Delivery

8. What is the demographic of the women who access these services/programs?

   • Probe: How does your agency gain participants to engage in your programs?

9. What employment services/programs does your agency provide for survivors of domestic violence?

10. How does your agency measure the success of these programs?

- Probe: Which components of the employment programs have been the most successful? Why?

- Probe: Which components of the employment programs have been least successful? Why?

11. In your agency, what challenges do you perceive survivors of domestic violence to experience when accessing your programs?

- Probe: What would alleviate these challenges?

D. <u>Overall Perceptions</u>

12. What would you want a survivor of domestic violence who is re-entering the community pursuing employment to know?

13. If you could wave a magic wand and change anything about your experiences delivering employment services, what would you change?

14. Is there anything we haven't discussed today about your experiences that you would like to share?

Appendix I – Support Services Resource List

Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region

Haven House   Anselma House
562 Concession Rd., Cambridge   700 Heritage Dr., Kitchener
Crisis Line: 519-653-2422   Crisis Line: 519-742-5894
* Offers 24 hour confidential support, shelter and outreach services, and community referrals

Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region

151 Frederick St., Kitchener
Crisis Line: 519-571-0121
* Offers 24 hour confidential support for individuals who have experienced sexual assault as a child or as an adult as well as support for family and friends of survivors

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

General Support Line: 519-745-1166   Youth Line: 519-745-9909
Mental Health & Addictions Data Base: 519-744-5594
* Offers 24 hour confidential support, crisis response, intervention and referrals

Waterloo Region Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centre

Cambridge Memorial Hospital
700 Coronation Blvd., Cambridge
* Ask for services in the hospital Emergency Department

Family Counselling Centre of Cambridge & North Dumfries

18 Walnut St., Cambridge
519-621-5090
* Offers sliding scale fees for individual counselling and a free Women Helping Women support group for survivors of domestic violence

Mosaic Family & Counselling Services

400 Queen St. S., Kitchener
519-743-6333
* Offers individual, couple, family and group counselling with sliding scale fees available
* Location of the Family Violence Project (FVP) where various services such as the Waterloo Regional Police Services, Crown Attorney's Office and Legal Aid provide assistance to victims of domestic violence

KW Counselling Services

480 Charles St. E., Kitchener
519-884-0000
* Walk in Counselling Clinic Thursdays from noon-6pm with sliding scale fees available
* Offers free services including counselling and safety planning for women and children who have experienced abuse

Cambridge Active Self Help Alliance (CASH)

9 Wellington St., Unit 1, Cambridge
519-623-6024
Mon – Fri from 9am – 5pm
* Offers a variety of information and services about mental health through peer support

Appendix J – Flow Chart of Employment Services Accessed by Survivors

Initial Contact by SDV
Social Assistance Provider
Outreach Worker
Social Worker

Caseworker Established
Once a caseworker has been established they provide ongoing support for the SDV and make referrals to suitable programs. This caseworker is usually the person who was initially contacted.

SDV Self-Directed Job Search

YES (Not satisfied with job) / NO

Employment Secured?

Training Programs

Large-Scale Employment Social Service Providers

YES (Satisfied with job)

Job Placements

SDV Stops Accessing Employment Services

Informal Social Support Networks Established

Community-based Employment Social Service