

**Genuine Concern or Lip Service:
Sexual Violence Policies in Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions**

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Abstract

Post-secondary institutions are intended to be safe spaces where students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to experience and engage in critical thought and discussion. When critical thought and discussion occurs, it may raise awareness, give context, and challenge assumptions which have the potential to shift the narrative around significant issues. Although post-secondary institutions foster the intellectual growth of its members, they are also environments where its members face sexual violence. While sexual violence has always been present in these institutions, it is only more recently that sexual violence along with its impacts on victims received closer attention from media. This media attention resulted in public pressure which demands post-secondary institutions to create and implement policies and educational programming that specifically addresses sexual violence. Other policies and processes, however, such as Student Codes of Conduct the criminal justice system, already designate forms of sexual violence as intolerable or illegal. Due to the massive public pressure and demand for policies which specifically address sexual violence and sexual violence only, it is crucial to examine how or if these policies add or contribute to the policy or legislative context in Canada. In order to examine these policies, this research investigates campus community members' knowledge of and perceptions of sexual violence policies in the context of Canadian post-secondary institutions. The overall findings of this research suggest that students lack knowledge around not only the content of sexual violence policies but also the existence of these policies more broadly. Despite this, there is unwavering support for these policies amongst students, faculty, and staff. The findings of this research provide valuable insights for Canadian post-secondary institutions about the knowledge of, perceptions of, and attitudes towards sexual violence policies.

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Dedication

The prevalence of sexual violence in post-secondary institutions is a frightful reality. Every person has the right to live their life free from sexual violence. Living free from this violence will never be possible without the commitment of all people working tirelessly in this field.

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Sexual Violence Policies in Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions

Introduction

Post-secondary institutions are high-risk communities for sexual violence. The presence of this violence is a perpetual historical issue that continues to be relevant today (Moorman, & Osborne, 2016; Quinlan, Quinlan, Fogel, & Taylor, 2017; Cantalupo, 2016; Senn et al., 2013). While sexual violence has always been problematic within post-secondary institutions, the detrimental physical and psychological impacts of this violence have only merited closer attention from the media over the past several years (Quinlan et al., 2017; Sawa and Ward, 2015). With a greater number of individuals publicly sharing their experiences of sexual violence through different forms of media, such as social media platforms or news broadcasting agencies, the media as a whole is forced to increase news coverage concerning post-secondary sexual violence. In turn, post-secondary institutions are forced to respond to this media coverage.

Stories shared across all forms of media, combined with social movements and campaigns, regarding sexual violence brought the issue of post-secondary sexual violence to the public forefront and has resulted in a public outcry (Quinlan et al., 2017; Sawa, & Ward, 2015). In response to this outcry, many Canadian post-secondary institutions created and implemented sexual violence-specific policies (Quinlan et al., 2017) as well as other educational programming regarding sexual violence, such as consent-based workshops or bystander intervention training. In some cases, post-secondary institutions created and implemented these policies and programming as a result of being mandated to do so via provincial legislation.

Through a review of post-secondary policies, I found that other existing policies, such as Student Codes of Conduct, Faculty Codes of Conduct, Safe Workplace policies, and Anti-Harassment policies, name many forms of sexual violence as unacceptable behaviour. Sexual

violence policies are new policies which specifically address sexual violence and sexual violence only; however, I did not find that they addressed any behaviour not mentioned elsewhere.

Furthermore, the Criminal Code of Canada also defines forms of sexual violence, such as sexual assault, harassment, or discrimination, as crimes.

Seeing as sexual violence policies address behaviours which are already prohibited elsewhere, this study aims to assess the extent to which and how these policies add or contribute something new or different to these contexts. The overarching research question is, “To what extent do sexual violence policies in Canadian post-secondary institutions add or contribute to the policy or legislative context?” To explore this question, I conducted focus groups and interviews with students, faculty, and staff of MacEwan University, where I examined their knowledge of and perceptions of sexual violence policies in Canadian post-secondary institutions. It is crucial to examine how or if these policies add or contribute to the policy and legislative context, particularly because of the demand for sexual violence policies.

Thesis Structure

I organized this thesis into six sections. The next section situates the policies in the literature which surrounds the conceptualization and prevalence of sexual violence. In addition to discussing the prevalence of the issue, I summarize how those who experience sexual violence may be affected, both physically and psychologically. The literature review not only situates the policies in the literature but also serves to convince readers that this sexual violence as an issue is worth studying and researching.

After the literature review, I outline the methods used for data collection. I engaged in a qualitative approach based on focus groups and interviews with student, faculty, and staff of a Canadian post-secondary institution. The chapter provides a clear description of the data

collection and data analysis techniques used in this research. I also offer justification for my decisions about the research methods used.

The fourth section presents my descriptive results. In this section, I outline the ways in which discussions occurred throughout my focus groups and interviews. It is my descriptive results which allow me to argue that, although students lack knowledge about not only the content of sexual violence policies but also the broader existence of these policies, there is overwhelming support for their creation and implementation.

After the results, I offer a discussion on the data collected. In my discussion, I situate my results in the literature by interpreting my data. Before offering concluding remarks on this research, I offer a brief conversation on the limitations of my project. When I was developing the methodology for this project, I was cognizant of the possible limitations which might occur around my sample. Despite these limitations, I still obtained a good sample which I believe represents much of the population's feelings towards these policies. I end this thesis with concluding remarks where I discuss the implications for sexual violence policy creation and implementation in Canadian post-secondary institutions.

Literature Review

Defining Sexual Violence

Traditionally, policies and laws in Canada outlined sexual 'assault' or sexual 'harassment'. Today, sexual assault and sexual harassment gained recognition as forms of sexual 'violence' (Government of Alberta, 2018). The use of sexual violence as a comprehensive term—as opposed to the narrower use of the terms sexual assault or sexual harassment—is not utilized by all policies or stakeholders. For example, MacEwan University (2018) specifically states that sexual 'violence' is problematic within post-secondary institutions, and they created a

policy which specifically addresses sexual violence. The University of Saskatchewan (2015), conversely, discusses sexual ‘assault’ as being an issue within post-secondary institutions, and they created a policy which addresses sexual assault. While the difference in choice of terminology may not seem problematic, the history and evolution of sexual assault law in Canada demonstrates that emphasizing differences is crucial.

The traditional and current definitions of sexual assault are vastly different from each other. In the 1970s, one goal of the women’s movement in Canada included addressing violence against women (Comack, & Balfour, 2004). In Canadian law, until Bill C-127 passed in 1983, sexual assault was thought of as only referring to ‘rape’ (Biesenthal, 1991; Comack, & Balfour, 2004). The definition of rape included sexual intercourse which involved penile penetration and as only occurring without consent between a man and woman who were not married (Comack, & Balfour, 2004; Kimmel, & Holler, 2017). As of 1983, sexual assault is defined as having potential to occur between any two individuals and not only as penile penetration but more holistically as any non-consensual sexual act, including unwanted kissing or bodily contact (Biesenthal, 1991; Kimmel & Holler, 2017). Today, there are three degrees of sexual assault—as outlined by the *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985). According to the *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985), the degree of sexual assault becomes determined by the level of injury, use of a weapon, and danger to life. The first level of sexual assault involves minor physical injuries or no injuries to the victim, level two involves weapons, threats, or causing bodily harm, and level three results in wounding, maiming, disfiguring, or endangering the life of the victim (*Criminal Code of Canada*, 1985; Comack, & Balfour, 2004; Kimmel, & Holler, 2017).

Today, sexual assault—in addition to other forms of violence, such as sexual harassment and sexual exploitation—is recognized as a form of sexual violence (Government of Alberta,

2018). According to the Government of Alberta (2018), sexual violence is “an act committed against someone’s sexual integrity without that person’s freely given consent, [and] it can be physical or non-contact”. MacEwan University (2018) also defines sexual violence as any act that a person does not consent to; they emphasize that sexual violence can be of a physical or psychological form which may include “sexual contact, sexual humiliation, sexual exploitation, degrading sexual imagery, sending unwanted sexualized text messages, cyber harassment, or indecent or sexualized exposure via electronic or social media”. These definitions of sexual violence are inclusive of a broad range of experiences.

The use of a broad definition is crucial, as all forms of sexual violence violate one’s personal integrity. Use of narrower definitions may lead to unfair outcomes if there is disagreement between two or more parties regarding what is sexual violence and what is not. These situations may cause further issues, such as one’s willingness to report their experience to the police or post-secondary institution.

Sexual Violence Terminology and Use of Language

To discuss sexual violence, there are key concepts which are essential to comprehend in order to develop an understanding of the issue. There is a broad range of terminology which may be used by different institutions; for example, the criminal justice system likely uses different terminology than a layperson. Because there is a such variance in the language used by different stakeholders—and this includes variance within post-secondary sexual violence policies—it is crucial to be familiar with the possible language of choice.

Those who are affected by sexual violence include the person directly violated as well as those indirectly affected by the violence, such as family members and friends. According to Spry (1995), those who are both directly and indirectly affected by sexual violence may identify as a

“victim” or “survivor”. Oftentimes, differences in speech cause conflict (Alcoff, & Gray, 1993), and Spry (1995) emphasizes the importance of allowing those who experience sexual violence to choose how they wish to be identified, as telling their story or experience from their perspective allows them to have power and authority over their experience.

Variance in language can be dependent on the environment. In a courtroom, rather than being referred to as a victim or survivor, a person is referred to as a complainant until or if the Crown proves that the person was violated (Spencer, Dodge, Ricciardelli, & Balluci, 2018). If the person is found to experience sexual violence, the person might choose to identify as a victim, while others may wish to identify as a survivor. For some, being referred to as a survivor of sexual violence may be desirable if they find being referred to as a victim leads to a sense of constant and continual revictimization.

In addition to the victim, there is also the person who does the violating, and they may identify as the “perpetrator”, “assailant”, or “accused.” Labels such as perpetrator or assailant are problematic from a criminal justice perspective because all individuals are innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt (Tomlin, 2014; Spencer et al., 2018). Although individuals must be proven guilty, labels such as “the accused” may also be problematic from a victim or survivor’s perspective, as it may give them a feeling of disbelief.

This feeling of disbelief is not uncommon among those who experience sexual violence (Spencer et al., 2018). When a sexual violence case enters the criminal justice system—which is rare to begin with¹—the individuals handling the case are often working under the preconceived notion that there are “ideal” victims (Randall, 2010). Ideal victims include those who are “most readily given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim” (Christie, & Duggan, 2018).

¹ Nine of ten sexual assaults are not reported to police (Perreault, 2014).

For example, a prostitute or a wife is not generally considered to be an ideal victim because they are assumed to be giving ongoing consent to their clients or husbands (Randall, 2010). Images of an ideal victim work to disqualify one's experience of sexual violence, which means that, if one's identity departs from the notion of an ideal victim, their entire being in terms of their identity and their life decisions are subject to scrutiny under policies and law (Randall, 2010; Spencer et al., 2018).

What the justice system says about victims and their experiences translate to the remainder of society, as the justice system is an influential social actor. For instance, if the justice system scrutinizes one's personal attributes, characteristics, or behaviours, broader society may see that person as anything but an ideal victim, as they may come to believe that all persons possessing these traits are problematic. Preconceived notions surrounding ideal victims often lead to mishandlings of cases and, subsequently, a loss of faith in the justice system for many (Spencer et al., 2018).

Each term discussed may be used when discussing sexual violence in policy and everyday life. For this thesis, and to ensure simplicity for readers, individuals violated are referred to as the victim, while those who violate victims are referred to as the perpetrator.

Sexual Violence Myths

Society's understandings of sexual violence become influenced by misconceptions and stereotypes that surround the issue (Randall, 2010). These misconceptions and stereotypes have two significant effects. First, they limit the identities of victims; second, they allow victim-blaming.

Victim blaming suggests that one is "responsible for protecting themselves" against sexual violence (Randall, 2010, p. 430). For example, if one did not take "reasonable steps" to

“avoid” sexual assault, many individuals within society will blame the victim’s experience on the victim themselves (Randall, 2010, p. 402). Other common stereotypes suggest that only women experience sexual violence or that men never experience sexual violence, that one is victimized because they are intoxicated or wearing clothing that reveals their skin, that prostitutes cannot be sexually violated, that a person must fight the assailant in order for the act to be non-consensual, that a stranger in the dark bushes is most likely to assault a person, or that sexual violence cannot occur within a marriage or a loving relationship (Université Concordia, N.D.). Because each of these misconceptions and stereotypes is false, it is important to challenge them because they are a contributing factor to the normalization of sexual violence. Furthermore, when people believe these misconceptions, administrators apply policy may be impacted.

Gendered Prevalence of Sexual Violence

The gender identities of victims and perpetrators are not limited. Although much of society sees victims as cis-gendered females and perpetrators as cis-gendered males, sexual violence can occur between individuals regardless of identity or relationship status (MacEwan, 2018). Although the act of sexual violence is not limited to any identity or demographic, research demonstrates that the perpetrators are primarily men and the victims are primarily women (Sinha, 2013; Quinlan et al., 2017).

The sociological concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity assist us in understanding women being at a higher risk of experiencing victimization. These concepts describe idealized forms of gender performance within society. Gender ideologies show hegemonic masculinity to center around the exertion of power and dominance, whereas emphasized femininity is focused upon compliance with male power and dominance (Kimmel, & Holler, 2017, p. 8-9; Butler, 1990). It becomes normalized that passive women are victims while

violent males are perpetrators, and it becomes difficult for society to understand the occurrence of sexual violence when these roles become reversed.

Prevalence of Sexual Violence and Sexual Violence Reporting

There have been many attempts to measure the occurrence of sexual violence within post-secondary, it is difficult to do so, as “different survey methodologies render vastly different results and measure different intervals and experiences” (Kimmel, & Holler, 2017, p. 371). Victimization methodologies may study police reports while others study self-reported surveys. These two methodologies render vastly different results, as fewer individuals report to the police than to victimization surveys (Perreault, 2014). According to victimization surveys, ninety percent of sexual violence cases are unreported for various reasons that may include, but are not limited to, whether or not the victim has a personal relationship with the perpetrator, fear of the reporting process, financial dependence upon the perpetrator, and/or fear of not being believed (Brennan, & Taylor-Butts, 2008; Cantalupo, 2016; Perreault; 2014).

Despite these criticisms regarding data collection, most authors agree that, of a student population, at least thirty percent of females and six percent of males have experienced or will experience sexual violence at some point, if not at multiple points, throughout their academic careers (Quinlan et al., 2017). Experiencing sexual violence within post-secondary seems to be normalized and as part of the post-secondary “experience” (Ziering, 2015).

Although authors agree on these numbers, victimization surveys show statistics to have issues of reliability and validity (Evans, 2016, p. 91) or hold a “dual meaning” (Sawa, & Ward, 2017). Counting crime is difficult in general due to the vast amounts that are unreported and unrecorded (Evans, 2016, p. 99). Furthermore, post-secondary officials at one institution may receive different instructions of recording occurrences over officials at another institution. It is

also possible that institutions with a greater number of occurrences mean that students feel safer reporting incidents of sexual violence, or they have a greater number of tools and support services established for victims.

Nonetheless, it is not only victims who are hesitant to speak about their experiences with sexual violence; some officials within post-secondary institutions are hesitant to discuss the occurrence and prevalence of the issue on their campus (Sawa, & Ward, 2017). Since one of the first jobs of an administrative person at a post-secondary institution is to maintain not only their reputation but also the institution's (Ziering, 2015), it is evident that post-secondary officials are concerned about potential threats to the operations of the institution. These institutions are, essentially, businesses that require the support of their consumers or students. Despite this, officials must realize that sexual violence is not limited to only their campus; sexual violence occurs on all campuses, and it is crucial that everyone speaks of the epidemic rather than treat it as a silent issue.

Effects of Victimization

It is critical that victims are offered belief and support in reporting their experience(s) or in asking for support because there are concerning and detrimental health consequences associated with experiencing any form of sexual violence (Cantalupo, 2016). There is a magnitude of physical and psychological health concerns have the potential to affect not only the victim but also the families, friends, and bystanders of the primary victim.

Physical and mental health effects of [sexual violence] have both acute and negative chronic consequences for victims, as well as extensive social and economic consequences. Physical consequences include unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and Hepatitis C, cigarette smoking, and alcohol and

drug consumption. Short- and long-term psychological consequences include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, lack of sexual enjoyment, and fear. (Senn et al., 2013, p. 2)

These have unique impacts in a post-secondary context. The aforementioned detrimental health effects can lead to negative alterations in one's academic performance or, in some cases, total withdrawal from the institution. These academic consequences, however, are only one of the few tangible costs that a victim may be forced to confront, as they may also face medical bills and loss of wage pay or intangible costs such as pain and suffering, loss of quality of life, and more.

In addition to the aforementioned consequences of experiencing sexual violence, there may also be a fear of violence itself, and many individuals may adjust their lifestyle based on this fear—therefore “restrict[ing their] movements at certain times and in certain spaces, and consequently limit[ing their] employment and recreational opportunities” (Senn et al., 2013, p. 2). It is not only the primary victims that are affected by sexual violence; bystanders, friends, and family may also be affected in the same or similar ways. How victims are affected are highlighted by the public when demanding post-secondary institutions to respond to sexual violence.

Current Responses to Sexual Violence in the United States of America (USA) and Canada

Both American and Canadian responses to sexual violence have included policy creation and implementation. Although they have both responded to the issue with policy, the policies created differ since education is a national responsibility in the USA and a provincial responsibility in Canada.

The USA responds to sexual violence in post-secondary institutions through Title IX, a federal civil rights law that addresses discrimination based on sex. While this law does not

directly address sexual violence and sexual violence only, it was interpreted by the Obama-era Department for Education in a Dear Colleague letter as prohibiting post-secondary institutions from engaging in sexual discrimination that impacts victims of sexual violence the right to an equal education (United States Department for Education, 2011). This Dear Colleague letter required post-secondary institutions to take actions related to sexual violence which included, but are not limited to, adopting a preponderance of evidence standard of proof—meaning that those accused of committing sexual violence are found guilty of the act if administrators were fifty-one percent convinced of the accusations—taking immediate action to eliminate known violence within the institution, and training staff members to report disclosures and reports of sexual violence to post-secondary authorities (United States Department for Education, 2011).

This Dear Colleague letter became largely chastised for its instruction for post-secondary institutions to use the preponderance of evidence standard of proof (Soave, 2017; Rouselle, 2017; United States Department for Education, 2017). According to the USA's Department for Education (2017), the Dear Colleague letter from 2011 led to the “deprivation of rights for many students”. Because the Department believed that the 2011 letter did this, they withdrew the statement in order to develop an approach which they believe will better address sexual violence within American post-secondary institutions (United States Department for Education, 2017).

Contrary to the USA, education in Canada is a provincial responsibility (Atkinson et al., 2013), meaning there is no federal policy such as Title IX in effect. In response to sexual violence being so problematic in post-secondary institutions, some provinces—British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario—implemented legislation which requires all post-secondary institutions within the province to create and implement policies which specifically address sexual violence (Bill 23, 2016; Bill 15, 2016; Bill 132, 2016). According to Manitoba's Post-Secondary Sexual

Violence Policy Guide (2017), sexual violence policies “promote awareness and prevention” with respect to sexual violence as a “deeply traumatic and difficult experience”. This guide also claims to have the ability to help post-secondary stakeholders to prepare and respond “sensitively and compassionately” to disclosures and reports of sexual violence. Although other post-secondary institutions outside these three provinces are not mandated to create and implement these policies, many have responded to the demand for these policies by creating and implementing them (MacEwan University, 2018; Saint Mary’s University, 2015; University of Saskatchewan, 2015).

In addition to policy as a response to sexual violence, other responses have included the creation and implementation of sexual violence education training and other initiatives. This education and initiatives may include, but are not limited to, bystander training programs or consent-based workshops (University of Saskatchewan, 2019). Some post-secondary institutions even have leadership programs for students which are related to sexual violence; for example, the MacEwan University Anti-Violence Network (MAVEN) allows students to “become a powerful agent for social change” in regards to sexual violence as well as other forms of violence (MacEwan University, 2019). These initiatives vary across post-secondary institutions because education in Canada is a provincial responsibility, meaning that no post-secondary institution has the same response to sexual violence.

Purpose of Sexual Violence Policies

Policies are, generally, implemented by governments or other institutions when they see a need to address or are demanded to address an issue (Khan, 2016). Ontario justified creating legislation requiring all Ontarian post-secondary institutions to create and implement sexual violence policies through arguing that “formal policies and response protocols can play a critical

role in creating an environment where everyone on campus understands that sexual violence is unacceptable” (Ontario Women’s Directorate, 2013). On the other hand, MacEwan University argues that its policy exists in order to “promote and maintain an educational and working environment free from all forms of sexual violence” (2018). Next, Iverson (2016) argues that policies are simply another discourse that adds to the issue of sexual violence. Despite these reasonings for policy, others question why institutional policies are in place when the criminal justice system exists to handle crimes such as sexual violence (Penn Law School Faculty, 2015; Cantalupo, 2016).

Contrary to the arguments of these post-secondary institutions, however, some argue that the creation and implementation of these policies are “lip service” (Kauri, 2015; University of Ottawa, 2014; Moore, 2016; Salvino, Khaleeli, & Dube, 2018). This means some individuals believe that the creation and implementation of these policies make post-secondary institutions only look like they are making a change as opposed to making change.

Conclusion

Currently, literature concerning sexual violence policies and their purpose lacks in Canada. Determining the value of these policies and the extent to which they add or contribute to the legislative and policy context is essential and beneficial to the field not only because it fills a gap in the literature but also because it helps to justify whether or not all post-secondary institutions need or do not need to create and implement these policies.

Methodology

I conducted a grounded theory research project in order to examine how or if post-secondary sexual violence policies add or contribute to the policy and legislative context. Focus groups and interviews were conducted with students, faculty, and staff in order to study their

knowledge of and perceptions of these policies. The themes resulting from the focus groups and interviews were analyzed in order to examine the extent to which these policies add or contribute to the studied contexts.

Qualitative Research

I approached this project as qualitative research. Qualitative methods allow researchers to study people in their ordinary settings (Rubin, & Rubin, 2005) while performing inductive and interpretive analysis, meaning that there is a focus on developing a nuanced understanding of the data collected from participants (Creswell, 2007). As this research is conducted in a person's ordinary setting, and settings cannot always be one-hundred percent controlled, researchers must account for flexibility. According to Creswell (2007), flexibility is an essential characteristic of qualitative research.

Qualitative focus groups and interviews were the best way to approach this research question because numerical data on its own cannot adequately answer to what extent post-secondary sexual violence policies add or contribute to the legislative or policy context. It is possible that I could have approached this project with quantitative methods, but a qualitative approach allows for the collection of more nuanced data (Creswell, 2007). If this project became approached from a quantitative viewpoint, for example, a survey might be conducted where participants answer statements such as "Sexual violence policies are needed on campus" on a scale of one to ten or strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Grounded Theory Approach

Grounded theory is a research approach consisting of "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1). In other words, data analysis occurs with data collection. While analyzing

data concurrently with collection can become complicated, I was forced to remain actively engaged in each step taken, which subsequently generated richer data. This project was conducted as a grounded theory project because the research area of post-secondary sexual violence policies is relatively new, and the project was exploratory in nature.

Qualitative focus groups and interviews were conducted, as little is known about the specific value of these policies at this time (Stewart, & Shamdasani, 2015). A focus group is a research and data collection technique in which a discussion group is led by an interviewer and is systematically designed to obtain views and feelings about a particular topic of interest (Symbaluk, 2014), whereas interviews involve only one participant but are similar to focus groups in the sense that they aim to understand the subjects' points of view (Kvale, & Brinkman, 2015, p. 3).

Sample

A convenience sample was primarily used to gather participants, meaning that I used a sample of the post-secondary population that was easily accessible (Symbaluk, 2014). From this convenience sample, I utilized snowball sampling, where participants of the study recruited other participants within their social networks (Symbaluk, 2014). The final sample included students, faculty, and staff at MacEwan University. I chose to recruit from the post-secondary population rather than the general public because this study aimed to examine post-secondary sexual violence policies which primarily affect members of post-secondary institutions.

Recruitment.

I recruited student participants primarily through posters shared on the University's advertisement boards as well as through my own social media, while faculty and staff were

recruited through recruitment letters distributed via email.² To participate in this study, participants were required to consent to being recorded, as I transcribed recordings for data collection and analysis.

Focus groups.

In total, five focus groups were conducted—three for students and two for faculty members. I placed students in focus groups based on gender identification; two focus groups consisted of those who identify as female and another consisted of those who identify as male. Initially, this study aimed to complete one female-identifying focus group, one male-identifying focus group, and one gender-neutral focus group in order to maximize inclusivity; however, participants who volunteered for the gender-neutral focus group withdrew their participation, subsequently making it a female-identifying focus group. This project aimed for three focus groups varying by gender identification because sexual violence is a gendered phenomenon, allowing the researcher to examine any gender differences present in discussions.

The two faculty focus groups were organized based on the level of sexual violence education and training; one consisted of faculty members who were trained Sexual Violence Support Guides (SVSGs)³, and the other group consisted of those not trained as SVSGs. These groups were intentionally created to examine any varying patterns and themes between these groups due to the training they had or had not received. Faculty voices are crucial to examine, as they often develop trusting or professional relationships with students, meaning some students may choose to disclose an experience of sexual violence to faculty members.

² See Appendix B for recruitment materials.

³ The SVSG program at MacEwan University is open to all MacEwan University employees, whether faculty or staff. This program enables one to be leaders in sexual violence prevention and education by providing them with training, skills, and resources they need to be successful. As a leader in sexual violence prevention and education, SVSGs learn to respond to disclosures of sexual violence in a “supportive, trauma-informed way” (MacEwan University, N.D.).

I conducted all focus under the same or similar conditions. They were conducted in-person in a classroom or seminar room at MacEwan. Each of the focus groups consisted of five to eight participants, totalling at twenty-eight participants in a total of five different focus groups. These smaller groups avoided the domination of the group by one or two participants while encouraging participation from all members of the group. In addition to the focus groups, I conducted six interviews, for a total of thirty-four participants overall. Each focus group was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The duration of focus groups ranged between twenty-nine and fifty-three minutes and averaged at approximately forty-six minutes.

I conducted a semi-structured focus group, meaning that I prepared questions in advance but was able to develop and ask other questions based on conversations that arose (Seidman, 2006). Participants of the focus groups were encouraged to stay on track with the questions they were asked to answer, but they were also allowed to bring in their own experiences and stories to support answers to the questions. Most times, I was not required to probe the conversation, as most participants had much insight to share. There was only one focus group which this open and natural conversation did not occur. Participants of this focus group only offered brief answers to each question, which made it challenging to create a welcome environment which encouraged open and honest conversation. Despite the difficult nature of this focus group, it provided some useful data.

Interviews.

This project also included interviews. I conducted six interviews with various staff members, one faculty member, and one student of MacEwan University. Each interview participant was involved in either MacEwan's sexual violence policy creation or policy revision process, so they were very knowledgeable about these policies. I conducted interviews—rather

than focus groups—with these individuals due to the power imbalances that may be present. If I conducted focus groups with the six individuals I interviewed, it is possible that an open and honest conversation would not have occurred. To give more context, one may be in the same room as their supervisor or boss, and may not be comfortable in giving their honest opinions or views during conversations. Despite the power issues, however, the voices of staff members at MacEwan remain crucial to the study, as many of the staff members at the University play a direct role in the issue of sexual violence through means such as policy creation and implementation or educational initiatives and programming.

I conducted all interviews under similar conditions. Participants chose the location of the interview, and it always took place in their office or classroom of their choice at MacEwan. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The duration of the interviews ranged from twenty-seven to forty-seven minutes and averaged at thirty-six minutes.

Like the focus groups, I chose a semi-structured approach for the interviews. Interview participants were encouraged to bring in not only their own opinions but also their experiences and stories to support their answer to my questions. Most interview participants kept on-track with the question; there was one participant who lost sight of the question when talking about their academic research, but I brought them back to the question as soon as possible in order to maximize our time together.

Consent.

All participants gave free or voluntary, informed, and ongoing consent prior to participating in a focus group or interview; researchers are required to obtain this consent as per the ethical guidelines established in Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities

Research Council of Canada, 2010). When participants arrived at the room for the focus group or interview, they were presented with a consent form to review and sign.⁴ I also encouraged them to share any questions they had about the form. Before beginning the focus group or interview, I asked if all participants understood the consent form and double-checked with them that they consented to be recorded with an audio tape. All participants in this project signed the consent form. I only had one participant leave before the end of the focus group, but they informed me prior to the start of the focus group that they were leaving early.

Confidentiality.

To protect the identities of my participants, their identities remain confidential. For this project, I could not offer anonymity since I completed the recruitment and conducted the focus groups and interviews. The consent forms, which contained names of participants, were kept in a locked cabinet in my research supervisor's office. Although direct quotes from the focus groups and interviews are used in the dissemination of the results of this thesis, any details that may identify the participant, such as job or role at the University, are not included in order to protect confidentiality rights.

Compensation.

Because there is, generally, a challenge in willingness to participate in research studies, I compensated student participants for their time with a five-dollar gift card to Tim Hortons or Starbucks. In order to minimize any coercive elements to the compensation, the participants were given the payment at the beginning of the study and were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Data Analysis

⁴ See Appendix C for consent forms.

The focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim with the consent of participants. After I transcribed the audio, I uploaded the transcripts to MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software program (MAXQDA, 2019). Using MAXQDA, I completed the coding process in two phases. First, I coded for actions; second, I coded for themes. The coding process I engaged in allowed me to learn from the data by revisiting the data until I saw patterns or conflicts and explanations (Richards, 2009, p. 94). When I coded for actions, I coded on a line-by-line basis and focused on the content rather than the specific words used. Using thematic coding, on the other hand, I looked for patterns and trends that occurred within the transcriptions and action codes. Based on these patterns and trends, I grouped together action codes in order to create larger, thematic code. For example, I grouped the action codes of “victim-blaming” and “males do not experience sexual violence” together as a thematic code, “sexual violence myths”.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 show the faculty association and gender of each focus group and interview participant. During recruitment, I clearly identified that there were specific focus groups designated for female-identifying persons, male-identifying persons, and persons of any gender. At the beginning of each focus group as well as each interview, participants shared their name, preferred pronouns, and role at the university (i.e. student, faculty, or staff). Most participants identified as women, as being affiliated with the Faculty of Arts & Science, and as being students. Table 3 shows the method of participation for participants according to their roles at the university.

	Arts & Science	Communications	Nursing	Business	Social Work	Other	Total
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Students	17		1	1			19
Faculty	7	2			1		10
Staff						5	5
Total	24	2	1	1	1	5	34

Table 1. Faculty association of participants.

Table 2. Gender identity of participants.

	Female	Male	Non-Binary	Total
Students	13	5	1	19
Faculty	7	3		10
Staff	5			5
Total	25	8	1	34

Table 3. Method of participation.

	Students	Faculty	Staff	Total
Focus Group	18	9	1	28
Interview	1	1	4	6
Total	19	10	5	34

The questions asked during the focus groups differed from the questions asked during the interviews, as interview participants were involved in the sexual violence policy creation process at MacEwan, meaning I could assume that they were familiar with and knowledgeable about sexual violence policies.

Knowledge of Sexual Violence Policies

One of the purposes of the focus groups—and especially the student focus groups—was to gauge whether or not MacEwan community members were familiar with the existence of or had knowledge about post-secondary sexual violence policies. Many student participants were unable to offer a definitive answer as to whether or not their institution has a sexual violence policy. Despite not knowing for sure, students expressed confidence that there was a policy; participants stated that “it must” (Focus Group 1), that they “are sure it does” (Focus Group 2), and that they “hope it does” have a sexual violence policy (Focus Group 1). Those who did know that their institution has a policy stated that these policies “re-affirm the existing laws” while

failing to “add anything surprising or more to what is already out there” (Focus Group 1).

Participants who were not sure whether or not their institution has a policy also stated that they “imagine there are a lot of grey areas in the policy” and that it is “redundant, as it lists things that are similar in other policies in the school and in law” (Focus Group 2). Overall, these findings show a lack of knowledge about these policies.

Need for and Scope of Sexual Violence Policies

The conversation regarding knowledge of post-secondary sexual violence policies, or lack thereof, led to discussions regarding whether or not these policies are needed or should exist. Some participants “ma[de] the case that [these policies] should not be around [because they are] sure that sexual violence certainly qualifies a person to be disciplined under more general codes of conduct” (Focus Group 1) or that these policies are “very much aligned with what will be done legally in the court and judicial system” (Focus Group 2).

Other participants, however, expressed that they feel as though policies that are broader in scope—such as Student Codes of Conduct or disciplinary policies—fail to offer “the issue the full attention, nuance, and complexity that it deserves, as folding [sexual violence] into workplace conduct or harassment can be problematic since other issues may not be characterized by the power differential” that is present in sexual violence (Focus Group 4). Another participant said that a sexual violence policy is a “specific [type of] policy designed to protect [people] from any violence of a sexual nature as opposed to downgrading it to something like poor behaviour” (Interview 6). This statement suggests that these policies are an expressive function of punishment, meaning that these policies clearly state that sexual violence is not tolerated on campuses (Feinburg, 1965). Also, sexual violence policies serving as clear statements around the tolerance of sexual violence, they may also offer another process for a victim to choose. One

participant said that it is unfair to assume all victims “are only able to heal if they engage in a criminal-justice like process or a criminal process” (Interview 4). This participant emphasized that they do not see sexual violence policies as reflective of the criminal justice system.

Factors Pushing for Sexual Violence Policies

As participants expressed, post-secondary sexual violence policies may serve a purpose in that it gives victims another option to pursue. There are, however, more factors which push for these policies. Some of these influences are more concerned with institutional well-being, whereas others are concerned with institutional members’ well-being. All participants highlighted, at some point in their interview or focus group, that these policies may, in part, exist due to a “cover-your-ass” attitude (Interview 4) or in motivation to cover the “institutional hindquarters” (Focus Group 5). Participants also suggested that it is “fashionable” (Focus Group 1) to have these policies and that post-secondary institutions do not want to become questioned for failing to have a sexual violence policy. While these factors may contribute to the push for these policies, influences around institutional care and concern may also contribute to the push for sexual violence policies. There were discussions around how, “philosophically, it is sad that we even need these” (Interview 6) but that having these policies is the “right thing to do [because] we ought to care when people suffer” (Focus Group 4).

Furthermore, the demand for these policies has also stemmed from the demands of students and parents shared in the media. Over the past several years, and as reported in the literature, the media has highlighted many horrific stories of students experiencing sexual violence within their institution. Campus stakeholders (i.e. students, parents) have demanded and continue to demand that post-secondary institutions take greater responsibility for events such as

sexual violence on campus. As a result of these elements combined, sexual violence policies are continually being created, implemented, and even revised in some post-secondary institutions.

Mandating Sexual Violence Policies

Since many factors contribute to the motivation for creating and implementing sexual violence policies within post-secondary institutions, and since many provinces in Canada mandate these policies, I wanted to explore whether or not participants felt as though these policies should be *mandated*. There was a mix of responses from all participants; in fact, many participants expressed mixed feelings towards this debate. While other provinces mandate their post-secondary institutions to have sexual violence policies, Alberta does not, and one participant believes Alberta should remain this way. This participant believes that not being mandated to have these policies “create autonomy” and that the challenge in mandating policies lies in “meeting requirements as opposed to doing it well” (Interview 5). When institutions are pressured to create policies by a date set by the government, it may not allow the institution to take the time required to create good policy. One participant believes that their institution has done a better job than the standard that the government would have created if they decided to mandate these policies (Interview 3).

There was also discussion around how mandating these policies may imply that these policies are the panacea to the issue, as all participants expressed the belief that simply having these policies do not solve the issue. With participants failing to know of these policies, or even of their existence in general, there were discussions around how to make these policies known. Some student participants suggested that dedicating a section in course syllabi to the sexual violence policy, and some faculty participants even suggested “incorporating [sexual violence education] into the classroom” (Focus Group 5) through means such as the syllabus or even

through a short, mandatory training course. The faculty participant who first proposed incorporating this education into the classroom shared that “every student in Biology laboratories must complete a short course on laboratory safety” and questioned why not a course on sexual violence (Focus Group 5). Participants also expressed that more than only policy is needed; they believe that education on issues underlying sexual violence, such as boundaries and rape culture, are needed. Since this participant is quite familiar with the policy, they are often asked to teach the campus more about it. This participant states that they become quite frustrated when the campus only wants to learn about policy because they need to learn how to talk about issues, such as toxic masculinity, that contribute to sexual violence being so problematic.

Complexity of Sexual Violence Policies

In addition to the complexity of sexual violence as an issue in and of itself, participants also highlighted the sexual violence policies being complex and sometimes difficult to follow. Interview participants were each involved with their institution’s policy creation process, so I posed questions during the interview regarding their experience with the policy creation process. Each participant highlighted the time-consuming nature of this process as well as the importance of many consultations and opportunities for feedback with those not directly involved in the process. According to one participant, these policies also become complex when thinking about other policies in the institution, as placing so much emphasis on, for example, the sexual violence policy but not the anti-discrimination policy may suggest to some that other issues are not as important or valued (Focus Group 2).

Discussion

When I bring my findings back to my research question, I see that post-secondary sexual violence policies add or contribute to the policy or legislative context through existing as a

means of addressing a public concern. These policies also serve as another option victims may pursue. While I do not deny that different individuals have different knowledge of and perceptions of these policies, my research shows that, overall, there is overwhelming support for the creation and implementation of these policies.

Knowledge of Sexual Violence Policies

The mass support displayed by participants creates a strong tension in the data. Nearly all students who participated in this study shared that they were unsure of whether or not their post-secondary institution has a sexual violence policy; however, they were hopeful that it did have a policy. Later on in the focus groups, the same students who said they were unfamiliar with these policies continued to share that they feel as though these policies are similar to other policies and processes, such as the criminal justice system, and some even suggested that engagement with the criminal justice system is more critical than engagement with post-secondary sexual violence policies. Suggesting that sexual violence policies are similar to other policies and processes or suggesting that engagement in other processes is more important would generally suggest that these participants are, at minimum, somewhat familiar with post-secondary sexual violence policies. Without familiarity, it is impossible to know whether or not sexual violence policies are or are not similar to other policies and processes. Because I know that these participants were unfamiliar with sexual violence policies, I feel as though general assumptions were made and shared about these policies. It can be difficult for not only students but anyone to share that they do not have an answer to a question.

Need for and Scope of Sexual Violence Policies

Some participants argued that sexual violence policies do not have a place in post-secondary institutions, as they believe other policies and processes offer similar supports for

victims. These same participants, however, said that they had not read the sexual violence policy at their post-secondary institution and were, therefore, unfamiliar with its contents. It is interesting to note that the participants who felt as though sexual violence policies should not exist in post-secondary institutions identified as male. While some female participants expressed feeling that these policies are similar to other policies and processes, they shared their support for these policies.

These gender differences regarding attitudes surrounding the existence of sexual violence policies became accompanied by the use of and presence of sexual violence myths. The males expressed fear of false reporting by females and were concerned about expulsion or suspension for those accused of committing sexual violence. They said that these policies do not allow room for discretion or fairness to both parties, as they favour the victim's side. In reality, the favouring of either party by the processes of sexual violence policy cannot occur. For example, MacEwan's policy (2018)—the post-secondary institution which these students attend—contains a clause which states that all investigations will be unbiased.

Contrary to the males, the female students as well faculty members—who were both male and female—and staff members expressive a high level of support for post-secondary sexual violence policies. Participants highlights that these policies may give victims another option to pursue—if they choose to pursue any option(s) at all. Giving victims more choices of options to pursue may offer empowerment, which is critical while choosing one's path of healing (Spry, 1995). Additionally, in the sexual violence response training I have completed, the session facilitators always highlight that allowing victims to be the leader in their healing process is essential in the process of recovering from traumatic experiences. Offering another option may

be beneficial, as we see that a large population has distrust in the criminal justice system and in the police (Spencer et al., 2018; Perreault, 2014).

Factors Pushing for Sexual Violence Policies

Even though there was support for sexual violence policies expressed, participants also highlighted concerns about the policies. The most significant concern expressed concerns the intention behind sexual violence policies. These concerns about intention include whether or not post-secondary institutions are creating and implementing these policies because they “ought to care when their members suffer” (Focus Group 4) or because they are “fashionable” (Focus Group 1).

Based on the conversations had in the focus group and interview, I think there is a mixture of concern for members of post-secondary institutions as well as concern for institutional well-being. As the public demands post-secondary institutions to create and implement sexual violence policies, they are, in some ways, forced to respond to what the public wants. Post-secondary institutions are, essentially, businesses which cannot maintain themselves without their consumers; if they do not give their customers the products they want—products being sexual violence policies—their expenses—which are paid mainly by tuition—will not be maintained if enrollment rates drop (Gregory, 2012). Gregory (2012) also suggests that the creation and implementation of these policies help post-secondary institutions project an image of care and concern on its current and prospective members.

At the same time, I see some post-secondary institutions as being truly concerned for their students, faculty, and staff (York University, 2010; University of Saskatchewan, 2019; MacEwan University, N.D). I especially see this in institutions who have chosen to do more than only create and implement a sexual violence policy; those who have offices dedicated to sexual

violence prevention, education, and response must have good intentions. Those who fill positions in these types of offices, generally, have a genuine concern for issues such as sexual violence.

Mandating Sexual Violence Policies

There were mixed feelings regarding whether or not post-secondary institutions should be mandated to create and implement sexual violence policies. In fact, no participants gave a definite answer as to whether they should or should not be mandated; each participant highlighted the pros and cons of mandating these policies.

This finding is interrelated with the findings regarding the factors pushing for sexual violence policies. If post-secondary institutions are mandated to create and implement these policies, and if they lack a genuine concern for this issue within their institution, the policy will not likely be strong. It may also be relatively unknown amongst the members of the post-secondary institution, especially if no efforts are made around sexual violence in addition to creating and implementing the policy.

Nonetheless, mandating these policies may, in fact, be a step in the right direction. Not only can governments mandate these policies, but they can also mandate that post-secondary institutions create sexual violence prevention, education, and response offices dedicated to working on and addressing sexual violence and sexual violence only. This, however, suggests that sexual violence policies are not the only ingredient required in addressing sexual violence within post-secondary institutions.

Complexity of Sexual Violence Policies

Each finding of this study was contradicted by another finding at least once during data analysis. For example, male students were against the creation and implementation of these policies while females supported them; post-secondary sexual violence policies may be similar to

other policies and processes, but they add another option for victims to pursue; some post-secondary institutions create and implement these policies because they have to, but others have people who genuinely care about the issue of sexual violence and spend their entire career dedicated to it; mandating sexual violence policies may not be beneficial in some post-secondary institutions but beneficial in others. These tensions were incredibly difficult to work through, but I think it highlights the very complex nature of sexual violence more broadly.

Sexual violence is not an issue on its own. There are many underlying issues which people must address before the roots of sexual violence become found, and many participants acknowledged this when I asked how they think sexual violence may be eliminated. The literature review of this thesis discussed how much of society's understandings of sexual violence are based around misconceptions of the issue. For example, one of the most common misconceptions around sexual violence says that only women are sexually violated because men always want to engage in sexual activity. This false belief leads to a lack of belief when male victims disclose their experiences. There are also issues around gendered behaviours; for example, much of masculinity is based upon power and conquest (Butler, 1990; Kimmel, & Holler, 2017), and this often leads to violence against women. These two issues are not a comprehensive list of contributors to sexual violence. It is a complex issue that cannot be addressed with simplistic solutions. If only policy is created and implemented, sexual violence will not be solved. There must be more education around, for example, these misconceptions and other issues which contribute to sexual violence.

Limitations

Although participants of this study provided interesting insight with regards to how Canadian post-secondary sexual violence policies add or contribute to the policy and legislative

context, some limitations are important to address. Several of the limitations concern the participant sample.

First, I based the sample on only one post-secondary institution, MacEwan University. It is possible that stakeholder perceptions of MacEwan's policy vary from perceptions of these policies in other institutions. Some participants highlighted this difference; they said MacEwan is rather progressive when it comes to defining and responding to sexual violence. According to these participants, the fact that MacEwan was the first post-secondary institution in Alberta to have a stand-alone sexual violence policy is progressive and is a sign of change. Many students felt as though MacEwan is doing a good job of educating the campus about consent and how to support those who may experience sexual violence amongst other issues. One student who works with other campuses on this issue feels as though MacEwan is doing a better job in this area than other institutions are. In the future, a researcher could replicate this study but use several post-secondary institutions as opposed to only one. It might also be interesting, if one had the resources, to conduct focus groups and interviews with campus stakeholders from different provinces. As some provinces mandate their post-secondary institutions to create and implement sexual violence policies, it might be interesting to observe if there are differences in stakeholder attitudes in a province that does not mandate these policies versus one that does.

Initially, I intended to conduct three student focus groups to study gender differences in conversation. The first focus group was for male-identifying persons, the second focus group was for female-identifying persons, and the third focus group was intended to be gender neutral in order to maximize inclusivity. After recruitment, the third focus group, which was intended to be gender neutral, had females, males, and non-binary persons registered to participate. On the day of the focus group, however, the males and non-binary persons withdrew their participation,

resulting in the focus group consisting of only female-identifying persons. I wanted to study the differences, if any, in conversations with groups only consisting of male- or female-identifying persons in comparison to a group which contains all genders.

Conclusion

This research project focused on the extent to which Canadian post-secondary sexual violence policies add or contribute to the policy and legislative context. It is crucial to examine these policies because post-secondary institutions are high-risk communities for sexual violence, and much of the public outcry regarding sexual violence in post-secondary demands the creation and implementation of these policies. Public pressure for these policies has led many post-secondary institutions to create and implement sexual violence policies. After reviewing other post-secondary policies, I found that sexual violence is more generally addressed in other policies, such as Student Code of Conduct policies, or even in criminal law. Because of this, I wondered why the public demands a policy which addresses behaviours already deemed inappropriate or illegal in other policy.

I found that some students, faculty, and staff see these policies as failing to address new or different types of behaviours. Despite this, there was significant support for these policies. Many participants expressed that they see sexual violence policies as making an individual statement about sexual violence in post-secondary institutions. This statement makes it clear to all stakeholders that these behaviours are not tolerated, and these policies give victims of sexual violence another option to pursue in addition to the criminal justice system. Sexual violence policies offer another form of healing, as not all paths of healing are identical.

There were also discussions around whether or not the intention behind these policies is 'genuine' or if they are 'lip service' to those demanding the policies. It was interesting to see that

it was not only students who discussed this idea of ‘lip service’; staff members, who were directly involved with the policy creation, also suggested that these policies do offer the post-secondary institution legal protections. According to participants, legal protections are not the primary concern of all post-secondary institutions, as the staff members behind the policy differ at each institution, and some institutions have staff members who genuinely care for the well-being of its members.

The findings of my study suggest that post-secondary institutions should continue to create and implement sexual violence policies as well as aim to improve existing policies. While a small portion of my participants expressed that they feel as though these policies are ‘lip service’, the overwhelming majority of my participants expressed support for these policies. Seeing as post-secondary institutions are essentially businesses, where students are the consumers with faculty and staff members as the producers, they must consider what will keep the consumers and producers satisfied.

Although these policies are important, I must emphasize that they are not the panacea to the issue. Based on the tension present in my results, it is evident that the complexity of sexual violence as an issue requires a more complex solution. Solutions may include a combination of policy, education, and engagement. Creating and implementing a policy is not enough and will not solve the issue of sexual violence being so problematic within post-secondary institutions.

There are numerous areas that this study suggests need further examination. For one, I suggest a review or comparison and contrast of all post-secondary institutions in Canada which examines where they are sitting in relation to sexual violence response and education. This will allow researchers to examine why or why not certain post-secondary institutions chose to create and implement or chose not to create and implement sexual violence policies. It may be

interesting to examine which regions those who have not created and implemented these policies have chosen to do so.

Another area which one can examine is how social movements influence these policies. The #IBelieveYou movement emphasizes the importance of believing victims' disclosures of sexual violence. In the criminal justice system, #IBelieveYou is not utilized because one accused of committing sexual violence is innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Contrary to the criminal justice system, most post-secondary institutions use a much lower standard of proof—a balance of probabilities. With this lower standard of proof, I am curious to see if #IBelieveYou plays a more significant influence, if at all.

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Appendix A: Sexual Violence Response Training Certificates

PANEL ON
RESEARCH ETHICS

Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Kelsey Friesen

*has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)*

Date of Issue: **28 November, 2017**

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

Training Workshop

**Supporting Survivors of
Sexualized Violence**

Presented by:

AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE



Dee Dooley—Regional Capacity Coordinator

June 22. 2017

Signature

Date

Frank Heimpel—Community Educator

June 22. 2017

Signature

Date



P.O. Box 1706
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada T5J 2P2

Toll free: 1-800-497-1622
Tel: 780-497-5040
Email: info@macewan.ca

March 29, 2018

Dear Research Ethics Board,

I am writing to confirm Kelsey Friesen's completion of several trainings on the topic of sexual violence response.

In March 2017 and again in March 2018, Kelsey participated in *Learning to Support Survivors of Sexual Violence*, a three-hour workshop offered by MacEwan's Office of Sexual Violence Prevention and Education and Wellness and Psychological Services. This workshop provides training on the realities and impacts of sexual violence and the foundations of a trauma-informed response to disclosures. Participants come away with practical skills and tools for supporting survivors of sexual violence, including knowledge about how to make referrals to campus and community resources.

Additionally, as part of her responsibilities as a member of University Students Offering Leadership on Violence Elimination (U-SOLVE), in August 2017, Kelsey completed a two-hour training offered by the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton on the topic of sexual assault and supporting survivors. This training provides education about sexual assault and its impacts, with a focus on support skills.

Please feel free to contact me by phone at 780-497-4027 or by email at roxanne.runyon@macewan.ca if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roxanne Runyon", written over a white background.

Roxanne Runyon
Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator
MacEwan University

Appendix B: Recruitment Materials

Faculty Focus Group Letter

Hello,

I am an undergraduate student in the Honours Sociology program at MacEwan University and am contacting you in your capacity as faculty member at MacEwan. For my Honours thesis, I am conducting research on post-secondary policies regarding sexual violence. I am hoping that you are interested in participating in a focus group consisting of approximately ten other faculty members.

Post-secondary institutions are high-risk communities for sexual violence, and, while sexual violence has always been present, it is only recently that the crime has merited closer attention from media. This increased news coverage has resulted in a public outcry and has resulted in the creation and implementation of post-secondary level policies that specifically concern sexual violence. Thus, for this project, I am interested in determining the extent to which these policies add or contribute to the policy and legislative context.

This focus group will occur in October 2018 and will require approximately sixty minutes of your time. With each participant's consent, the focus group will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Focus group questions will include general questions about sexual violence as well as questions in regards to MacEwan's creation and implementation of their stand-alone sexual violence policy.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Amanda Nelund.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Friesen, Student Investigator
friesenk34@mymacewan.ca

Dr. Amanda Nelund, Supervisor
nelunda@macewan.ca

This project (File No. 100531) was approved by MacEwan University's Research Ethics Board on August 24, 2018.

SVSG Focus Group Letter

Hello,

I am an undergraduate student in the Honours Sociology program at MacEwan University and am contacting you in your capacity as a Sexual Violence Support Guide (SVSG) at MacEwan. For my Honours thesis, I am conducting research on post-secondary policies regarding sexual violence. I hope that you are interested in participating in a focus group consisting of approximately ten SVSGs.

Post-secondary institutions are high-risk communities for sexual violence, and, while sexual violence has always been present, it is only recently that the crime has merited closer attention from media. This increased news coverage has resulted in a public outcry and has resulted in the creation and implementation of post-secondary level policies that specifically concern sexual violence. Thus, for this project, I am interested in determining the extent to which these policies add or contribute to the policy and legislative context.

This focus group will occur in October 2018 and will require approximately sixty minutes of your time. With each participant's consent, the focus group will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Focus group questions will include general questions about sexual violence as well as questions in regards to MacEwan's creation and implementation of their stand-alone sexual violence policy.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Amanda Nelund.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Friesen, Student Investigator
friesenk34@mymacewan.ca

Dr. Amanda Nelund, Supervisor
nelunda@macewan.ca

This project (File No. 100531) was approved by MacEwan University's Research Ethics Board on August 24, 2018.

Interview Letter

Hello,

I am an undergraduate student in the Honours Sociology program at MacEwan University and am contacting you as [position] at MacEwan. For my Honours thesis, I am conducting research on post-secondary policies regarding sexual violence. I hope to interview you as part of my research process.

Post-secondary institutions are high-risk communities for sexual violence, and, while sexual violence has always been present, it is only recently that the crime has merited closer attention from media. This increased news coverage has resulted in a public outcry and has resulted in the creation and implementation of post-secondary level policies that specifically concern sexual violence. Thus, for this project, I am interested in determining the extent to which these policies add or contribute to the policy and legislative context.

An interview with you would take place at your convenience between the times of September 2018 and November 2018 and would require approximately sixty minutes of your time. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview questions will include general questions about sexual violence as well as questions in regards to MacEwan's creation and implementation of their stand-alone sexual violence policy.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Amanda Nelund.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Friesen, Student Investigator
friesenk34@mymacewan.ca

Dr. Amanda Nelund, Supervisor
nelunda@macewan.ca

This project (File No. 100531) was approved by MacEwan University's Research Ethics Board on August 24, 2018.

Student Poster



STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS: SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY

We are learning about how Canadian post-secondary sexual violence policies add or contribute to the policy and legislative context.

Participation is voluntary. If you choose to participate, your time will be compensated with a \$5 Tim Hortons or Starbucks gift card. The focus group will run for approximately sixty-minutes.

If you want to participate in this study or would like more information before deciding to participate, please contact Kelsey Friesen at friesenk34@mymacewan.ca or Dr. Amanda Nelund at nelunda@macewan.ca.

This project is approved by the MacEwan University Research Ethics Board (File No. 100531).

Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms

Student Focus Group

Project Title: Sexual Violence Policy in Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions

Researchers:**Student Investigator**

Kelsey Friesen
Department of Sociology
MacEwan University
friesenk34@mymacewan.ca

Faculty Investigator

Dr. Amanda Nelund
Department of Sociology
MacEwan University
nelunda@macewan.ca

Purpose of the Research:

- The purpose of this individual study is to study the role of sexual violence policies within post-secondary institutions.

Procedures:

- The study will ask you to answer questions regarding sexual violence and sexual violence policy.
- You are under no obligation to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- With your consent, your focus group will be audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim.
- Your focus group will be conducted at MacEwan University and will take sixty minutes to complete.
- The researchers anticipate including a total of thirty students, faculty, and staff combined in their study.
- Please feel free to ask any questions about the procedures and goals of the study and your role as a participant.

Funded by:

- This study is funded by the Department of Sociology at MacEwan University.
- There are no potential conflicts of interest on the part of the researchers or the sponsors.

Potential Risks:

- There is a risk of psychological or emotional discomfort.
- If you experience discomfort during the study, you may choose to withdraw from the study or skip any questions you do not wish to answer without penalty. You may contact the researchers (contact information on the top of page one) if you have any questions or concerns.

Potential Benefits:

- You may gain a better understanding of how research focus groups are conducted in Sociology.
- You may learn about sexual violence on Canadian post-secondary campuses.

Compensation:

- You will earn \$5 for participating before your focus group begins.

Confidentiality/Anonymity:

- Your identity will be kept confidential.
- Forms containing identifying information will be kept in a secure location from data.
- All data collected will be kept in a locked cabinet that only the investigators have access to and/or on a password-protected computer.
- By consenting to participation, you are not waiving your legal rights.
- There is a chance that the interviewer will be one of your fellow students; remember that your identity will be kept confidential.

Right to withdraw:

- You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Should you wish to withdraw, you will still keep your payment of \$5.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study, please contact one of the researchers using the information at the top of page one.

Questions or Concerns:

- If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the researchers using the information at the top of page one.
- You will be provided with a support services card at the beginning of the focus group in the case that you feel as though you would like to further discuss a topic(s) mentioned in the interview or feel as though you need more support.

Questions or Concerns about Ethical Conduct:

- This project was approved by the MacEwan University Research Ethics Board on August 23, 2018 (File No. 100531). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Board at 780-633-3274 or REB@macewan.ca.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand the description provided. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to

participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher's Name

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Should you feel as though your participation in this study causes any psychological or emotional discomfort or anxiety, please contact the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) at 780-423-4102 or visit them at 205-14964 121A Avenue in Edmonton. Alternatively, please contact MacEwan University's Wellness and Psychological Services at 780-497-5063 or visit them at 7-103A 10700 104 Avenue.

Faculty Focus Group

Project Title: Sexual Violence Policy in Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions

Researchers:**Student Investigator**

Kelsey Friesen
Department of Sociology
MacEwan University
friesenk34@mymacewan.ca

Faculty Investigator

Dr. Amanda Nelund
Department of Sociology
MacEwan University
nelunda@macewan.ca

Purpose of the Research:

- The purpose of this individual study is to study the role of sexual violence policies within post-secondary institutions.

Procedures:

- The study will ask you to answer questions regarding sexual violence and sexual violence policy.
- You are under no obligation to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- With your consent, your focus group will be audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim.
- Your focus group will be conducted at MacEwan University and will take sixty minutes to complete.
- The researchers anticipate including a total of thirty students, faculty, and staff combined in their study.
- Please feel free to ask any questions about the procedures and goals of the study and your role as a participant.

Funded by:

- This study is funded by the Department of Sociology at MacEwan University.
- There are no potential conflicts of interest on the part of the researchers or the sponsors.

Potential Risks:

- There is a risk of psychological or emotional discomfort.
- If you experience discomfort during the study, you may choose to withdraw from the study or skip any questions you do not wish to answer without penalty. You may contact the researchers (contact information on the top of page one) if you have any questions or concerns.

Potential Benefits:

- Your participation in this study may contribute to the general knowledge regarding sexual violence on campus.
- Through this study, you may contribute to the improvement of campus responses.
- Through focus group discussion, you may learn more about sexual violence on campus.

Compensation:

- You will not be monetarily compensated for your time in this study.

Confidentiality/Anonymity:

- Your identity will be kept confidential.
- Forms containing identifying information will be kept in a secure location from data.
- All data collected will be kept in a locked cabinet that only the investigators have access to and/or on a password-protected computer.
- By consenting to participation, you are not waiving your legal rights.
- There is a chance that the interviewer will be one of your fellow students; remember that your identity will be kept confidential.

Right to withdraw:

- You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study, please contact one of the researchers using the information at the top of page one.

Questions or Concerns:

- If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the researchers using the information at the top of page one.
- You will be provided with a support services card at the beginning of the focus group in the case that you feel as though you would like to further discuss a topic(s) mentioned in the interview or feel as though you need more support.

Questions or Concerns about Ethical Conduct:

- This project was approved by the MacEwan University Research Ethics Board on August 23, 2018 (File No. 100531). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Board at 780-633-3274 or REB@macewan.ca.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand the description provided. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher's Name

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Should you feel as though your participation in this study causes any psychological or emotional discomfort or anxiety, please contact the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) at 780-423-4102 or visit them at 205-14964 121A Avenue in Edmonton.

Interview

Project Title: Sexual Violence Policy in Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions

Researchers:**Student Investigator**

Kelsey Friesen
Department of Sociology
MacEwan University
friesenk34@mymacewan.ca

Faculty Investigator

Dr. Amanda Nelund
Department of Sociology
MacEwan University
nelunda@macewan.ca

Purpose of the Research:

- The purpose of this individual study is to study the role of sexual violence policies within post-secondary institutions.

Procedures:

- The study will ask you to answer questions regarding sexual violence and sexual violence policy.
- You are under no obligation to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- With your consent, your interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim.
- Your focus group will be conducted at MacEwan University and will take sixty minutes to complete.
- The researchers anticipate including a total of thirty students, faculty, and staff combined in their study.
- Please feel free to ask any questions about the procedures and goals of the study and your role as a participant.

Funded by:

- This study is funded by the Department of Sociology at MacEwan University.
- There are no potential conflicts of interest on the part of the researchers or the sponsors.

Potential Risks:

- There is a risk of psychological or emotional discomfort.
- If you experience discomfort during the study, you may choose to withdraw from the study or skip any questions you do not wish to answer without penalty. You may contact the researchers (contact information on the top of page one) if you have any questions or concerns.

Potential Benefits:

- Your participation in this study may contribute to the general knowledge regarding sexual violence on campus.
- Through this study, you may contribute to the improvement of campus responses.

Compensation:

- You will not earn compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality/Anonymity:

- Your identity will be kept confidential.
- Forms containing identifying information will be kept in a secure location from data.
- All data collected will be kept in a locked cabinet that only the investigators have access to and/or on a password-protected computer.
- By consenting to participation, you are not waiving your legal rights.
- There is a chance that the interviewer will be one of your fellow students; remember that your identity will be kept confidential.

Right to withdraw:

- You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study, please contact one of the researchers using the information at the top of page one.

Questions or Concerns:

- If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the researchers using the information at the top of page one.
- You will be provided with a support services card at the beginning of the focus group in the case that you feel as though you would like to further discuss a topic(s) mentioned in the interview or feel as though you need more support.

Questions or Concerns about Ethical Conduct:

- This project was approved by the MacEwan University Research Ethics Board on August 23, 2018 (File No. 100531). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Board at 780-633-3274 or REB@macewan.ca.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand the description provided. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher's Name

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Should you feel as though your participation in this study causes any psychological or emotional discomfort or anxiety, please contact the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) at 780-423-4102 or visit them at 205-14964 121A Avenue in Edmonton.

Appendix D: Focus Group and Interview Outlines

Student and Non-SVSG Focus Group

Introduction

- Name
- Sociology Honours student
- Conducting focus groups as a method of data collection for my thesis on sexual violence policies within Canadian post-secondary institutions
- I will be moderating

Study & reminder of ethics and confidentiality

- The focus group will ask you to answer some questions regarding sexual violence and post-secondary policies, but you are under no obligation to answer any question, and you are free to withdraw your participation from the study at any time without penalty.
- There is a risk of feeling uncomfortable due to the sensitivity of this topic. Again, you are free to refrain from answering questions and/or are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you feel as though you need or are interested in getting support from someone, free services are available to you (*hand out support services cards*).

That being said, my focus for the study is not violence itself but instead our responses to that violence. Policy and procedure will be the main topic of our discussion.

- The ethical approval for this study is based on MacEwan University's Research Ethics Board.
- Your identity will be kept confidential.
- The data collected during the focus group will be destroyed after the completion of this project.
- I ask that you keep the information you hear confidential.
- This focus group will be recorded and transcribed.

Instructions

- I'd love to hear from each person during the focus group, so please allow everyone speaking space
- I'd like us to have a group discussion, but please feel free to ask any questions at any point
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Please sign the consent forms if you are OK with what I have explained

QuestionsFactual Questions

- How long have you been studying at MacEwan?
- What is your expected graduation date?

Obtuse Questions

Ok, thanks everyone. I want to shift now to some common concepts when we're thinking about sexual violence. Let's start with consent:

- How do you define consent?
- How do you define sexual violence?
- Where does sexual violence occur?
- Who can sexual violence happen to?
- Who commits an act of sexual violence?

Great! Now shifting your thinking specifically to our campus.

- How often do you hear of sexual violence at school (i.e. conversations between friends, from professors)?
- Does MacEwan have a sexual violence-specific policy?
 - Tell me about it/what do you know about it?
 - When did you find out about it?
 - How did you find out about it?
- Do you know of any other post-secondary institutions that have sexual violence policies?
 - Who?
 - How do you know about them?
- What do you think these policies do?
- Why do these policies exist?
- To what extent are these policies needed or necessary?
- To what extent are these policies effective?

Closing Questions

- If you could imagine a world free from sexual violence, how would this have come to be, and what would this look like?
- Does anyone have anything they'd like to add or clarify?

Conclusion

- Thank you for participating
- Your voice is valuable in this study
- If, for any reason, you would like to withdraw your voice from this study, please contact me (*hand out contact information card*). Also, feel free to contact us if you have any questions.
- Results will be disseminated on April 23, 2019 at MacEwan's 3rd Annual Research Day, and everyone is welcome to attend
- Reminder that individual identities will be kept confidential
- Final thanks

SVSG Focus Group

Introduction

- Name
- Sociology Honours student
- Conducting focus groups as a method of data collection for my thesis on sexual violence policies within Canadian post-secondary institutions
- I will be moderating and will ask you questions regarding...

Study & reminder of ethics and confidentiality

- The focus group will ask you to answer some questions regarding sexual violence and post-secondary policies, but you are under no obligation to answer any question, and you are free to withdraw your participation from the study at any time without penalty.
- There is a risk of feeling uncomfortable due to the sensitivity of this topic. Again, you are free to refrain from answering questions and/or are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you feel as though you need or are interested in getting support from someone, free services such as the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton are available to you, and their contact information is listed on these cards (*hand out support services cards*).

That being said, my focus for the study is not violence itself but instead our responses to that violence. Policy and procedure will be the main topic of our discussion.

- I will record and transcribe this focus group with your consent.
- The ethical approval for this study is based on MacEwan University's Research Ethics Board.
- Your identity will be kept confidential.
- The data collected during the focus group will be destroyed after the completion of this project.
- I ask that you keep the information you hear confidential.

Instructions

- I'd like us to have a group discussion, but please feel free to ask any questions at any point and make sure to allow everyone space to speak
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Please sign the consent forms if you are OK with what I have explained

QuestionsFactual Questions

- How long have you been at MacEwan?
- What is your role at MacEwan?
- How do you see your role at MacEwan in relation to sexual violence?
- Why are you interested in participating?

Obtuse Questions

Ok, thanks everyone! I want to now shift to some common concepts when we're thinking about sexual violence. Let's start with consent:

- How do you define consent?
- How do you define sexual violence?
- Where does sexual violence occur?
- Who can sexual violence happen to?
- Who commits an act of sexual violence?

Great! Now shifting our thinking specifically to campuses.

- How often do you hear of sexual violence at the school (i.e. conversations between colleagues, student to professor, etc.)?
- With two weeks ago being SVAW and multiple workshops on sexual violence being held, did you notice any difference in the conversation levels?
- Does MacEwan has a sexual violence-specific policy?
 - Tell me about it/what do you know about it?
 - When did you find out about it?
 - How did you find out about it?
- Do you know of any other post-secondary institutions that have sexual violence policies?
 - Who?
 - How do you know about them?
- What do you think these policies do?
- Why do these policies exist?
- Why is there such a push for stand-alone policies?
- To what extent are these policies are needed or necessary?
- To what extent are these policies effective?
- Do you think everyone at MacEwan is on board with the sexual violence education initiatives and policy?
- What do you think about institutions that do not have these policies?
- What do you think these policies will do for the future of post-secondary institutions?
- How do you see your role in relation to the policy?

Closing Questions

- If you could imagine a world free from sexual violence, how would this have come to be, and what would this look like?
- Does anyone have anything they'd like to add or clarify?

Conclusion

- Thank you for participating
- Your voice is valuable in this study
- If, for any reason, you would like to withdraw your voice from this study, please contact me or my supervisor with the information on the contact cards and at the top of the consent form. Also, feel free to contact us if you have any questions.
- Results will be disseminated on April 23, 2019 at MacEwan's 3rd Annual Research Day, and everyone is welcome to attend

- Reminder that individual identities will be kept confidential
- Final thanks

Interview

Introduction

- Name
- Sociology Honours student
- Conducting interviews as a method of data collection for my thesis on sexual violence policies within Canadian post-secondary institutions

Study & reminder of ethics and confidentiality

- The interview will ask you to answer some questions regarding sexual violence and post-secondary policies, but you are under no obligation to answer any question, and you are free to withdraw your participation from the study at any time without penalty.
- There is a risk of feeling uncomfortable due to the sensitivity of this topic. Again, you are free to refrain from answering questions and/or are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you feel as though you need or are interested in getting support from someone, free services are available to you (*hand out support services cards*).

That being said, my focus for the study is not violence itself but instead our responses to that violence. Policy and procedure will be the main topic of our discussion.

- I will record and transcribe this focus group with your consent.
- The ethical approval for this study is based on MacEwan University's Research Ethics Board.
- Your identity will be kept confidential.
- The data collected during the interview will be destroyed after the completion of this project.

Instructions

- There are no right or wrong answers
- Please sign the consent forms if you are OK with what I have explained

QuestionsFactual Questions

- What is your role at MacEwan?
- How long have you been working at MacEwan?

Obtuse Questions

Ok, thanks for that. I want to shift our conversation towards sexual violence now.

- When did you first hear about sexual violence being an issue on campuses?
- How and when did MacEwan start talking about sexual violence on campus?

Great! Now shifting your thinking to sexual violence policy.

- Tell me about the policy creation process.
- What was the policy creation process like?
- Why did MacEwan see a need for a stand-alone policy?
- Did you have a role in the creation of the policy? Explain.

- What do you think these policies add to an institution?
- To what extent do you believe these policies are needed/necessary? Explain.
- How do you think we can lessen the amount of sexual violence on campus?
- Do you think everyone at MacEwan is on board with the sexual violence education initiatives and policy?
- What else would you like to do to add to MacEwan's work around sexual violence?
- What do you think about institutions that do not have these policies?
- What do you think these policies will do for the future of post-secondary institutions?
- How do you see your role in relation to sexual violence on campus?
- How do you see your role in relation to the policy?

Closing Questions

- If you could imagine a world free from sexual violence, how would this have come to be, and what would this look like?
- Do you have anything you'd like to add or clarify?

Conclusion

- Thank you for participating
- Your voice is valuable in this study
- If, for any reason, you would like to withdraw your voice from this study, please contact me (*hand out contact information card*). Also, feel free to contact us if you have any questions.
- Results will be disseminated on April 23, 2019 at MacEwan's 3rd Annual Research Day, and everyone is welcome to attend
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- Final thanks