

Violence interrupted: confronting sexual violence on university campuses

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Stand by Me

Viewing Bystander Intervention Programming through an Intersectional Lens

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INTRODUCTION

As public awareness and institutional concern about sexual violence grow, many post-secondary institutions are developing policies and looking for solutions to address sexual violence and rape culture on campuses. Over the last few years, legislation was introduced in several provinces mandating sexual violence prevention policies for post-secondary institutions (see Nelund and Rossiter, this volume), and these newly developed policies often include commitments to provide sexual violence prevention training to students (University of Ottawa 2016). Many post-secondary institutions have begun implementing bystander intervention programming (BIP)¹ as part of that training. This chapter reviews certain BIP practices and explores how this increasingly popular form of sexual violence prevention programming could be implemented in ways that better reflect the complex needs and realities of diverse student populations by examining BIP through an intersectional lens and making suggestions on ways to incorporate an intersectional lens into sexual violence prevention programming.²

BIP has been shown to have some positive results in shifting rape culture on campuses in certain circumstances (Banyard, Moynihan, and Plante 2007; Katz and Moore 2013). For example, Banyard, Moynihan, and Plante's (2007) study showed that a

group of predominantly white male and female undergraduate students had decreased rape myth acceptance, increased knowledge of sexual violence, improved bystander attitudes, and increased self-reported bystander behaviours following participation in BIP. However, even with positive results such as those, BIP should not be understood as a monolithic one-size-fits-all “solution” to sexual violence, but rather as part of a multi-prong approach to address prevention training and education. Within universities this programming must be examined critically, adjusted to reflect the complexity of the student population it is being presented to, and supplemented with additional institutional support. BIP programming that focuses primarily on the sexual violence experienced by young, white, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied, upper-middle-class women who drink alcohol fails to address the experiences of students who do not fit that mould (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016; Monette 2017; Wooten 2017). As such, advocates have been calling for bystander intervention programming that attends to a multiplicity of student experiences from a wider breadth of social locations, as well as addresses structural systems and interlocking forms of oppression such as misogyny, racism, and transphobia that inform and enable sexual violence (Suchland 2016; Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016).

In this chapter, we explore what making a commitment to intersectionality might mean in terms of the design and implementation of BIP as part of an institutional response to sexual violence. We do not purport to offer a single blueprint because such an exercise would fly in the face of intersectionality’s demand that we recognize the ways in which diverse social locations complicate the experiences of individuals and groups, requiring nuanced and contextually informed responses. Instead, we (1) clarify our approach to intersectionality by drawing on the long-established expertise of intersectionality theorists and practitioners, especially in relation to sexual violence; and (2) draw on these insights to frame suggestions about the ways that adopting an intersectional approach might affect seven specific aspects of the design and implementation of BIP. We conclude with suggestions for further research that could assist institutions that adopt BIP in evaluating its implementation and efficacy from an intersectional perspective, and encourage institutions to consider additional supports to supplement BIP in order to comprehensively address sexual violence.

FROM MARGIN TO CENTRE: INTERSECTIONALITY

History and Definition of Intersectionality

There is a rich global history of feminist activism and scholarship led primarily by black, Indigenous, and other women and trans people of colour demonstrating that the simultaneous experience of social location markers such as gender, race, class, and sexual orientation results in unique forms of oppression that cannot be addressed either by isolating a single marker or by purporting to add up the effects of each (Carastathis 2016). Contributors to this rich history include Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Anna Julia Cooper, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Sirma Bilge, Vivian May, and Savitribai Phule, as well as grassroots activist organizations like Somos Hermanas/We Are Sisters and the Combahee River Collective, among others (May 2015; Collins and Bilge 2016).

In her seminal 1989 work, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” to describe this reality (Crenshaw 1989, 139; 1991, 1241). Crenshaw (1991) argued that without a multi-axis analysis, the experiences of those subordinated by various intersecting social categories, such as those of black women, are erased from social justice movements and denied anti-discrimination remedies in the courts. While recognizing that categories such as race and gender are socially constructed and frequently deployed as a tactic to justify discriminatory distinctions, intersectionality theorists also note that social location categorizations can become intertwined with identity in meaningful ways that allow them to be used as positive tools for creating alliances to resist subjugation and building coalitions for achieving social justice (Collins and Bilge 2016; Carastathis 2016).

From Crenshaw’s perspective, however, intersectionality “is not primarily about identity” (2016). Instead, it is “about how structures make certain identities the consequence of and the vehicle for vulnerability. So, if you want to know how many intersections matter, you’ve got to look at the context. What’s happening? ... What are the policies, what are the institutional structures that play a role in contributing to the exclusion of some people and not others?” (ibid.).

In 1990 Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 225) described intersectionality in terms of “interlocking systems of oppression” and the “matrix of domination,” which work not only to exclude members of subordinated groups, but also to privilege members of dominant groups.

Reflecting this approach, Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016) define intersectionality as:

a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves.

Intersectionality's emphasis on the complexity of interactions between factors such as social categories and institutional policies and practices has been central to problematizing essentialism within feminist and anti-racist movements. Yet, no single clear intersectional methodology can be applied to all forms of research or practice. Instead, as Crenshaw has suggested, intersectionality may be taken up as a provisional concept meant to challenge the entrenched ways of understanding ideas such as identity-based discrimination (Carastathis 2016). In this way, intersectionality is an ongoing process that contests dominant mindsets (Carastathis 2016). An intersectional lens can shed light on subjects and experiences that have been overlooked or erased because they do not fit comfortably in entrenched understandings of identity or oppression (May 2015), such as the ways in which state-based racism impact the willingness of Indigenous and racialized women to seek assistance from law enforcement agencies. As such, intersectionality's insights are crucial to developing meaningful responses to sexual violence, which is too often analyzed exclusively through the lens of gender, and/or, by default, from the perspective of those who benefit from matrices of domination.

*Framing Potential Experiences of Sexual Violence
within BIP on Campuses*

We argue that taking an intersectional approach to BIP is essential if institutional responses to sexual violence are going to be meaningful

for *entire* post-secondary communities, rather than just specific (and often otherwise privileged) segments of them. Intersectionality provides an important analytical framework for BIP because it highlights the complexities of sexual violence in relation to matrices of oppression such as racism, homophobia, classism, transphobia, and more.

Angela Davis's and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's intersectional work on sexual violence is particularly instructive for BIP. In *Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist* (1981), Davis argued that the second-wave feminist anti-rape movement failed to acknowledge the impact of racism and classism on experiences of sexual violence. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014) understood that sexual violence is not merely a single-axis gendered oppression, but is a tool of "colonialism, settler colonialism and capitalism", along with "white supremacy, rape culture and the real and symbolic attacks on gender, sexual identity and agency."

An intersectional approach benefits BIP programming by addressing the intersectionality of social locations and power structures. The consequences of failing to apply an intersectional lens to BIP design, implementation, and evaluation include overlooking systemic marginalization, perpetuating the shortcomings of previous single-axis analyses of sexual violence, and leaving the sexual violence experiences of some of the most subordinated community members unaddressed.

Taking an intersectional approach to BIP on campuses involves recognizing and naming structural and institutional forces of subordination, and then seeking to dismantle them. These forces include gendered, colonialist, heterosexist, and racist exercises of power, which disproportionately expose women (cis and trans³) and gender non-binary people (particularly those who are young, disabled, racialized, Indigenous, and/or members of LGBTQ2S+ communities) to sexual violence at the hands of mainly straight cisgender men.⁴ Taking this approach will first mean embracing the complexity of students' social locations, avoiding essentialized versions of who they are, and actively examining whose experiences are neglected or erased in research and programming. Second, BIP should challenge dominant narratives that view sexual violence as only perpetrated against young, white, heterosexual women by male strangers, and challenge the conception of intervention strategies as primarily physical interventions that prevent sexual assault as it is about to occur. This will mean rethinking mainstream narratives about what sexual violence looks like, who is a target or survivor of sexual violence, who is a perpetrator, who is a bystander,

and how meaningful interventions can be framed. Finally, BIP should seek to build coalitions against sexual violence across social locations.

BIP DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION: INSIGHTS FROM INTERSECTIONALITY

In this section, we explore how taking an intersectional approach might affect seven different aspects of BIP design and implementation. Our intention here is not to specifically critique any existing approaches to BIP, but instead to highlight the difference that taking an intersectional approach might make in BIP. It would be impossible in this limited space to comprehensively address each aspect of BIP that could benefit from an intersectional approach. Therefore we have chosen to focus on seven that figure prominently in the existing literature and/or are particularly edifying in terms of how they illustrate what some of the concrete effects of taking an intersectional approach to BIP might be.

Identifying Patterns of Victimization and Perpetration

In identifying patterns of victimization and perpetration, BIP should avoid single-axis essentialized understandings of who a sexual assault survivor or perpetrator is, such as framing all sexual assault victims as young white women assaulted by young white men they met at a party or bar. BIP should instead explore the complex and diverse social locations of both potential victims and perpetrators. In doing so, it should also specifically identify intersecting structural influences and social location categorizations that make some individuals, such as women, trans, and non-binary students, more vulnerable to sexual violence and others more likely to perpetrate it (May 2015).

If BIP focuses solely on scenarios involving young, white, heterosexual women being physically assaulted at or after drinking excessively at a party or bar, those receiving the training may come to assume that these are the only situations in which sexual violence arises, and/or that they are the only situations in which they ought to intervene. As a result, other acts of victimization at different points on the spectrum of sexual violence, and other experiences of sexual violence that more frequently affect students in less privileged social locations, may go unnoticed and effectively be erased (Wooten 2017). A better intersectional practice of BIP could involve identifying what

Crenshaw (1989) recognized as collective yet divergent experiences, which recognizes that there may be more common experiences shared among a particular group but that no overarching generalizations about that group's experience can be made. As noted by Sara Carrigan Wooten (2017), failure to recognize divergent experiences in sexual violence programming can work to reinforce systems of privilege that perpetually marginalize the understandings and experiences of sexual violence of members of groups most vulnerable to it.

First and foremost, students and frontline administrators of sexual violence training must come together to share information about current trends on university campuses that would speak to students' lived experiences in a nuanced way. This can be conducted via informal or formal methods, but, either way, it should include detailed and sustained consultation with students from diverse social locations before, during, and after the provision of sexual violence training.

A BIP training session itself could incorporate a multiplicity of experiences and/or be tailored to address the specific needs and experiences of particular audiences, which allows for an intersectional approach suited for that particular group of students. Attempts to use neutralized language in an effort to be inclusive of all people by addressing no one in particular – for example, by not centring the gender, sexual orientation, or race of the individuals involved in the scenario (without further discussion of the assumptions made about those individuals) – can, in fact, undermine identifying patterns of victimization and perpetration of sexual violence by burying social location categorizations and power structures that influence perpetration and victimization (Wooten 2017). Wooten suggests that the imagining of a so-called generic student experience that is not influenced by cultural, social, or historical factors merely embodies the experiences of the privileged white student (Wooten 2017). Value-neutral language erases the various lived experiences of students impacted by factors such as sexism, colonialism, racism, and transphobia, as the default “neutral” language reverts to scenarios that prioritize the experiences and intervention strategies that are meaningful to survivors who are white, heteronormative, able-bodied, and cisgender women (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016). Moreover, it risks erasing systems of privilege, such as patriarchy and white supremacy, that are arguably reflected in the fact that men represent the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of sexual violence (Conroy and Cotter 2017; Wooten 2017). Where neutral language is used and

no opportunity is given for recognition and discussion of systems of oppression, it can also undermine BIP's capacity to address the need for structural interventions and change.

In any event, patterns remain that are central to better understanding social structures and categorizations that inform sexual violence, and these should be shared with students. For example, sexual violence is a gendered phenomenon where cisgender men are overwhelmingly the most common perpetrators (Conroy and Cotter 2014). Women (cis and trans) are the most common targets of sexual violence in general and on campuses specifically (Gunraj 2014; DeKeseredy 2011). However, other social locations are irreducibly enmeshed with gendered experiences that contribute to sexual violence, disproportionately leaving students who are gender non-conforming (Coulter and Rankin 2017; Association of American Universities 2015), Indigenous (Native Women's Association of Canada 2018), LGBTQ2S+, racialized, immigrant, and disabled at a higher risk of sexual violence while attending Canadian post-secondary institutions (Gunraj 2014; Canadian Federation of Students 2015). These realities should be addressed during BIP.

Structural Critiques

Because intersectional practice is grounded in seeking social justice through individual *and* structural change (Collins and Bilge 2016), BIP that is committed to an intersectional approach must go beyond individual intervention strategies. We suggest that training related to individual strategies for intervening in particular incidents of sexual violence should be fully contextualized with information and discussion about institutional and societal structures that contribute to sexual violence on and off campuses, along with strategies for intervening in those structures (ibid.). This could, for example, include discussing scenarios from several points along the continuum of sexual violence, as well as discussing harassing online behaviours that signal tolerance for transphobic, sexist, racist, homophobic, and other oppressive behaviours.

Further, post-secondary institutions need to look inward at the systemic factors that contribute to sexual violence by, within, and against members of their student body, such as the normalization of rape culture, rather than just focus on individual interventions. As Sarah McMahon (2015, 473) states, "although the bystander approach

is often framed as a community level intervention, most of the programming and research has actually focused largely on the individual level of change, with an emphasis on addressing personal attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.” Personal changes and individual feelings of responsibility are certainly important factors in preventing sexual violence. However, BIP that also helps students to identify opportunities to challenge and change institutional systems that inculcate an atmosphere that sanctions, tolerates, or even ignores sexual violence can also assist in addressing the interlocking systems of power whose existence is a key insight from intersectional theory and practice (Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly 2005; Fuchs 2016). This could include discussing whether an institution provides effective reporting systems, clear and cohesive sexual violence policies, and meaningful support for those situated in vulnerable social locations who experience sexual violence.

It can be challenging to develop systems that meet the needs of survivors with intersecting social experiences (INCITE! 2016, 208). However, institutions can begin by acknowledging the historic and current neglect of the sexual violence perpetrated against racialized, Indigenous, and disabled women and LGBTQ2S+ students. This acknowledgment can be made, in part, by seeking guidance to provide meaningful services for survivors of sexual violence from all communities, and by providing services using an anti-oppression framework (Ryerson University 2016, part V (1); Ristock and Timbang 2005). These steps are key factors in preventing sexual violence (Ristock and Timbang 2005) because they communicate to sexual violence survivors from all social locations that they will not be blamed for the violence perpetrated against them or denied services to address their situation (Banyard 2015). This may in turn lead to improved reporting and opportunities for dealing with perpetrators in ways that minimize the risk of reoffending.

Intervention Strategies

Where BIP approaches sexual violence as a spectrum, it becomes possible to imagine opportunities to intervene *before* physical violence occurs, including through acts that challenge rape culture itself (Banyard 2015). An intersectional approach can challenge the dominant narrative of what meaningful intervention looks like in two ways. First, as discussed above, it can integrate discussion and recognition

of the need for institutional and social structural interventions, as well as address patterns that leave certain groups more vulnerable to sexual violence and others more likely to perpetrate it. Second, BIP can be designed to ensure recognition and discussion of how social location influences the ways in which any particular bystander can intervene *safely* (Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly 2005).

Adriane Bang et al. argue that forms of BIP that do not engage with the experiences relevant to particular communities on campuses may falsely presume that there is a general consensus of ideas about sexual violence, including when individuals may be at risk of sexual violence, what is considered harmful sexual behaviour, when it is meaningful to intervene, and what strategies are most helpful when intervening (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016). Whereas, in reality, sexual violence is interpreted differently in different communities, calling for different forms of intervention relevant to that community (INCITE! 2009). Research has shown that bystander training tailored for specific communities has proven beneficial (McMahon 2015; Moynihan et al. 2011). However, some mainstream programs have been criticized by authors such as Wooten (2017) for neglecting to bring to light the experiences of students from a broad range of social locations. Recognizing a breadth of students' social locations is important not only in relation to targets and perpetrators of sexual violence, but also to bystanders.

For example, bystanders from communities that are more frequently and intensely surveilled and who face institutionalized discrimination and sexual victimization at the hands of white men and authority figures, such as black (Wooten 2017), Indigenous (Human Rights Watch 2013), or gender non-binary (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016) communities, have legitimate reasons to fear intervening in situations involving white men, or in ways that may lead to the involvement of authorities (INCITE! 2016). Further, members of these communities are more likely to have experienced state interventions that were in themselves violent and where reporting did not stop the violence perpetrated against them (*ibid.*). As such, even when sexual violence is being perpetrated by a member of their own community, survivors and bystanders from those communities may prefer intervention strategies that avoid criminalizing their communities out of concern for perpetuating stereotypes about violence within their community (Wooten 2017) or perpetuating discriminatory treatment by the criminal justice system (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016).

LGBTQ2S+ survivors of sexual violence may have unique concerns about individual interventions, including the risk of discrimination from students and staff, and in some cases the loss of friends, family, and jobs, if their sexual orientation is revealed to particular groups or individuals (Potter, Fountain, and Stapleton 2012). Since the population of LGBTQ2S+ students may be smaller on a campus, it can be difficult for survivors to address sexual violence within their communities without risking being isolated from their unique social groups. This is particularly challenging for students who have been rejected by their families or previous social groups because of their sexual or gender identity or expression (ibid.).

Social locations (Banyard 2015) can also differentially affect bystanders' ability to *safely* intervene in sexual violence (McMahon and Banyard 2012) since students experiencing intersecting social locations that result in lower social status may place themselves at considerable risk when intervening in sexual violence (de la Cretaz 2017). This causes a troubling conflict for these students. While BIP places an expectation on students to intervene in sexual violence, students may correctly feel that it is not safe for them to intervene due to their social location. For example, members of racialized, LGBTQ2S+, and Indigenous communities who are more at risk of physical violence may rightly hesitate to intervene in sexual violence involving a straight white male perpetrator. At the same time, they may feel pressured into acting in a way that could place them in danger. BIP that aims to address intersectionality would therefore address the complexity of responsibility and the personal well-being of interveners, as well as offer possibilities for structural interventions and for identifying less intrusive opportunities to intervene earlier, before a situation escalates into physical violence.

Audience

When implementing BIP, post-secondary institutions should have a clear understanding of who their audience is. Without conscious planning around this issue, institutions may default to framing their audience as a monolithic group of white, able-bodied, heterosexual, upper-middle class young people (Wooten 2017), even though the actual composition of student bodies is typically much more complex (McGill University 2009). Committing to addressing the intra- and inter-group differences among students in a non-hierarchical manner is

key to an intersectional approach (Carastathis 2016). It can also strengthen anti-violence movements (INCITE! 2016) by identifying spaces for coalition and solidarity within complicated matrices of social locations (May 2015; Collins and Bilge 2016).

Post-secondary institutions should clearly understand the demographics within their student population and seek out knowledge of sexual violence experiences and interventions from students from a multiplicity of social locations – especially those, such as transgender students, who are systemically vulnerable and face disproportionate levels of sexual violence, even though members of those communities may only represent a small fraction of the overall student population. Unfortunately, detailed demographics for Canadian post-secondary institutions are difficult to locate; many post-secondary institutions do not collect data on various relevant demographics, such as race (McDonald and Ward 2017). However, some institutions have gathered this data, illuminating the actual composition of their students. A 2009 survey of students at McGill University determined that a significant percentage of students were members of a visible minority group (37 per cent), LGBTQ++ (9 per cent), or were international students (19 per cent) (McGill University 2009). These statistics demonstrate the problem with developing policies based on an implicit or explicit assumption of a single *type* of student or a single student experience. The reality is that student bodies are complex and no single definition of a student can capture the plethora of experiences of the actual student body.⁵

We suggest that sexual violence programs at post-secondary institutions should aim to actively generate visibility for a multiplicity of experiences of sexual violence relevant to their student body and subsections within it, rather than rely on a single standardized BIP aimed at a homogenous, and, by default, white population (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthich 2016). This may require the development of specific BIP for various student populations within each institution.

Studies on BIP aimed at specific groups, such as sorority students (Moynihan et al. 2011, 712) and intercollegiate athletes (Moynihan et al. 2010, 197), showed improvements in these students' attitudes about sexual violence and greater intentions to intervene in sexual violence following BIP training developed specifically for their group. Bystander interventions that are developed within the community and put members of that community in leadership roles are more likely to meet the needs of groups with intersecting and diverse

experiences, and may better address the simultaneously marginalized and privileged positions of that student group (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthich 2016). Assumptions should not be made about the social locations of particular student groups, such as assuming that all male athletes are cisgender or heterosexual. Efforts must be made to understand and address the actual composition of the group receiving the training. Program developers can look to BIP training by groups such as Draw the Line (n.d), which have collaborated with various communities to develop community-specific bystander intervention material, including programming developed in collaboration with Indigenous populations.

Due to the complexity of the student population, BIP will often be offered to groups with diverse audience members, even when presenting to smaller groups. When presenting to mixed audiences of students, facilitators should use BIP as an opportunity to build coalitions among students not only by recognizing the multiplicity of experiences among students, but also by seeking to build solidarity among students to end sexual violence (Collins and Bilge 2016). As noted by Elizabeth “Betita” Martinez, learning about and sharing experiences with violence, while respecting and validating varying experiences and historical relationships with violence, can assist in alliance building across difference (INCITE! 2016).

Bystander Bias

Part of addressing the structural issues discussed in the previous sections, such as institutionalized racism, sexism, and homophobia, is discussing how these forces impact bystanders’ willingness to intervene – not just for reasons of personal safety, but also due to their own implicit biases. BIP that examines the intersecting structures that influence bystanders’ intent to intervene can better achieve intersectionality’s goals of naming and dismantling individual and systemic forces that increase oppression (Collins and Bilge 2016). Further, BIP that specifically addresses the structural complexity of sexual violence risks can assist in making visible the experience of particular groups of survivors, and potentially reduce their vulnerability, while increasing the likelihood that they will receive support from others once they have been alerted to their experiences (Crenshaw 1991).

Research indicates that the social location of the target of sexual violence affects whether a bystander will intervene. For example, Lynn

Bowes-Sperry and Anne M. O’Leary-Kelly’s (2005) research shows that bystanders are more likely to help targets of sexual harassment with whom they share social identity categorizations, such as race, gender, or area of employment. David Byers (2013, 255) argues that homophobia and transphobia may cause bystanders to either deny the harm of homophobic sexualized bullying of LGBTQ2S+ targets in order to avoid acknowledging their own bias, or to elect not to intervene out of fear of being labelled homosexual themselves. In a study by Katz et al., women students showed less intention to intervene in a potential sexual assault if both the perpetrator and target were male and presumed gay, when compared to a similar situation involving a heteronormative pairing with a female as a potential target of sexual violence (Katz, Colbert, and Colangelo 2015, 274). Differences in bystander intervention intentions were noted in studies focused on race as well. In several studies, white individuals were statistically less likely to identify a situation as an emergency or have an intention to intervene if the person at risk was black (Saucier, Miller, and Doucet 2005; Katz, Merrilees, et al. 2017). Katz has also suggested that this kind of bias could apply when those with less social status or privilege are targeted (ibid.).

These examples demonstrate the urgency of addressing underlying prejudice and discrimination, and in particular, of making students from privileged communities aware of their own biases when deciding whether to intervene in sexual violence. Without a critical analysis that addresses this underlying power dynamic and seeks to identify and dismantle structural forms of sexism, racism, homophobia, and other categorizations used as bases for discrimination, individuals with diverse social locations outside of white, heteronormative, and otherwise privileged groups seem less likely to benefit from BIP.

Selection and Training of Facilitators

According to Vivian May (2015, 35), an intersectional approach requires “unmasking knowledge claims purported to be neutral and universal ... it raises questions about who has been perceived to be an authoritative knower, whose claims have been heard, which forms of knowledge have received recognition ... and who has had access to the means of knowledge production and training.” By actively selecting facilitators from a wide variety of social locations, this approach shifts who is traditionally recognized as a knowledge bearer, and what

knowledge is considered legitimate, away from where it has been traditionally centred to embrace the complexity of various understandings. BIP grounded in intersectionality should commit to seeking out knowledge bearers affected by various social locations, both to utilize those bearers' positional expertise, and to shift audiences' perceptions of who is an authority in understanding sexual violence prevention.

When training facilitators to present BIP to the larger student population, facilitators from communities inside and outside of white heteronormative communities should be selected to facilitate the workshops. Post-secondary institutions can benefit from engaging with various student community groups to understand who is actually represented within their student body and how those students experience sexual violence (Wooten and Mitchell 2016). Intentionally selecting students from multiple communities and various social locations as leaders legitimizes the experiences of students from diverse social locations, and can shift understandings of sexual violence and alert potential bystanders to less recognized forms of sexual violence (Wooten and Mitchell 2017).

Where possible, facilitators providing training for specific communities – such as students in particular programs, older students, athletic teams, LGBTQ2S+ groups, or international students – should come from within those communities (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016). Those facilitating BIP often have a great deal of power to select and develop the scenarios they determine to be relevant to the group sessions (Cares et al. 2015; Coker et al. 2016). Leaders from specific communities will have intimate knowledge of the nuances of community expectations and what language and scenarios can be most effective in communicating the bystander message to those specific groups (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016). There must be opportunities to present various student perspectives and scenarios related to sexual violence.

However, merely training facilitators from a broad range of communities will not necessarily ensure against discriminatory programming. Facilitators must have an understanding of their own implicit biases and knowledge gaps, as well as potential biases and gaps in the knowledge of participants. An intersectional approach focuses on structural blank spots in understandings of sexual violence, and places where willful ignorance about sexual violence exists (May 2015). Seeking out facilitators from a variety of student communities can potentially offset some of these biases, but as all

individuals will have some knowledge gaps, direct training on implicit bias and sexual violence is recommended regardless of who is facilitating the workshops.

Empirical Data Collection on BIP

An intersectional approach for studying BIP at post-secondary institutions requires a commitment to establishing new narratives of sexual violence experiences involving post-secondary students, and making space for those students who are not traditionally viewed as statistically significant (May 2015). To understand a diversity of narratives, an intersectional approach would call for research that goes beyond data sets that fit smoothly into dominant understandings. An intersectional approach purposely examines the interstices between dominant logics and identities, actively seeking out what lies at the edges, what claims to be well understood but isn't, and what exists outside of common understanding (May 2015; Crenshaw 2005).

Some empirical evaluations of BIP at post-secondary institutions have demonstrated initial positive results, such as a reduction in sexual violence perpetration (Coker et al. 2016; Casey and Ohler 2011), reduced acceptance of rape myths, and increased self-reported bystander interventions (Banyard, Moynihan, and Plante 2007; Katz and Moore 2013). However, the impact of these programs is sometimes evaluated using a predominantly young, white, heteronormative student population (Coker et al. 2016; Bennett, Banyard, and Garnhart 2014). Even where demographic information on factors like race was collected, studies did not always specifically analyze and discuss data specific to racialized groups (Brown, Banyard, and Moynihan 2014). When the positive effects of the program on students affected by diverse social locations – including those who represent a smaller portion of the student body but experience disproportionately high levels of sexual violence – have not been disaggregated to test the effectiveness of BIP on those groups, their experiences with BIP can be neglected or buried in the research results.

In order to better understand a wider variety of student experiences and the impact of BIP on those populations, academics and post-secondary institutions should evaluate sexual violence involving their students and the impacts of their program using disaggregated data (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016), particularly among smaller populations who are disproportionately vulnerable to sexual violence. Information gleaned from these studies should be used to identify gaps

and improve programming (*ibid.*). Without accurate data on sexual violence against their students and the actual impact of the programming aimed at preventing it, post-secondary institutions will be unable to meaningfully address this issue.

CONCLUSION

Intersectionality provides a framework for offering BIP that better addresses the needs and realities of students from a multiplicity of social locations, rather than primarily serving the interests of students from privileged communities. Post-secondary institutions committed to addressing sexual violence through BIP informed by intersectionality will need to conduct research to better understand the diverse social locations occupied by the members of their student bodies and provide programming that addresses these needs. In this way, intersectionality steers BIP away from presumed homogeneity and the use of neutral language that risks defaulting to a cisgender, white, heterosexual standard. Addressing this underlying complexity creates the opportunity to prevent rendering more vulnerable those who are already vulnerable. BIP informed by intersectionality ensures discussion of the needs and realities specific to students affected by varying social locations and addresses the biases affecting others' willingness to intervene in violence against members of groups more likely to be victimized. It also ensures recognition of the expertise and knowledge of individuals from varying social locations through their consultation and their inclusion as facilitators in the process.

BIP with an intersectional approach also addresses systemic issues. In the context of sexual violence, socially constructed locations are reflected in gendered patterns that disproportionately expose women (cis and trans) to sexual violence that is disproportionately committed by cis men. Intersectionally informed BIP also allows for nuanced conversations of sexual violence experienced by men, particularly gay, trans, and bisexual men. Further, power structures informed by racism, colonialism, transphobia, homophobia, and ableism affect survivors' experiences in ways that cannot be separated from their experience of gender. These intersecting experiences of social categories add complexity to understanding the risk and impact of sexual violence, the availability of assistance, and the willingness of bystanders to intervene. Taking an intersectional approach to BIP would encourage not only laying those structures bare, but also expanding the notion of "intervention" beyond reactions to individual instances of sexual

violence, so that it includes developing self-awareness of bias, coalition building, and systemic change.

Intersectionality theory and practice undoubtedly raise complexities for designing and implementing BIP, but the insights and opportunities they yield, in particular in relation to understanding the structural underpinnings of sexual violence and expanding the community of students who stand to benefit from them, are both practically and morally impossible to ignore.

Recommendations for Future Research

We have identified three areas of further research that could aid in realizing intersectionality's benefits in BIP. First, our review of the current literature on BIP indicates a lack of research in which data are disaggregated in order to evaluate the impact and effect of BIP on student bodies at various social locations. The experiences of smaller student populations who experience disproportionate levels of sexual violence, such as transgender or Indigenous students, are often neglected. These experiences must be taken into consideration in future studies to ensure that the programming being provided is useful and relevant to those groups, and that their experiences are not erased. Second, academic attention should be paid to those institutions that are providing BIP using an intersectional lens, assessing the effectiveness of their programming and highlighting diverse and unique approaches to BIP. By examining a variety of programming styles, institutions can identify ways to alter their programming to take better account of the experiences of subordinated groups. Third, research must be conducted on what other forms of institutional support are required to supplement sexual violence intervention programming like BIP. Even with an intersectional approach, BIP and individual actions cannot serve as the sole solutions to sexual violence. Structural and systemic change is needed. A better understanding of what other supports and programming are needed to fully address sexual violence and rape culture on campus will help institutions provide a robust and supportive space to improve the safety, autonomy, and well-being of their student population.

Recommendations for Policy

We have identified three policy changes that could aid in realizing intersectionality's benefits in BIP. First, we recommend that

post-secondary institutions acknowledge the historic and current neglect of the violence perpetrated against racialized, Indigenous, and disabled women, and LGBTQ 2S+ students, in their policies. This includes seeking guidance from those groups on how to provide meaningful services for survivors of sexual violence from all communities, gaining knowledge about these communities' experiences with sexual violence, and using an anti-oppressive framework in their sexual violence prevention policies and services. Second, as part of their sexual violence prevention policies, institutions should commit to collecting and publishing disaggregated data about student demographics, including disaggregated data on sexual violence reporting by their student population (concerning both perpetrator and survivor demographics, where possible), and the effectiveness of their sexual violence programming and services across a breadth of social locations. Third, both governmental and academic institutional actors should invest in community-developed anti-oppression programming aimed at addressing underlying systems of discrimination that work to disproportionately expose women (cis and trans) and gender non-binary people (especially those who are young, disabled, racialized, Indigenous, and/or members of LGBTQ 2S+ communities) to sexual violence at the hands of mainly straight cisgender men.

NOTES

- 1 In this chapter, we use the term “bystander intervention programming” in a general sense to refer to programs that aim to create a community sense of responsibility of and for sexual violence. BIP can and does take a variety of forms from institution to institution, although many post-secondary institutions that offer BIP use variations of popular programs such as *Bringing in the Bystander* and the *Green Dot*. BIP, as it is currently practised, often involves educating community members about sexual violence and encouraging bystanders to intervene to address it (Kingade 2016; Banyard et al. 2007).
- 2 We have specifically chosen to focus on student populations only in this chapter as we believe that unique considerations may apply to faculty, staff, and other groups receiving BIP that require specific attention and further research.
- 3 We have adopted the definition transgender/trans as the encompassing term for many gender identities of people who do not identify or

exclusively identify with the sex assigned at birth. The term “transgender” is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life (Trans-Student Educational Resources n.d.).

- 4 The Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton reports that one in three women and one in six men will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, while 80 per cent of disabled women will be sexually abused in their lifetime, rates of victimization are five times higher for women under age thirty-five, and one in five members of the LGBTQ++ community experienced sexual/physical violence in an intimate relationship, with bisexual women reporting this type of violence most frequently, followed by gay men, lesbian women, and bisexual males. In 99 per cent of sexual assaults the perpetrator is male (Sexual Assault Centre 2015).
- 5 This complexity should be explicitly recognized in institutional sexual violence policies. See for example Ryerson University’s policy (Ryerson University 2016).

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“Strangers Are Unsafe”

Institutionalized Rape Culture and the Complexity of Addressing University Women’s Safety Concerns

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual assault is a primary safety concern for women (Ferraro 1996, 686–7; Lane and Gover et al. 2009, 187). This fear of sexual assault is not unfounded: over 550,000 women reported being sexually assaulted in Canada in 2014, and – unlike all other crimes, which have decreased – this number has remained relatively stable over the past two decades (Perreault 2015). Young Canadians are particularly likely to be sexually victimized (Brennan and Taylor-Butts 2008, 12–13). Among post-secondary students, women in their first and second year are at the highest risk (Humphrey and White 2000, 422; Kimble et al. 2008, 335–6). Recent legislation in Ontario has mandated the development of stand-alone sexual assault policies to address sexual assault on university campuses (Legislative Assembly of Ontario 2016). Criticism and debate have ensued regarding responsibility for addressing safety issues and the presence of rape culture in the university community (Vemuri, this volume).

In light of the increased attention to sexual assault on university campuses, we examined women’s experiences and perceptions of safety on one Canadian campus. We situate our analysis within a broader discussion of the Canadian university context and institutional efforts

to adequately address sexual assault. Throughout this chapter, we also discuss an overarching tension in both our analysis and in promoting women's safety on campus more generally; that is, the tension between (1) taking seriously women's voices and safety concerns (which, as our results demonstrate, often rely on stereotypical social constructions of sexual assault), and (2) challenging stereotypical social constructions of sexual assault and institutionalized rape culture.

*The Social Construction of Sexual Assault
and Institutionalized Rape Culture*

Previous research suggests that women are more fearful of sexual assault: at night compared to during the day (Fisher and Sloan 2003, 646; Fisher et al. 1995); in public compared to private spaces (Starkweather 2007, 362–5); and by a stranger compared to by someone they know (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1997, 537; Wilcox et al. 2006, 361). These concerns do not match where and from whom women are most at risk – a paradox previously noted (e.g., Pain 1997, 306) but rarely critically examined in the literature. Moreover, little research has specifically examined how these fears relate to the social construction of sexual assault or how university characteristics such as infrastructure, policies, and programs may influence women's safety concerns on campus, particularly as contemporary university campuses are connected with broader rape culture (discussed in detail below).

Rape myths, rape scripts, and sexual scripts are all part of the social construction of sexual assault (Burt 1998). Such narratives and assumptions appear normal and natural, with the function of maintaining a patriarchal power structure. Rape myths are prejudicial or stereotyped beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists that serve to deny and justify male sexual violence (Bohner et al. 2013, 19; Burt 1998). Rape scripts are “individuals’ notions of what a typical rape entails” (Littleton 2011, 794) and tend to match the stereotypical rape scenario (Littleton et al. 2009, 801–2; Ryan 1988, 242–3): “a rape by a stranger who uses a weapon – an assault done at night, outside (in a dark alley), with a lot of violence, resistance by the victim, and hence severe wounds and signs of struggle” (Burt 1998, 130). Importantly, however, this script does not correspond to the reality of most rapes or sexual assaults, which most often are perpetrated by men known to women, do not involve physical force or injury, and occur in private indoor spaces (Abbey et al. 2001, 793–9; Brennan and Taylor-Butts

2008, 13–14; Smith et al. 2017, 23). Sexual assaults that do not fit the stereotypical rape script (i.e., the majority of sexual assaults) often become invisible.

Finally, sexual scripts are notions of how women and men should behave in normative romantic or sexual interactions (Simon and Gagnon 1986, 104–11), and many of their elements are supportive of sexual assault. Traditional sexual scripts depict men as more sexually assertive, more commonly initiating sexual activity, and unable to control their sexual behaviour (Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2005, 153; Ryan 2011, 779; Simon and Gagnon 1986, 104–11). These scripts also underlie rape myths that function to exonerate perpetrators (Bohner and Eyssel et al. 2013, 19; Ryan 2011, 777–9).

While rape myths, rape scripts, and sexual scripts exist at the individual level, they are socially and culturally determined and embedded (e.g., in laws, media, religion; see Edwards et al. 2011, 763–9; Ryan 2011, 779). Universities are part of this broader sociocultural context and institutionalize rape culture; that is, they facilitate sexual assault and stereotypical social constructions of sexual assault through policies, resources, and infrastructure focused on stranger sexual assault and individualized causes of sexual assault (e.g., alcohol consumption). Moreover, universities may actually have a stake in perpetuating rape culture and stereotypical social constructions of sexual assault. Universities are increasingly operated like businesses and are motivated to maintain a favourable public image to ensure economic interests (e.g., preserving enrolment numbers; Gregory 2012, 76; Smeltzer and Hearn 2015, 353). These motivations have influenced campus policies and practices that (1) “make individuals the ultimate agents of their own safety,” (2) discourage victims from reporting campus sexual assault, and (3) focus on stranger danger and suggest that threats of violence come from outside the university (Gray and Pin 2017, 96–9; Gregory 2012, 72). In these ways, universities can effectively maintain their public image as “safe and reputable” institutions while circumventing their own responsibility for sexual assault (Gregory 2012, 76). It is within this context that we situate our analysis of nine woman-identified Canadian university students' subjective experiences and perceptions of safety through the lens of the social construction of sexual assault. We aim to highlight the sheer strength and embeddedness of dominant social constructions of sexual assault in our participants' safety concerns, as well as the effects of these concerns on participants' academic and social lives.

Situating Ourselves and Our University Campus

The authors of this chapter occupy distinct and overlapping social positions. We are all women, Western, and middle class. At the time of writing, two of us were psychology graduate students and two had PhDs. We identify with various sexual orientations and ethnoracial identities (though all have light-skin privilege). We are all feminist researchers influenced by various academic and theoretical backgrounds and perspectives (e.g., clinical psychology, social psychology, critical feminism, participatory research, poststructuralism). As such, during this research we were concerned with understanding and taking seriously participants' safety concerns while challenging rape culture (goals which often conflicted in this project, as we will discuss).

Our research comes from a mid-sized university in Southwestern Ontario with a student population that predominantly occupies positions of race and class privilege. In addition to an institutional sexual assault policy, the university has a number of sexual assault resources (e.g., an institutional website) and annual sexual assault and consent-based campaigns and programs available to students. For example, there were several programs held on campus for first-year students in the academic year when our research took place, including sexual assault information sessions for residence students and the "Can I Kiss You?" program by Mike Domitrz, which was mandatory for all first-year students (Domitrz 2019).

METHOD

We used participatory photography (sometimes termed PhotoVoice) to examine participants' subjective experiences and perceptions of safety on campus during the Winter 2015 semester. Participatory photography is a participatory action research (PAR) strategy that allows participants to represent and share their lives, expertise, and knowledge through photography (Wang 1999, 185–9; Wang and Burris 1997, 369). PAR aims to understand and improve social systems by making positive change within them. It is a collective, self-reflective method in which participants act as researchers themselves and can become empowered in the process (Baum et al. 2006, 854–5). This method allows people to: (1) record and reflect on aspects of their daily lives; (2) promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through group discussion; and (3) use

photography to catalogue social issues to reach policy-makers. We chose this method because we wanted to go beyond gaining a better understanding of women's safety concerns – we wanted to use women's voices and the visual power of photos to help foster positive change on our campus. However, this endeavour became complicated by our process and results. In particular, uncritically using our participants' voices and safety concerns would have meant reproducing problematic rape myths and rape and sexual scripts, and promoting potentially less effective safety policies and practices.

Participants

Our study sample included nine first-year woman-identified university students. Although two did not continue their participation after the first workshop, we include them here because we used some data from the first workshop in our analysis. Although there is variability in sample size across participatory photography studies, a sample size under ten is not uncommon (see Catalani and Minkler 2010, 439). All nine participants were eighteen years old and lived in campus student residences. One participant identified as lesbian, one as bisexual, three as heterosexual, and the remaining four were unreported. Four identified as White/European, two as Black/African/Caribbean, two as South Asian, and one as "other." Five were single, three were in a serious relationship, and one was casually dating. We use pseudonyms for participant names throughout this chapter.

Procedure

We adapted our methodological procedure from Wang and colleagues' PhotoVoice practices (Wang 1999, 187–9; Wang and Burris 1997, 378–80). Participants first attended a two-hour workshop where we introduced the method of participatory photography and the goals of the project, and stimulated engagement with the topic through individual and group brainstorming about what made them feel safe and unsafe on campus. Over the course of the following week, participants took approximately fifteen photos each of people, places, and things that make women feel (un)safe on campus, or that could convey how safety influences women's activity on campus. We collected a total of eighty-one photos from the seven participants who attended the second workshop.

We held the second, three-hour workshop two weeks after the first. The purpose was to review and reflect on the photos as a group and to collaboratively develop overarching themes and discuss how the results could be disseminated. First, participants selected three of their photos from the hard copies we provided and wrote a brief description of each. Next, participants took turns in an open and dynamic process of sharing their photos and experiences. We encouraged participants to engage in discussion and critical thinking by considering different perspectives and whether their safety concerns matched their actual risk. Importantly, however, we tried to balance this with our goal of understanding women's safety concerns independent of the researchers' influence and the potential ethical concerns of adding to women's fears. The facilitators helped link the photos and themes within the broader goal of the research, and the group then further developed and refined the themes that had been identified. We also discussed possible dissemination efforts and later encouraged participants by email to engage in this process; however, only two women ultimately participated by providing feedback on a zine (a homemade magazine-style publication) that was created based on our research findings.

Data Analysis

To address our goal of developing a practically and materially grounded understanding of participants' campus safety concerns, we began with a semantic thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006, 84–5). This involved reading the transcripts as straightforward reflections of participants' subjective perceptions. Using the coding and organizing principles of thematic analysis, five members of the research team developed an initial set of content themes regarding participants' safety concerns. These were: (1) men and strangers; (2) alcohol and drugs; (3) darkness and isolation; (4) ineffective and unreliable resources; and (5) an unfavourable campus climate for women.

In line with the values and goals of PAR, we believe that the ways in which women experience and perceive the world are important to highlight, particularly to the extent that they influence women's behaviour and how they take up space in the world. Notably, however, most of our participants' safety concerns reflected dominant, stereotypical social constructions of sexual assault. This created a challenge for us as feminist researchers because the impetus for our project was to use this research to facilitate effective change on campus. We were

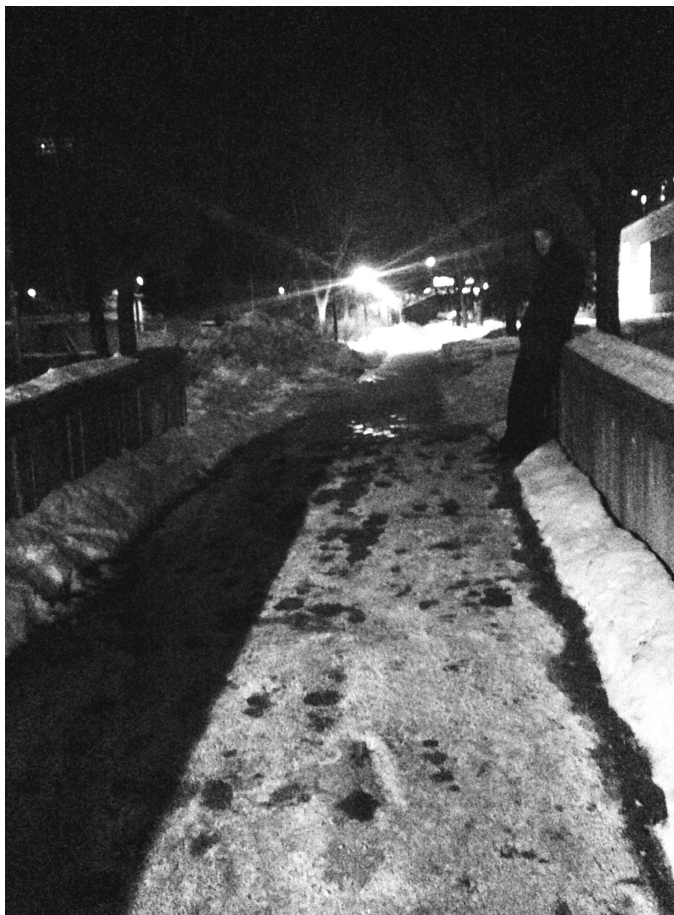
surprised not by the existence of these stereotypical social constructions of sexual assault among our participants, but rather by their *strength* (even in the face of our efforts to promote critical thinking), and we did not want to reproduce them or broader institutionalized rape culture. Thus, in an effort to theorize the institutional and socio-cultural conditions that might have enabled participants' accounts, the first two authors further analyzed the data for more latent meaning (i.e., underlying ideas, assumptions, and ideologies). Accordingly, we adopted a critical feminist perspective to examine the ways in which women's safety concerns interacted with and reproduced social constructions of sexual assault, how these concerns impacted participants' lives on campus, and the potential implications for addressing women's safety on contemporary Canadian university campuses.

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S CAMPUS SAFETY CONCERNS AND FEAR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Our analysis focuses on how our participants' notions of sexual assault and campus safety concerns reflected sociocultural constructions of sexual assault – what it looks like and what causes it. We are not suggesting here that women's safety concerns are trivial or unwarranted, nor are we conflating *feeling* unsafe with *being* unsafe. Rather, our analysis demonstrates how stereotypical social constructions of sexual assault shape women's safety concerns and necessitates grappling with the tension between recognizing and challenging these concerns in order to fully address women's safety on campus.

What Sexual Assault Looks Like: The Power of the Stereotypical Rape Script

One manifestation of the broader social construction of sexual assault was a dominant, stereotypical definition of rape among participants. The notion that sexual assault involves a violent nighttime attack by a stranger was deeply embedded in participants' safety concerns on campus. The fears that participants expressed were almost exclusively related to men, strangers, and being alone outside at night. While these safety concerns have been well documented in the literature, our data depict not only the presence, but the *extent* to which participants' understandings of safety on campus were rooted in the representations of a stereotypical rape. In addition to their discussions noted below,



6.1 “This photo ... is a representation of my fear about walking alone at night. The shadowy man figure staring out of the picture is symbolic of the constant paranoia I feel at night. Is someone following me? Am I safe?” – Audrey

participants’ photos also illustrated these patterns: roughly 70 per cent ($n = 56$) of the photos reflected safety concerns related to men, strangers, darkness, or isolation (see figures 6.1 and 6.2 for examples).

Drawing on the stereotypical rape script that implicates strangers as the main perpetrators of sexual assault (Burt 1998), participants’ campus safety concerns were centred around male strangers. When they did acknowledge women’s fear of known men, it was usually reserved for women who have men in their lives who are “scary” or



6.2 “In this tunnel, whether it is night or day, when I walk through it, I get shivers down my spine. The echoes of my footsteps almost make it seem as if there is someone bigger, stronger following me. Tunnels like this are the stereotypical place where you, as a woman, would expect yourself to become prey. Dark isolated corners, a staircase that leads up to something or someone you cannot see, the possibility of getting trapped when both entrances are blocked. It is another area where a girl dreads to walk through alone.” – Lucy

“threatening,” such as women with abusive intimate partners. Perceived risk was also reserved mainly for certain *atypical* men. When they discussed the potential for sexual assault in the home, the comments seemed to imply that sexual assault is still perpetrated by strangers (e.g., “balcony rapists”).

Further drawing on the stereotypical rape script, participants reported that being alone outside at night made them feel unsafe. For example, Audrey explained that many women experience “paranoia and fear ... when they are walking at night” and that this fear is always in the back of women’s minds. Participants pointed to such concerns as isolated areas on campus – including parking lots and pedestrian tunnels – where they felt afraid or “very vulnerable,” especially at night, as well as a lack of accessible well-lit buildings. In contrast, they expressed that being with friends or around other people at night

(unless it was only one man “lurking around”) is where they felt safe. Underlying this appears to be an assumption that no one would attempt to harm them with others around, or that, “if anything came up, [they could] ask for help” and bystanders would step in. Thus, women’s reported feelings of safety in any given situation were contingent on the degree to which their encounter reflected a stereotypical rape scenario.

Participants’ protective strategies also suggested a strongly held fear or concern associated with the stereotypical rape scenario. These strategies often involved their attempts to avoid being alone outside at night. Participants commonly reported practices like being alert at night; taking faster, better-lit, and more populated walking routes; avoiding taking classes or going to the library at night; and taking a taxi or bus instead of walking at night (even for short distances across campus). Notably, these strategies parallel the safety resources available on campus, which are intentionally made visible by the university: night walking services, outdoor lighting, and outdoor emergency call posts. Participants identified these resources as elements of the campus infrastructure that helped them to feel safer. What was conspicuously missing from these discussions was any reference to activities associated with acquaintances, such as only inviting a romantic or sexual partner over if other roommates are home. It is possible that the participatory photography method contributed to these results (i.e., participants may have taken pictures of *visible* safety concerns and resources); however, their discussions further highlight how strongly such concerns were held.

While the mismatch between women’s knowledge about general risks and their fear and perceptions of personal risk is well documented (e.g., Ferraro 1996, 686–7; Fisher and Sloan 2003, 646; Pain 1997, 306), we wish to highlight the extent to which participants’ understandings of what sexual assault looks like were rooted in these stereotyped accounts of sexual assault. To illustrate, despite prompts from the facilitators to consider acquaintance risk in general and despite participants’ own real-life experiences with acquaintance risk, participants continually returned to stereotypical rape scripts. For example, in response to a prompt from the facilitator reminding participants that women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know, Audrey confirmed that she was aware of this risk; however, her own photos and fears shared throughout the workshops were still steeped in stereotypical rape scripts. Similarly, while

participants pointed to specific sources of misinformation that position women as being unsafe when they are alone at night, such as messages from parents and the media, their reported *feelings* of fear and danger remained. Finally, despite participants recounting several real-life stories of acquaintance-perpetrated violence and no stories of personally known stranger-perpetrated sexual assault, their safety concerns were still overwhelmingly centred on strangers outside at night and the belief that bystanders would step in to help.

*What Causes Sexual Assault:
The Power of Rape Myths and Sexual Scripts*

Participants' discussions of their safety concerns were also replete with stereotyped explanations about the causes of sexual assault. Their discussions suggested that they believed sexual assault to be caused by men's sexual urges, alcohol, and women's behaviour and clothing. Discussed in detail below, each of these "causes" reflect common rape myths that blame the victim, suggest that only certain types of women are sexually assaulted, and exonerate the perpetrator (Bohner et al. 2013, 19). To illustrate, within a single story, Lucy suggested that alcohol causes sexual assault, that women's behaviour elicits sexual assault, and that men cannot control themselves when drunk or when women provoke or attract them:

sometimes it's not really the man's fault ... you know how they say like they have two heads ... when that other head takes over like they can't ... Especially when at the party I went to, there were two girls on the bed dancing like they were really drunk ... like taking their shirts off and I mean sometimes like they do provoke it and they – it isn't their fault entirely because they are drunk as well but if they know that they... are doing this when they are drunk and if they know they will regret it afterwards.

Lucy's account offers a powerful example of how women's understandings of sexual assault are influenced by (1) rape myths that exonerate perpetrators (i.e., sexual assault happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control; Bohner et al. 2013, 19), and (2) traditional sexual scripts that depict men as biologically driven to be sexually assertive (e.g., Ryan 2011, 779; Simon and Gagnon 1986, 104–11). Lucy linked the idea that men have "two heads" to their intoxication,

implying that men have an irrational and uncontrollable side that “takes over” when intoxicated. Her reference to the women dancing provocatively also suggests that this second “head” is related to sexual urges that cannot be controlled once a man is provoked.

Participants’ discussions and photos often reflected a culture of heavy alcohol consumption on campus (e.g., see figure 6.3). Concerns with alcohol were mainly related to men, described by participants as sometimes misbehaving or acting rowdy, aggressive, or possessive when intoxicated. Participants’ protective strategies also often reflected these concerns, including avoiding parties and groups of people who were drinking. Feeling unsafe around intoxicated men included male friends and acquaintances, though not more so than strangers. Several participants also spoke about women’s own alcohol consumption putting them in danger, therefore making them partly to blame if sexually assaulted while drunk – either because they are less coherent and attentive, or because their behaviour provokes it.

Importantly, participants often described the presence of alcohol – rather than people’s specific behaviour when intoxicated – as inevitably leading to situations getting out of hand. In this way, they shifted responsibility from the person’s behaviour to the alcohol itself (see also description of figure 6.3): “I had a friend this year who got raped because she was really drunk and the guy was really drunk and it was just a mess and everyone else is really drunk and everyone left her with him and ... things like that happen when people are really drunk” (Lily). While there is evidence that sexual assault often involves alcohol consumption by both the perpetrator and victim (Abbey and McAuslan et al. 2001, 794), rape myths about alcohol do more than point to alcohol as a risk factor; they act to shift blame from the perpetrator to the alcohol itself or to women’s behaviour when intoxicated. Moreover, in the university context, focus on alcohol allows the issue to remain individualized. In this way, universities can distance themselves from cases of sexual assault where alcohol is involved. Rather than addressing the broader issue of rape culture, university policy can shift the problem to individuals’ alcohol consumption in campus residences. Our participants explained that the university punished individual students who were caught drinking too much or in residence common areas (for example, by having them attend a seminar or create a poster about responsible drinking).

Participants also implicitly described other aspects of women’s behaviour as eliciting sexual assault. This was mainly illustrated in



6.3 "This photo ... represents how the consumption of alcohol could easily get out of hand and things can escalate very quickly. This is very important because this is when women are most taken advantage of." – Rabina

participants' protective strategies such as dressing more conservatively, limiting their own alcohol consumption, and locking their residence doors. These strategies imply, at the least, that women hold some of the responsibility for preventing sexual assault and, at the most, that women are to blame if they do not engage in these strategies and are then sexually assaulted. Thus, participants' understandings of sexual assault emphasized personal responsibility for making oneself a target with respect to lifestyle choices (e.g., being intoxicated) and self-presentation (e.g., wearing provocative clothing) (Fileborn 2016, 1112; Madriz 1997, 88; Snedker 2012, 86–93).

As occurred in discussions about what sexual assault looks like, constructions of the causes of sexual assault were so deeply engrained in some participants' understandings of sexual assault that they continually defaulted to them, despite challenges from the facilitators and other participants to consider alternative explanations. For example, following a discussion of alcohol consumption, women's behaviour, and victim-blaming spurred by Lucy's party story described above, Audrey introduced her staged photo of someone's hand over a woman's mouth (see figure 6.4) and explained that women are often blamed

for sexual assault and that this can prevent women from reporting sexual assault or speaking out about women's issues. Despite these arguments, Jillian responded: "I just totally agree with everything that's been said like, so much. But again ... I totally feel it's you know, really it is both sides." Even participants who challenged stereotypical constructions about sexual assault in some ways (e.g., questioned women's responsibility in provoking sexual assault) still promoted them in other ways (e.g., alcohol as causing sexual assault, strangers as likely perpetrators of sexual assault).

DISCUSSION

Our findings highlight the strength of stereotypical social constructions of sexual assault in shaping women's safety concerns, even in the face of contradictory knowledge and experiences. Previous research has shown that men and women continue to endorse rape myths, hold erroneous rape scripts, and adhere to traditional sexual scripts (Hayes et al. 2016, 1546; Littleton et al. 2009, 800–2; Masters et al. 2013, 418–19), and our results support recent contentions that rape myths and scripts have evolved to be subtler and more covert (McMahon and Farmer 2011, 71–2). For example, while most of our participants did not directly blame women, they did suggest that women sometimes put themselves in undesirable situations and that, in some cases, men should not be held entirely accountable for sexual assault (*ibid.*, 71–5). Our findings provide further evidence that fear of sexual assault continues to restrict women's activities and use of public and academic spaces (e.g., Fisher and Sloan 2003, 651; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1997, 537–41; Valentine 1989, 389). In addition, rape scripts and fear of sexual assault continue to perpetuate largely ineffective protective strategies and lead to false assumptions about safety in private spaces (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1997, 537–41; Turchik and Probst et al. 2010, 81–2; Valentine 1989, 385).

Many of the resources that currently exist on university campuses, including our own, effectively promote, or at least fail to challenge, notions of "stranger danger," including night walking services and emergency call posts. Other examples from our own university include safety bulletins that tend to only report sexual assault by strangers who are not part of the university community and smartphone applications that promote safety only in stereotypically unsafe situations. Most campus resources also suggest that individuals are responsible



6.4 “[This photo is] a representation of the silencing many women may feel on campus ... the inability to speak out about injustices in fear of ridicule ... [including] fear to speak out about being sexually assaulted, or the fear to voice ‘feminist’ opinions ... It is also representative of the stigma associated with women who do speak out, which works to keep us quiet ...” – Audrey

for preventing sexual assault. These messages and resources perpetuate stereotypical constructions of sexual assault, and thereby uphold and institutionalize rape culture. They also allow universities to point to these interventions as evidence of their commitment to addressing sexual assault – indeed, our participants highlighted these resources as doing just that – while simultaneously distancing universities from the broader institutional and sociocultural issues that contribute to rape culture in the first place.

As previously mentioned, universities might also gain from promoting individualizing and “stranger danger” messages that allow them to distance themselves from sexual assault cases and to appear safe. To this end, the promotion of stereotypical constructions of sexual assault allows universities to effectively manage parent and student concerns by obscuring acquaintance/student sexual assault and the university’s own responsibility in preventing it (because it is an

individual problem). While the work of student activist-survivors has been instrumental in holding universities responsible for creating policies and procedures to adequately address sexual assault on campuses, the ensuing institutional response seems to be continually motivated by the need to preserve the university's reputation rather than a true commitment to supporting women and victims (Vemuri, this volume).

As we have stressed throughout this chapter, there is a tension between taking seriously women's safety concerns and challenging stereotypical social constructions of sexual assault and institutionalized rape culture. Thus, how to best address women's safety on campus is not straightforward. On the one hand, we do not wish to discount or trivialize women's perceptions of safety. Our participants appreciated and felt safer with resources such as night walking services and outdoor lighting. Such efforts might, therefore, be important for helping women feel freer to go about their academic and social lives, and for showing at least some women that their concerns are taken seriously. Upon personal reflection, we, as women who study sexual assault, also admitted to holding some of the same fears as our participants. And it is important to acknowledge that the scenarios in which participants felt unsafe do pose *some* risk for women and warrant attention.

On the other hand, campus interventions that focus more on stranger assault are unlikely to keep women safe from most sexual assault scenarios (and, indeed, have not shown reduced rates of sexual assault on university campuses; Cass 2007, 361). They are also complicit in promoting notions of "stranger danger" and other rape scripts and myths on campus, especially because they are often the most visible resources available. Like rape myths and scripts themselves, these resources might hinder women's recognition of risk cues in contexts outside of the stereotypical rape script, create an "illusion of invulnerability," and, ultimately, prevent women (and universities) from engaging in more effective protective strategies (Bohner et al. 2013, 31; Turchik et al. 2010, 81–2). Importantly, while "stranger danger" resources did help our participants to feel safer in some ways, they did not eliminate the fear of being attacked by strangers on campus. Moreover, university administration does not appear to give equal attention to the breadth of women's safety concerns. Participants spoke about the overconsumption of alcohol as a safety concern related to sexual assault, but there were no visible institutional

remedies that addressed it as such. Instead, it was treated as an individual problem or a broad nuisance related to university life that is not linked to women's safety, sexual assault, or rape culture. This valuing of certain safety concerns (e.g., fear of walking alone at night) over others, and the treatment of sexual assault and alcohol as separate issues, simultaneously reinforces stereotypical constructions of sexual assault and absolves universities from addressing acquaintance sexual assault (and from being held responsible when it does occur). Nevertheless, in deconstructing stereotypical myths and scripts about sexual assault and fostering acquaintance risk awareness, there is also a risk that women will become fearful of men they know, which would also hinder their freedom.

Our collective goal has been to help bring attention to women's ongoing safety concerns and the ways in which they impact women's psychological, social, and academic success, and to facilitate improvements to campus safety. In collaboration with a fine arts student, our research team created a zine to share key results from our project. The zine brings to life our participants' safety concerns by following the story of a fictional young woman's concerns about safety while she leaves for a party on campus. The story is created through participant quotes and photos and highlights the unjustness of those concerns (i.e., few men feel afraid on campus), but also works to shift risk awareness to acquaintances (i.e., unacknowledged safety concerns at campus parties (Jeffrey and Crann 2016). It also provides community resources and ways to work towards improving women's safety on and beyond our campus.

Despite our best efforts to include our participants in this knowledge mobilization effort, most were not interested in being involved. We speculate that this was because they did not feel invested in the topic of the study. This lack of investment is telling: our participants conceptualized sexual assault and women's safety in the same narrow and stereotypical ways that the university portrays them; thus, for the most part, participants were not outraged at the university's lack of (effective) response. Nevertheless, we took the "action" piece of this study seriously and worked hard to share the zine widely at campus events, organizations, and public spaces (e.g., bulletin boards); at national academic conferences; and at undergraduate guest lectures at several local universities.

Our findings highlight the tension involved in representing women's lives and voices when those voices contradict feminist interpretations

of oppression. Feminist researchers have previously discussed this challenge (Andrews 2002; Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1997; Lewis 2007). While privileging participants' interpretations can be "dangerous in enforcing dominant constructions" that they may reproduce, privileging researchers' interpretations risks discrediting women's voices and reproducing power relations between researchers (positioned as experts) and participants (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1997, 573; Lewis 2007, 274). The latter would be particularly counter to the goals of PAR. Throughout this research process, we had countless discussions in which we grappled with the incongruities between participants' fears and the reality of acquaintance rape. This chapter and our zine highlight this tension, and both are attempts to disrupt rape culture (and universities' role therein) while still doing justice to our participants' and other women's fears and concerns.

Recommendations for Future Research and Policy

While our feminist PAR women's safety project resulted in several "action" outputs (such as the zine and invited talks on campus) in spite of limited participant interest in these activities, future PAR research on women's safety might consider deeper integration of the action components into recruitment and data collection processes. Similarly, recruiting participants who are passionate about women's safety and committed to creating positive change on campus may result in greater collective interest in the action components. Future research on women's safety should also aim to recruit larger and more diverse samples with respect to ethnoracial background, sexual orientation, and age to improve representativeness.

What is ultimately required to improve women's safety on and off campus is a complete dismantling of the sociocultural, political, and institutional conditions that enable sexual assault and rape culture. As discussed above, university policies and practices often enable sexual assault and rape culture, and, thus, they could play an important role in dismantling rape culture. In light of the tension involved in valuing women's safety concerns without promoting stereotypical and often inaccurate ideas about sexual assault, universities must work to promote women's *feelings* of safety while simultaneously critically deconstructing rape culture. The development of alternative campus resources congruent with this goal might include: male-focused

messages around campus that focus on consent or that disrupt hetero-normative depictions of men's sexuality as aggressive and as taking precedence over women's; smartphone apps that allow women to seek peer support or interruption (e.g., from residence assistants) when they feel unsafe at residence parties or in their dorm rooms; and programs that equip women with accurate knowledge about risk and effective resistance strategies and provide alternative understandings about the nature and causes of sexual assault. Although equipping women with these new understandings is difficult (as our study demonstrated), targeted resistance programs are theorized to undermine rape culture (Radtke et al., this volume) and have demonstrated success in reducing the incidence of rape (Senn et al. 2015, 2332–4). University policy-makers might also consider how to address heavy alcohol consumption on campus and its link to acquaintance sexual assault – while being careful not to victim blame, or to shift responsibility from perpetrators to alcohol itself, or to position the issue and its solution as individual matters instead of institutional ones. While it can be difficult to imagine what alternative resources could even look like given the pervasiveness of rape culture, our study showed that it is an increasingly important endeavour and these examples are only a starting point. Ultimately, universities must acknowledge the role of (institutionalized) rape culture in efforts to address sexual assault on campuses.

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Understanding Students' Intentions to Intervene to Prevent Sexual Violence

A Canadian Study

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary approaches to addressing sexual violence on university and college campuses (and beyond) call for addressing rape culture, and demanding accountability among the entire community to create a climate where sexual violence is not tolerated (Banyard, Plante, and Moynihan 2004). These approaches focus on all community members, not just women as potential targets of violence and/or men as potential perpetrators (ibid.). Individuals' willingness to intervene as prosocial bystanders is key to a safe climate. Prosocial bystanders intervene to prevent or stop an assault, challenge sexist comments, and/or support survivors (McMahon, Postmus, and Koenick 2011).¹

To promote prosocial actions and concomitant campus norms, many schools offer bystander training programs. Though these programs are growing in popularity, theoretical and applied research on bystander intervention on campus is still in its development. Furthermore, bystander intervention research has focused on American colleges, with few studies on Canadian campuses (Senn and Forrest 2016; DeKeserdy, Schwartz, and Alvi 2000). In this study, we provide evidence to inform bystander training programs, as well as other efforts to promote a culture of prosocial bystanderhood. We examine university students' intentions to intervene in hypothetical cases of

sexual violence on campus. Specifically, we explore students' likelihood to intervene depending on gender and other demographic characteristics; personal experiences of sexual violence; participation in anti-violence training; personal beliefs held about sexual violence; and perceptions about peer norms relating to sexual violence.

For the purpose of this chapter we define sexual violence broadly, to include physical violence as well as heteropatriarchal speech and behaviours that encourage or justify sexual victimization. This includes sexually degrading remarks and victim-blaming rhetoric. As McMahon et al. (2011) argue, elements of rape culture exist on a continuum of social acceptability, with rape and physical violence considered unacceptable while other rape culture elements, such as misogynistic comments, are tolerated or even celebrated. Using this definition, we argue that campuses should aim to create a climate where all speech and actions that perpetuate rape culture are challenged rather than focusing only on those that cause physical threats. Below we outline existing literature related to our key variables, describe our methods and study results, and discuss the implications of our findings, including practical recommendations.

Gender

Sexual violence is a gendered phenomenon, with women reporting significantly higher rates of violence than men (Benoit et al. 2015). Further, as Edwards et al. (2011) argue, commonly accepted beliefs that excuse or minimize sexual violence are rooted in sexist beliefs that assume fundamental differences between men and women. These include beliefs that characterize women as being likely to lie about their sexual experiences, or as being unable to explicitly express their sexual agency and thus “ask for it” indirectly, or as secretly enjoying rape. These myths require women to monitor their behaviours in ways that significantly impact their lives. For example, many women avoid walking alone at night, limit their drinking, and monitor how they look and what they say to avoid being viewed as promiscuous. These beliefs and actions severely limit women's freedom. Moreover, trans individuals face constant surveillance and risk violence because they do not conform to social expectations related to the gender binary (Perry and Dyck 2014).

Gender also appears to play a major role in student's likelihood to intervene as a bystander. Women, on average, intervene more often

than men to address sexual violence (Brown, Banyard, and Moynihan 2014). The reasons for this are not fully understood; however, some studies indicate that sexist attitudes and social pressures from male peer groups pose major barriers to intervening for many male students. Women may not feel these pressures to the same an extent (Fabiano et al. 2003). The gendered nature of experiences and social pressures related to sexual violence led us, in this study, to compare female and male students²² intentions to intervene. Due to the small number of trans-identified students who took the survey, we were not able to include them in our multivariable regression analysis. However, we include trans students in the descriptive and bivariate findings.

Intersecting Identities

While gender has been studied for its association with bystander behaviours, other important demographic characteristics, such as race (Brown, Banyard, and Moynihan 2014), Indigenous ancestry, and sexual orientation have been largely unexplored. As intersectionality scholars have argued (Crenshaw 1989; Harris and Linder 2017), focusing too narrowly on gender oversimplifies sexual violence (and bystander intervention). Without explicit efforts to address intersectional elements, the experiences and bystander intentions of the most dominant groups on campuses – white heterosexual students – are assumed to apply to all students.

Race, sexual orientation, and other elements of a person's social location complicate judgements of who can and cannot be understood as a legitimate victim of sexual violence (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016). Donovan (2007) found that male students perceive black women as more promiscuous and as “wanting rape” more than white women. Katz et al. (2017) found that white women reported being less likely to help a black woman at risk of sexual assault than another white woman in the same situation. The potential victim's sexual orientation may also impact judgements of whether a situation is intervention-worthy. Basow and Thompson (2012) found that domestic violence service providers view violence as less severe when it occurs in a same-sex relationship compared to when it occurs in a heterosexual relationship.

Additionally, to contextualize decisions to intervene, we must consider that many students belonging to marginalized groups feel unsafe on university campuses. In their examination of the LGBT inclusivity

of bystander programs, Potter, Fountain, and Stapleton (2012) emphasize that many LGBT students feel unwelcome at school, and have been victimized or alienated by other students or university staff. Instances of racism are also extremely common on North American campuses (Currie et al. 2012). Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) describe how racist microaggressions create “racial battle fatigue” among black college men. Currie et al. (2012) apply this concept to document Indigenous students’ experiences at a Canadian university who face subtle and overt discrimination from other students and campus staff.

Research suggests that members of marginalized groups may have a heightened awareness of sexual violence. Worthen and Wallace (2017) found this when comparing LGB and heterosexual students. Awareness and desire for positive change may motivate students in marginalized groups to take action. However, concern for personal safety may create barriers for these students to intervene, due to the apprehension that they themselves could be vulnerable to violence if they get involved. Furthermore, marginalized students including women and trans people have less confidence that school officials would handle sexual assault reports appropriately compared to their peers (ibid.), which may lower their likelihood to intervene.

In this study, we explore intersecting identities among male and female students by examining how race, Indigenous ancestry, and sexual orientation relate to bystander behaviours among female and male students. We also include students’ level of study in our analysis (i.e., undergraduate/graduate). Because researchers have not examined the relationship between these factors and students’ intentions to intervene, we do not offer specific hypotheses, but take an exploratory approach. Alongside demographic variables, we include students’ personal experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of peer norms related to bystander intervention. We discuss these below.

Experiential Variables: Survivorship and Participation in Training

In our analysis, we have included sexual violence survivorship and participation in anti-violence training as experiential variables that may impact students’ likelihood to intervene. To our knowledge, no research has explored the relationship between surviving sexual violence and bystander intervention. Given that sexual violence survivors

make up a significant proportion of the student body, we believe that including sexual violence survivorship in our analysis may be helpful in understanding the campus climate of bystanderhood. Research to date has shown some support for the effectiveness of bystander training. In a meta-analysis of studies evaluating the effectiveness of campus bystander training programs, Katz and Moore (2013) found moderate support that training can lead to higher bystander efficacy and higher intent to intervene, and modest evidence that training can lead to less rape myth acceptance and more actual intervening behaviours.

Personal Attitudes and Rape Myth Acceptance

Rape myth acceptance is closely tied to rape culture. Rape myths include beliefs about rape and sexual violence that partially or fully blame the targets of violence for their victimization. Rape myths support a narrow and stereotypical idea about which behaviours and incidents constitute “legitimate” sexual violence worthy of intervention by a bystander. As Hockett et al. (2016) argue, so-called legitimate incidents require that the targeted person not be intoxicated, have no prior relationship with the perpetrator, have experienced obvious distress, have immediately reported the crime, and have clear, blatant evidence of the assault. Other scholars (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016; Worthen and Wallace 2017) add that the target’s race, sexual orientation, and ability level also influence what is judged legitimate. Studies have found that those who endorse rape myths or believe that some victims are more worthy of intervention than others are less likely to intervene (Banyard and Moynihan 2011; McMahon 2010; Burn 2009).

Past literature has established that gender affects rape myth acceptance. Two meta-analyses have found that men report higher rape myth acceptance than women (Suarez and Gadalla 2010; Hockett et al. 2016). Given these findings, we hypothesize a negative association between rape myth acceptance and students’ intentions to intervene when witnessing a range of acts of sexual violence, and that the association will be greater among male than female students.

Peer Norms

Beyond individuals’ attitudes, peer or group norms are gaining attention for their role in encouraging or discouraging prosocial bystander behaviours. Studies have found that individuals who perceive their peers as being more likely to intervene are more likely to intervene

themselves (Brown, Banyard, and Moynihan 2014; Banyard and Moynihan 2011). The impact of peer norms appears to be especially strong for male students (Brown, Banyard, and Moynihan 2014) and thus men have been the focus of much of the research and programming in this area. Two studies (Brown and Messman-Moore 2010; Fabiano et al. 2003) have found that college men's perception of their male peers' attitudes and likelihood to intervene were more strongly related to their likelihood to intervene than the men's own personal attitudes about sexual violence. Based on these studies, we hypothesize a positive relationship between pro-intervention peer norms and students' intentions to intervene, and that the association will be greater for males than females.

METHOD

The research presented in this chapter comes from a survey conducted at Wilfrid Laurier University, a mid-sized university in Southern Ontario. We extracted data for this analysis from an anonymous campus safety survey conducted online with students in 2016. An external organization, the Education Advisory Board, developed and administered the survey, which is designed to allow post-secondary institutions to assess students' experiences of sexual violence (including verbal and physical violence, harassment, and abuse within romantic relationships), as well as their personal attitudes and perceptions of the campus climate concerning sexual violence. All students registered during the Winter 2016 semester were invited to participate in the survey. The survey asked students to report their likelihood to intervene in a variety of scenarios that represented potential sexual violence situations that students could encounter on campus. The use of hypothetical situations that mirror real-life cases is common in bystander research (Gini et al. 2008; Dessel, Goodman, and Woodford 2017), given the usefulness of such scenarios in examining sensitive topics (Hughes and Huby 2012). The survey items that we use in our analysis include questions about demographics, sexual violence experiences, rape myth acceptance, and perceptions of peers' likelihood to intervene. We describe the study measures in more detail in table 7.1.

RESULTS

In total, 3,141 students participated in the survey (response rate 18 per cent). After data cleaning, the final sample includes 2,021 respondents

Table 7.1
Study measures

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Theoretical range*</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
Personal intentions to intervene	8-item scale assessing students' likelihood of intervening in various situations of sexual violence; 1 = not likely at all, 4 = very likely (see table 7.3 for items)	1-4	.79
Peer's intentions to intervene	8-item scale assessing students' perceptions of their peers' likelihood of intervening in various situations of sexual violence; the situations of sexual violence are the same as those in the "Personal intentions to intervene" scale; 1 = not likely at all, 4 = very likely	1-4	.87
Rape myth acceptance	10-item scale assessing students' endorsement of common rape myths. Items address myths related to survivors' truthfulness, survivors being partially to blame, and holding perpetrators accountable; 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree	1-4	.87
Sexual violence in current academic year	Single question asking about experiences of sexual violence during the current academic year (since September 2015); sexual violence was defined broadly, including attempted and completed incidents of unwanted sexual touching, oral sex, and sexual penetration; response options: yes, no, and unsure. Due to the very small number of "unsure" responses, we combined "unsure" responses with "yes" responses, theorizing that students would only select "unsure" if they had experienced some form of sexual aggression, even if they were unsure whether it could be labelled sexual violence.		
Sexual violence prior to studies	Single question asking about experiencing unwanted sexual contact prior to going to university; response options: yes, no, and unsure. As per the previous variable, we combined "unsure" and "yes" responses.		
Sexual violence training in current academic year	Single question asking if students received training during the academic year related to sexual violence, such as on the definition of sexual violence and reporting procedures; response options: yes, no, and do not recall. Very few respondents selected "do not recall," therefore we recoded those responses as "no."		

Gender identity	6 response categories provided, including “male,” “female,” 3 non-binary options and other. We combined the non-binary options into trans.
Race	12 categories provided, including other. Due to sample sizes we dichotomized race into white/student of colour.
Indigenous ancestry	Dichotomous question asking about Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations, Metis, Inuit). Though the survey used the term “Aboriginal” we use “Indigenous” in our reporting, as this is the preferred terminology in Canada.
Sexual orientation	7 response categories provided, including other. Due to sample sizes, we dichotomized sexual orientation into heterosexual/LGBQ+.
Level of study	Response categories ranged from first year student to graduate or professional student. We dichotomized this variable into undergraduate and graduate for the analysis.

* Higher scores indicate greater intentions/acceptance of myths.

(12 per cent of Laurier students). Compared to the general university population, female students are overrepresented in the sample, representing 73 per cent of respondents. Trans students comprise 1 per cent of the sample, students of colour comprise 26 per cent, Indigenous students comprise 4 per cent, and LGBTQ+ students comprise 12 per cent. Comparative institutional data is unavailable for these demographic variables. Fourteen per cent of students had experienced sexual violence in the current academic year and 29 per cent had experienced sexual violence prior to attending university. For those questions, sexual violence was defined as someone having or attempting to have unwanted sexual contact with the student.

Table 7.2 shows that, based on average scores, students reported being likely to intervene, with scores being significantly higher among females compared to males. Trans students' likelihood to intervene was the highest among the three groups. This difference was not significant, though the difference between trans and male students' likelihood to intervene was nearly significant ($p = .051$). Collectively, students perceived their peers to be fairly likely to intervene in sexual violence, and no significant differences were observed between the three groups. Overall, students indicated disagreeing with most rape myths. However, males reported significantly higher rape myth acceptance than both trans and female students, while scores were statistically similar between female and trans students.

Continuum of Violence and Intentions to Intervene

Table 7.3 shows that for the full sample, intentions to intervene were highest for items relating to helping someone who is at risk of sexual violence or who had experienced sexual violence. Scores were lower for items relating to holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable, and lowest for confronting sexism that is not directly related to physical violence. On five of the eight items, female students reported significantly higher intentions to intervene than male students. Trans students were more likely than both males and females to intervene in instances of commonplace sexism, and reported being more likely to intervene by challenging victim-blaming statements compared to male students.

Intentions to Intervene among Female and Male Students

To understand the factors associated with students' intentions to intervene, we ran two four-step linear regression models. Linear

Table 7.2
Descriptive statistics; full sample and by gender

	<i>Full sample</i>	<i>Female sample</i>	<i>Male sample</i>	<i>Trans sample</i>	
CATEGORICAL VARIABLES	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>x</i> ²
Race					4.92
White	1,493 (73.9)	1,149 (74.6)	320 (70.6)	24 (85.7)	
Student of colour	528 (26.1)	391 (25.4)	133 (29.4)	4 (14.3)	
Indigenous ancestry					3.80
No	1,937 (95.8)	1,470 (95.5)	441 (97.4)	26 (92.9)	
Yes	84 (4.2)	70 (4.5)	12 (2.6)	2 (7.1)	
Sexual orientation					164.56 ***
Heterosexual	1,780 (88.1)	1,363 (88.5)	414 (91.4)	3 (10.7)	
LGBQ+	241 (11.9)	177 (11.5)	39 (8.6)	25 (89.3)	
Level of study					2.91
Undergraduate	1,831 (90.6)	1,394 (90.5)	415 (91.6)	23 (82.1)	
Graduate	189 (9.4)	146 (9.5)	38 (8.4)	5 (17.9)	
Sexual violence in current academic year					39.42 ***
No	1,748 (86.5)	1,293 (84.0)	432 (95.4)	23 (82.1)	
Yes/unsure	273 (13.5)	247 (16.0)	21 (4.6)	5 (17.9)	
Sexual violence prior to studies					121.50 ***
No	1,444 (71.4)	1,016 (66.0)	415 (91.6)	13 (46.4)	
Yes/unsure	577 (28.6)	524 (34.0)	38 (8.4)	15 (53.6)	
Sexual violence training in current academic year					1.92
No	1,261 (62.4)	966 (62.7)	281 (62.0)	14 (50)	
Yes	760 (37.6)	574 (37.3)	172 (38.0)	14 (50)	
CONTINUOUS VARIABLES ⁱ	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>F</i>
Personal intentions to inter- vene in sexual violence ⁱⁱ	3.24 (0.45)	3.27 (0.42)	3.11 (0.50)	3.33 (0.45)	24.00 ***
Peer norms regarding intentions to intervene in sexual violence	2.84 (0.55)	2.83 (0.55)	2.90 (0.52)	2.75 (0.66)	NS
Rape myth acceptance ⁱⁱⁱ	1.68 (0.51)	1.59 (0.47)	1.96 (0.53)	1.44 (0.55)	105.00 ***

i Theoretical range for all variables 1–4. Higher scores indicate greater intentions to intervene or greater endorsement of rape myths.

ii Games-Howell post hoc test revealed a significant difference between males and females.

iii Games-Howell post hoc test revealed significant differences between males and females, and between males and trans people.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$, NS = not significant.

Table 7-3
Mean scores for likelihood to intervene scale; full sample and by gender

SCALE ITEM	Full sample	Female sample	Male sample	Trans sample	ANOVA	Games-Howell post hoc test (m = male, f = female, t = trans)			
	M (sD)	M (sD)	M (sD)	M (sD)	F	m x f	t x m	t x f	
Express my discomfort if someone makes a sexual joke about a person's body.	2.78 (.79)	2.84 (.78)	2.55 (.80)	3.25 (.64)	28.98***	***	***	***	**
Express my discomfort if someone says that sexual assault victims are to blame for being assaulted.	3.49 (.71)	3.56 (.66)	3.21 (.81)	3.68 (.61)	45.60***	***	**		NS
Talk to a friend who I suspect is in a sexually abusive relationship.	3.28 (.65)	3.30 (.63)	3.22 (.71)	3.32 (.55)	NS	—	—		—
Ask someone who looks very upset at a party if they are OK or need help.	3.23 (.70)	3.27 (.68)	3.09 (.77)	3.32 (.72)	11.97***	***	NS		NS
Confront a friend who tells me that they had sex with someone who was passed out or didn't give consent.	3.42 (.71)	3.45 (.69)	3.32 (.74)	3.39 (.83)	5.85 **	**	NS		NS
Tell a campus authority about information I have that might help in a sexual violence case even if pressured by my peers to stay silent.	3.06 (.77)	3.06 (.77)	3.08 (.78)	3.04 (.88)	NS	—	—		—
Report a friend who committed sexual violence.	2.94 (.77)	2.96 (.77)	2.91 (.79)	3.00 (.78)	NS	—	—		—
Help a friend report an incident of sexual violence or abuse.	3.71(.52)	3.77 (.47)	3.53 (.60)	3.61 (.68)	39.50***	***	NS		NS

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$, NS = not significant

regression allows us to explore the degree to which various independent variables predict an outcome, which in this case is the likelihood that a student would intervene. We ran separate analyses for male and female students. In both cases, we first examined demographic characteristics (race, Indigenous ancestry, sexual orientation, and level of study), and then sequentially added personal experiences (training, experiences of sexual violence during the school year, experiences of sexual violence prior to beginning university), rape myth acceptance, and finally perception of peers' intentions to intervene to address sexual violence.³

Entering variables sequentially allows us to examine the contribution made by a given variable or set of variables in predicting the outcome, while controlling for all of the variables entered at previous stages. By entering the variables as we have, we are able to assess how much impact peer norms have on intentions to intervene, above and beyond the effect of the variables that were entered at previous stages (demographic characteristics, personal experiences, and rape myth acceptance). See table 7.4 for regression results.

Female students. In the model addressing only demographics, both LGBTQ+ students and graduate students tended to report higher intentions to intervene compared to their peers. When adding student experiences, sexual orientation was no longer statistically significant. In this model we found higher intentions among those who experienced sexual violence prior to university as well as those who participated in training in the current academic year, and we found lower intentions among those who experienced sexual violence in the current academic year. In the next model, we found that rape myth acceptance was negatively associated with students' intentions to intervene. With the exception of level of study, all other variables significant in the previous model remained so. In the final model, students who reported higher perceptions of peer norms tended to report higher intentions to intervene. Except for training, all other variables remained statistically significant. In this model, peer norms emerged as the strongest predictor of intentions to intervene ($\beta = .30$), followed by rape myth acceptance ($\beta = -.22$).

Male students. When only including demographics, intentions to intervene were significantly higher among graduate students compared to undergraduate students. In the next model, none of the experiential variables were statistically significant, but level of study remained significant. In the third model, we found that students who were more

Table 7-4
Multivariable linear regressions predicting male and female students' intentions to intervene in sexual violence

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β
Female (N = 1539)												
Race (ref. white)	.00	.03	.00	.00	.02	.00	.03	.02	.03	.03	.02	.03
Indigenous ancestry	.09	.05	.04	.06	.05	.03	.08	.05	.04	.08	.09	.04
Sexual orientation (ref. heterosexual)	.07	.03	.05*	.05	.03	.03	.01	.03	.01	.04	.02	.03
Level of study (ref. undergraduate)	.10	.04	.07**	.09	.04	.06*	.06	.04	.04	.02	.05	.02
Sexual violence in current academic year				-.07	.03	-.06*	-.07	.03	-.06**	-.01	.03	-.01
Sexual violence prior to studies				.11	.02	.13***	.11	.02	.12***	.12	.02	.14***
Sexual violence training in current academic year				.07	.02	.08***	.07	.02	.08***	.04	.02	.05
Rape myth acceptance							-.21	.02	-.23***	-.20	.02	-.22***
Peers' intentions to intervene										.23	.15	.30***
Adj. R ²	.01			.04			.09			.17		
F for R ² change	3.99***			12.91***			84.87***			156.37***		
Male (N = 452)												
Race (ref. white)	.00	.05	.00	.00	.05	.00	.04	.05	.03	.05	.04	.05
Indigenous ancestry	.24	.15	.08	.25	.15	.08	.27	.14	.09	.19	.13	.06
Sexual orientation (ref. heterosexual)	.14	.08	.08	.13	.08	.07	.10	.08	.06	.14	.07	.08
Level of study (ref. undergraduate)	.28	.08	.16***	.29	.09	.16***	.19	.08	.10*	.11	.07	.06

Sexual violence in current academic year	-.03	.11	-.01	.01	.11	.01	.10	.10	.04
Sexual violence prior to studies	-.02	.09	-.01	-.04	.08	-.02	-.10	.07	-.06
Sexual violence training in current academic year	.04	.05	.04	.06	.05	.06	.02	.04	.02
Rape myth acceptance				-.28	.04	-.30***	-.26.00	.04	-.28***
Peers' intentions to intervene							.42	.04	.44***
Adj. R ²	.04		.04		.12			.31	
F for R ² change	4.01***	0.26			41.58***			119.57***	

Note: Ref. = reference group category

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

accepting of rape myths also expressed fewer intentions to intervene, and graduate students continued to be more willing to intervene than undergraduates. The final model found that students who perceived high pro-intervention peer norms tended to express greater personal intentions to intervene. Rape myths continued to be statistically significant, while level of study lost significance. Likelihood to intervene was most strongly predicted by peer norms ($\beta = .44$), followed by rape myth acceptance ($\beta = -.28$).

DISCUSSION

Intentions to Intervene across the Continuum of Violence

We found that students, regardless of gender, reported lower personal intentions to intervene when overhearing a sexist remark or comments that reflect rape myths, compared to situations in which a threat of bodily violence is more obvious. It may not be surprising that students do not think they would intervene in instances of commonplace sexism because these instances are often not coded as “sexual violence,” or as contributing to a culture where rape is more likely to occur. In comparison, students appear to think they would feel an increased sense of urgency if an incident involved an immediate threat of physical harm. Such scenarios align more closely with typical representations of violence in society. These disparities in intentions to intervene may indicate that students lack understanding regarding the continuum of violence, and thus too commonly dismiss incidents of “commonplace” sexism or expressions of rape myths as not being harmful. Our regression findings support this possibility because we found that higher rape myth acceptance predicted decreased intention to intervene as a bystander. While these findings are helpful in understanding the situations when students are most likely to intervene, the scale is overly simplistic as it ignores variables such as the race, sexual orientation, and gender expression of the targeted person. As research shows that these factors impact judgements of who is considered a legitimate victim (Bang, Kerrick, and Wuthrich 2016), readers should be mindful that these factors also influence intervention decisions.

Gender and Intentions to Intervene

Consistent with earlier research (Brown, Banyard, and Moynihan 2014), we found significantly higher overall intentions to intervene

among female students than their male peers, and trans students reported higher intentions than both other groups, but the differences were not statistically significant. In terms of male students' versus female students' intentions, Carlson's (2008) qualitative research sheds light on the possible reason for this difference. Her findings showed that "appearing weak" poses a major barrier to intervening when men observe that someone is in need of help. That is, men believe that showing sensitivity and compassion are feminine characteristics, and they fear facing significant social consequences, including ridicule and homophobia (in the form of having their heterosexuality questioned), if they displayed these qualities. Carlson argues that men's constant self-monitoring in relation to the norms of masculinity constitutes a major component of rape culture.

Given that women and trans students face more sexual violence than men, individuals who identify with these groups may have an increased awareness of the problem and feel greater motivation to address it. Moreover, their experiences may explain why we found significantly lower rape myth acceptance among female and trans students than males. However, while students who have personally experienced sexual violence may be particularly compelled to take action, personal safety concerns may deter some students from intervening, as may be the case for students who experienced sexual violence in the current year.

Though the literature supports examining bystander intentions by separating students by gender, as we have done, we acknowledge that the approach assumes a gender binary and so does not capture the fluid nature of gender. Furthermore, when considering the gender differences that we identify in our analyses, it is vital to recognize that experiences of womanhood and manhood are not universal, but rather are shaped by other intersections in identity. Thus, we caution readers to interpret the results from this study within a framework that allows for a nuanced understanding of different experiences within gender categories.

Rape Myth Acceptance and Peer Norms

The findings supported our hypotheses. For both female and male students, those who endorsed rape myths tended to report significantly lower intentions to intervene. This result was found when controlling for demographic and experiential variables, as well as when perceptions of peers' intentions were included. This provides evidence that

an individual's attitudes about rape are a major component of intentions to intervene, and thus efforts need to focus on challenging rape myths in order to encourage a prosocial bystander culture. Hockett et al. (2016) suggest that rape myths can be challenged by programming that educates students about the nuanced contexts in which rape often occurs, as opposed to "stranger in the night" stereotypes that rape myths support. We found that the association between rape myth acceptance and intentions was stronger among male students compared to female students, which is consistent with past literature (Banyard and Moynihan 2011; McMahon 2010; Burn 2009). Therefore programming aimed at challenging rape myths among male students may be particularly beneficial.

In terms of peer norms, among both groups, they played a greater role than rape myths in explaining students' intentions to intervene. We found that students with a higher sense that their peers would intervene were more likely to think that they themselves would intervene, and this association was especially strong for male students. These findings indicate that social pressures may have more influence on students' decisions of whether or not to intervene than the attitudes that they individually hold. Therefore, while it is certainly important to challenge individual attitudes, it is also important to encourage students to express to their peers that they do not tolerate sexual violence and are willing to intervene.

Given that peer norms are especially salient among male students, programs specifically designed for male students may be helpful. Fabiano et al. (2003) suggest amplifying the voices of men who oppose sexual violence. For example, men's groups can provide opportunities for men to talk with peers about sexual violence, challenge constructions of masculinity (a major component of rape culture), and decrease men's misconceptions about the attitudes held by their peers. Such programs may encourage men to become better allies to women.⁴

Additionally, institutions might consider implementing programming to leverage the high level of motivation that many students (of all genders) feel to address sexual violence. This can be done through programming to encourage highly motivated students to act as champions for creating a culture where sexual violence is not tolerated (Banyard, Moynihan, and Crossman 2009). These approaches may help to change campus culture, as our findings indicate that a positive campus culture may be self-perpetuating, with students becoming more likely to intervene when they perceive that their peers will do the same.

Given that our findings showed that graduate students are particularly likely to intervene, they might be targeted as potential allies.

Sexual Orientation, Race, Indigenous Ancestry

Race and Indigenous ancestry did not emerge as significant predictors of students' intentions to intervene in our study. The insignificance of our findings could be because we combined racialized students into one group due to small sample sizes of many minoritized students. Therefore we could not detect differences between racial groups. To avoid conflating the experiences of students of colour and to understand the role of racism in bystander decisions, research with larger racially diverse samples is needed.

Sexual orientation predicted likelihood to intervene only among female students, with higher bystander intentions among sexual minority females compared to heterosexual females. It is likely that our sample of sexual minority males was too small to detect statistical significance. Interestingly, the discrepancy within female students lost its significance once experiential variables, including receiving anti-violence training, were added in. This finding is encouraging, as it suggests that LGBQ+ female students are not inherently more likely to intervene than their peers, but that other students may be equally likely to intervene if their attitudes about rape and perceptions of peer and gender norms are challenged.

Graduate students in both gender groups reported higher intentions to intervene when demographic and experiential variables were included in the analysis. Level of study (undergraduate/graduate) continued to be significant for males when adjusting for rape myth acceptance, but was no longer significant when peer norms were included. This suggests that undergraduate students could be equally likely to intervene if their attitudes and perceptions of their peers' willingness to intervene were challenged.

Turning to the experiential variables (sexual violence training and sexual violence experiences before coming to university and in the current school year), important differences emerged across the two samples. None of these variables significantly predicted intention to intervene scores among male students (possibly due to the small number of male students reporting experiences of sexual violence). In contrast, each was significant among female students, even when controlling for rape myth acceptance. Females who experienced sexual

violence in the current academic year reported *lower* intentions to intervene, whereas those who had experienced violence before attending university and those who participated in sexual violence training expressed higher intentions to intervene. Female students who have recently experienced sexual violence may be hesitant to intervene because of immediate safety concerns or a heightened sense of vulnerability. Sexual violence is a profoundly distressing experience (Carey et al. 2018), and self-blame is common among survivors (Donde 2015). Furthermore, survivors who did not receive adequate support from peers or an academic institution after experiencing sexual violence may feel powerless to intervene. Encouragingly, the association between survivorship and intentions to intervene lost significance when peer norms were added in, suggesting that survivors who feel that peers are supportive may be more comfortable intervening.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Future Research

More research is needed to better understand the reasons why people choose to intervene or not. This includes why peer norms are so highly influential on individuals' likelihood to intervene, such as concerns of safety among individuals who perceive their peers as being unwilling to intervene. It also includes characteristics of the potential victim, and situational variables. In particular, research is needed to examine why students are less willing to intervene when they witness sexism or the reinforcement of rape myths in order to better understand bystander behaviour in relation to the full continuum of sexual violence.

Future research should deliberately seek to capture intersectional experiences by making efforts to reach racialized, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ students on campuses. This will likely involve specific efforts to recruit minoritized students or undertake coordinated efforts across multiple institutions in order to draw large enough samples for statistical analysis.

Recommendations for Policy

There are several ways that insights from this research can be incorporated into the development of programs on campus. Policy-makers

can support the development of programming to address rape myths and other misconceptions that students of all genders harbour relating to rape and sexual violence (including stereotypes about women), as well as factors such as racism that influence judgements about who is considered an intervention-worthy victim and who is not. Programs can also educate students about the continuum of violence, including connections between commonplace sexism and physical manifestations of violence, and prioritize addressing everyday forms of sexual violence to encourage a culture of bystander intervention in which the full continuum of violence is challenged.

Given that peer norms are so influential on students' willingness to intervene, programs should encourage dialogue between students about their willingness to intervene in order to challenge the assumption that one's peers are unlikely to intervene. Research presented in this chapter shows a high level of motivation that many students feel to address sexual violence. Programs can leverage this motivation by developing programming in which students can act as champions for an anti-violence culture.

Those developing programs should be mindful that many students who are the most compelled to address sexual violence are themselves survivors of violence. When designing programming it is important to consider the needs of sexual violence survivors, by directly asking how programming can be made more accessible and what should be incorporated to increase their sense of safety when intervening within a rape-supportive climate. These programs should also be explicitly intersectional, including providing information and encouraging discussion about the ways in which various forms of marginalization affect rates of victimization and impact individuals' intentions to intervene.

CONCLUSION

Given urgent calls to address rape culture and promote community accountability for creating university campuses in which violence is not tolerated, and the critical role that prosocial bystander intervention can play in realizing this outcome, our findings help advance a more nuanced understanding of students' intentions to intervene when witnessing sexual violence. Ultimately, we hope that our findings will inform on-the-ground efforts to create and strengthen a climate of bystander intervention.

NOTES

- 1 All of these actions are considered “prevention.” Primary prevention is defined as taking action to prevent an assault before it happens, secondary prevention aims to minimize harm while an assault is occurring, and tertiary prevention includes efforts to minimize harm after an assault has occurred (McMahon et al. 2011).
- 2 In our introduction and review of literature, we use the language of “man/woman” to denote the socially constructed nature of gender, and because this is the language most often used in the existing literature; however, in reporting our results we use language of “male/female,” in keeping with the terminology used in the survey. The survey question about gender was worded in such a way that it is possible that some trans students selected “male” or “female” rather than specifying trans; therefore we do not want to make an assumption and label male- and female-identified students as cisgender here.
- 3 Intentions to intervene and rape myth-acceptance are both non-normally distributed. However, the assumption of homoscedasticity is satisfied and the sample size is large, so we determined that the skew in these variables would not pose a threat to the validity of findings. Collinearity values were all well within acceptable levels.
- 4 Some communities already run these programs. For example, there is one such program in Kitchener called Male Allies (Male Allies, n.d).

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“Homosociality” in Paradoxes and Erasures in Scholarship on Campus Sexual Assault and Hazing

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INTRODUCTION

A student once jovially recounted to Malinen’s Gender and Society class what could not be categorized as anything other than a sexual assault carried out by veteran members of his football team on rookie members. Against concerns expressed by another class member, the student insisted that this exercise had been good for team cohesion, had been entirely heterosexual, and that the rookies in question could have said “no.” This incident left us wondering about the construction of gender, sexuality, and violence in popular and scholarly understandings of sexual assault versus hazing. We began to ask ourselves questions about these constructions particularly with respect to university-aged students, because this was the context in which the matter had presented itself, and because we knew that both sexual violence and hazing are strongly associated with post-secondary environments.

An early foray into the thought process that emerged from this classroom exchange, the present chapter offers a small thematic analysis comparing Canadian scholarly treatments of hazing on university campuses with Canadian scholarly treatments of sexual assault on university campuses. Our results provide preliminary exploration of how gendered ideology and discourses shape these areas of scholarship. Our analysis revealed the following: (1) Male survivors of sexual violence were recognized only within hazing-focused articles (and often as hazees rather than sexual assault victims) – sexual assault-focused

articles made no reference either to male victims or to hazing as a potential context for sexual assault. (2) Forms of trauma sustained by victims/survivors of hazing were regularly enumerated in hazing articles but generally absent from sexual assault articles. (3) While homophobia was sometimes addressed in hazing-focused articles, it was not addressed in sexual assault-focused articles. Furthermore, neither literature referred directly to LGBTQ survivors.

We will argue that the paradox of our first observation and the omissions displayed by our second and third observations all exemplify homosocial ideology. We begin by unpacking "homosociality" before detailing our study and findings. Finally, we conclude by offering suggestions for future research and for policy.

HOMOSOCIALITY AND MAN-TO-WOMAN SEXUAL ASSAULT

Many gender and sexuality scholars focus on relationships between masculinity and femininity and/or between men and women as the basis of gender inequities (a few of the countless examples include Butler 1990, 1993, 2004; Cahill 2001, 2010; Beauvoir 1949; Greer 1970, 1999; MacKinnon 2016). In contrast, researchers who have taken up the concept of male homosociality suggest that the lives of many men, including their relationships to women, are largely organized by man-man bonds (Flood 2008, 341; Sedgwick 1985). In the case of these latter researchers, gender-based inequities including violence are understood as caused by the relationships between men instead of by the relationships between men and women. We take up the insights of these homosociality researchers to interrogate the gaps we have identified in scholarship on hazing and sexual assault in Canadian universities.

The concept of homosociality can be applied to people of any shared gender, and to relationships that are horizontal or hierarchical in structure (Hammarén and Johansson 2014). Here, we use "homosociality" in the tradition of Sedgwick to explore the most socially problematic form of homosociality, namely, hierarchical relationships between men. As we will explain, the problem with these relationships has to do with their connections to sexual and other forms of violence, homophobia, and misogyny.

Sedgwick draws a causal path from "homosexual panic" to misogyny. As Hammarén and Johansson (2014, 4) put it, her "definition of

homosociality is characterized by a triangular structure in which men have bonds with other men and women serve as the conduits through which these bonds are expressed. However, this triangle may portray as rivalry what is actually an attraction between men. The argument ... that there is an underlying continuum between different kinds of male homosocial desires opens up a potential arena for research on the fragile boundaries and lines between different masculinities and hetero-/homosexuality.” This fragility means that heteronormative, hierarchical male bonding is vulnerable to homosexual panic, in which the men involved react to the often unconscious fear of homosocial commitments slipping into homosexual ones. This panic would not be produced by closeness between men in a queer-positive social context. But, in homophobic conditions, a reaction to homosexual panic can be an intense objectification of women.

Women are positioned exclusively as hetero-patriarchal sex objects within the male homosocial triangle. Heterosexual sexual activity (1) is a means for achieving male power and prestige; (2) positions women as different from and beneath men by treating women as sex objects and not as people; and (3) ostensibly demonstrates the heterosexuality of men whose primary commitments are in fact to one another. For heterosexual activity to serve these functions, it requires an audience of men who can confer power within the homosocial group. Flood’s (2008) research demonstrates that such groups regulate the primacy of relationships between men by imposing a paradoxical view of heterosexuality in which men who are deemed overly committed to female partners are accused of being homosexual.

Male homosocial hierarchies rely “on group cohesion, male domination, and woman-distancing rituals” (Lenskyj 2004, 91). Such rituals may include attending strip clubs, watching pornography, or exchanging nude pictures of women. Some of the young Australian men whom Flood interviewed (2008) shared that during sexual encounters with women, they particularly enjoyed thinking about how impressed other men would be were they in attendance. Indeed, young men often recount their (sometimes embellished) sexual encounters to friends. In so doing, they vie for position in masculine hierarchies, solidify man-man bonds, and provide mutual reassurance of the heterosexuality of the group. Flood (*ibid.*, 350) recounts an exchange with one participant in his study:

Asked what makes a ‘good mate,’ Tim laughs at length at the response he perceives as hilarious: ‘I don’t know, what, the other

guy on the other end of a pig on a spit!' He explains that 'pig on a spit' is a type of sexual act in which a woman on her hands and knees performs oral sex on one man while having intercourse with another man from behind. She is the 'pig' on their penile 'spits.' Thus, in this scenario, the woman's body literally is the medium through which the two men are connected to each other.

In the same study, Tim elaborates on games played by "the boys" during which women are sexually humiliated for "men's collective amusement." In one, called "Rodeo," a man brings a woman to a hotel room "and begins to have sex with her. He ties her to the bed with her stockings, on her hands and knees. Then, he calls out to the hiding men, the lights are switched on, and he jumps on her back, trying to hold on for as long as he can while she struggles" (*ibid.*, 351).

As Flood argues, sexual violence perpetrated against women contributes to male bonding, and vice versa: men's sexual violence against women can be understood as homosocial (Boswell and Spade 1996; Flood 2008, 340), whether it takes the form of a gang rape during which perpetrators perform for one another, street harassment inflicted for the benefit of male compatriots, or violence before an imagined audience. Were it not for relationships and competitions between men, there would be little to motivate these deplorable behaviours.

A focus on this form of homosociality in theorizing sexual violence does not contravene the feminist truism that man-to-woman sexual violence reproduces objectification of women. Rather, the concept of homosociality helps us to understand how and why women and girls are sexually objectified. Under conditions of homophobia, men must not appear to feel passionately for one another, even when homosocial relationships contain such passions. Women are not part of these relationships as people, but only as objects that allow male homosocial commitments to escape the feminizing spectre of homosexuality. Another way of seeing this dynamic is that "the sexual objectification of women facilitates self-conceptualization as positively male by distancing the self from all that is associated with being female" (Bird 1996, 123). In this manner, homosociality links homophobia with the subjugation of women.

The problematics of hierarchical male homosociality as they bear on the issue of sexual violence are particularly relevant for campus communities, where men's athletic groups and fraternities are concentrated. Sometimes referred to as "fratriarchies," these organizations share a homosocial structure: "they bring men together, they

keep men together, and they put women down” (Loy cited in Lenskyj 2004, 87–8). Furthermore, university men are at an age when many are more vulnerable to homosocial pressures than they will likely be later in life. On the cusp of the coveted social construction of “manhood,” they are in many cases deeply uncertain of whether this is a category they will adequately attain. Therefore, young men in universities face a great deal of pressure to live up to social standards of masculinity (Edwards and Jones 2007). For example, the documentary film *Liberated: The New Sexual Revolution* (Nolot 2017) includes interviews with young men deeply involved in Spring Break hook-up culture, and yet who recall being pressured into their first heterosexual encounters by male friends. In this way, the film shows that university men may succeed in attaining homosocial ideals of masculinity, not least through dehumanization of young women, with regret and under duress.

HOMOSOCIALITY AND HAZING

To say that men’s hazing practices are hierarchically homosocial seems both more and less obvious than to say that man-to-woman sexual violence is homosocial. On the one hand, men’s hazing practices take place directly between men, making the male-male character of the hazer-hazee relationship immediately obvious. On the other hand, hazing practices appear to lower hazee status through processes referred to in the hazing literature as denigration or humiliation, which commonly occur through the perpetration of “sadistic sexual acts” (Lenskyj 2004, 83). As Lenskyj asks, “how is it that men’s sexual victimization of other men proves their *heterosexual* superiority, and not their *homosexual* interests?” (ibid., 92).

One answer lies in the reconstruction of masculine hierarchy, and the value placed in that hierarchy by those who aspire to upward mobility within it. The logic of sexual assault as hazing can be differentiated from the logic of sexual assault in other contexts by the fact that being hazed is seen as a step on the path to the coveted status of veteran, and therefore being a hazer. Temporarily forcing men in homosocial environments to take on the feminized role of sexual victim maintains a pecking order in which real men dominate feminized people, reinforcing the interest in attaining the “real man” status reserved for veterans and achieved by fidelity to the group (Kirby and Wintrup 2002). In these ways, even in its most sexually violent form,

hazing adheres to male homosocial logic. For all of this, it is no less the case that hazing can and does suffer trauma as a consequence of sexual assault experiences or other forms of violence inflicted under the guise of hazing.

Our initial goal was to narrow the sample by selecting only those articles that would focus on the contexts of university athletics and/or Greek letter organizations. However, whereas many publications from the United States fit these parameters, Canadian articles that did so proved far less common. No doubt this lacuna is partly a consequence of the fact that our smaller population translates into a smaller population of scholars. Furthermore, the dearth of Canadian articles about sexual assault or hazing in the context of Greek letter organizations is at least partially attributable to the less pronounced presence of Greek letter organizations on our side of the border. In Canada as compared to the United States, these student groups are less popular and less visible because housed off campus.

The dearth of Canadian scholarship in these areas illustrates the importance of the current volume. Interestingly, it was more difficult to find qualifying Canadian research about campus sexual assault than it was to find Canadian research about hazing. In the end, we included three articles on sexual assault that addressed neither the Greek letter context nor the athletic context. We compared six pieces of scholarship focused on hazing in Canadian university sport (Fogel 2013; Hamilton et al. 2016; Johnson 2011; Kirby and Wintrup 2002; Lenskyj 2004; Massey and Massey 2017) with six pieces of scholarship focused on sexual assault in Canadian universities, three of which were focused on university but not sport or Greek letter contexts (Moore and Valverde 2000; Quinlan, Clarke, and Horsley 2009; Senn, Gee, and Thake 2011; Fogel 2017; Haiven 2017; DeKeseredy, Schwartz, and Alvi 2000).

Of each article, we asked the following questions: Is gender and/or sexuality part of the analysis? Is the violence in question problematized? Is the violence framed as having negative or traumatic effects? Is violence framed as having potential benefits? Our final question was included because some researchers believe, like Malinen's student who initiated my interest in this area, that hazing enhances team cohesion (e.g., Keating et al. 2005). We also looked at whether hazing-focused texts mentioned sexual violence, and whether sexual violence-focused texts mentioned hazing. Finally, Bagh and Tobin noted any further patterns observed among texts during their analyses.

Close reading by Malinen of three patterns that emerged for Bagh and Tobin suggest the appropriateness of using homosociality as an analytic framework.¹ In other words, not only does this framework provide a tool for understanding the recalcitrant problem of sexual violence on campus, as argued by Flood (2008) and others, it also helps us to understand the paradoxes and erasures that emerged from the articles we read, as described below.

FINDINGS

Pattern 1

Within the literature we examined, “hazing-focused” sometimes referred to sexual assault as a form of hazing, and sometimes referred to female hazees, but sexual assault-focused articles made no reference to hazing, and no reference to male survivors.

The exceptions to each pattern appear in Fogel’s 2017 chapter “Precarious Masculinity and Rape Culture in Canadian University Sport.”

To the extent that each pattern maintains, it preserves the homosexual/heterosexual divide that is foundational to Euro-Canadian and Euro-American homosociality. On one hand, popular and academic traditions understand sexual assault as a form of violence that feminizes/objectifies the victim, thereby masculinizing the perpetrator. This is true whether the understanding is misogynistic (i.e., women *are and should be* mere objects for men’s gratification) or feminist (i.e., women *have been positioned as* mere objects for men’s gratification, and this problem must be rectified). To reiterate, this dualism is consistent with the triangular structure of homosociality in which women are objectified and inserted between men to provide the conduit for relationships between men while fending off the spectre of homosexuality.

On the other hand, hazing is widely understood as a form of violence that ultimately masculinizes the victim. For example, in exploring sexual violence in hazing, Kirby and Wintrup (2002, 52) note, “If hazing exists, rookies are the targets of such practices. Rookies who successfully pass through hazing are accepted into the ‘team family’ and become part of the tradition or legacy.” One might extrapolate that the more violent the hazing, the more manly the man who has survived it. While hazing-focused articles frequently include sexual assault

among forms of hazing rituals, their authors categorically have chosen hazing rather than sexual assault as the overarching frame of analysis, presenting the sexual assaults as hazings first and foremost.

As a result, men who live through incidents that read for all intents and purposes as gang rapes are still not seen as sexual assault survivors. Identification of these men as such would compromise the masculinity of these survivors/hazees as well as the masculine structural integrity of the homosocial hierarchies to which they belong. This taxonomy bridges scholarship, popular media, and institutional reports. Fogel's (2013) hazing-focused text begins by citing McGill University: "After a thorough investigation, officials at McGill released a statement that described the initiation ritual involving 'nudity, degrading positions and behaviours, gagging, touching in inappropriate manners with a broomstick, as well as verbal and physical intimidation of rookies by a large portion of the team.'" Why view this incident, again with the exception of Fogel's 2017 chapter, as a "hazing" rather than a gang rape? Part of the answer may be that this taxonomy functions to protect the masculine status of the hazing victim against the more permanent humiliation associated with sexual assault victimization, through its association with victimization.

While men are rarely identified as sexual assault survivors in our literature, except under the umbrella category of hazing, women are sometimes identified as hazing survivors in the articles where hazing is the focus. This inclusion of women hazees poses less of a threat to homosocial structures than one might imagine. Euro-Canadian and Euro-American societies appear to accept women and girls performing masculine activities more easily than men and boys performing feminine activities, a fact that underlines the cultural valuing of masculinity. Inversely, researchers have found that young adults responding to descriptions of gender-conforming and gender-nonconforming children rated both "the typical girl and the 'mama's boy' ... more likeable and competent than the typical boy, [yet] would encourage 'mama's boys' to behave more like typical boys" (Coyle, Fulcher, and Trübutschek 2016, 1836). The authors concluded that because masculinity is culturally valued, "the behaviours of nonconforming boys are seen as problematic" (*ibid.*; see also D'Augelli, Grossman, and Starks 2006). This is not to suggest that sexualized hazings were seen in any literature to render women hazees more masculine and therefore more powerful as individuals – only that the linking of hazing and masculinization may not pose a barrier to the discussion of women

hazees in the same way that the linking of sexual violence and feminization seems to impede discussion of male sexual assault victimization/survival.

Indeed, research about sexual victimization of men and boys – some of which has been produced, but without focus on the post-secondary arena – routinely refers to the additional shame men and boys experience as a consequence of the feminization that is culturally understood as inherent to sexual assault (e.g., Dorais 2002; Gear 2007; Knowles 1999; Pino and Meier 1999). The implication can be that men suffer more from sexual assault victimization than women, because men also have their masculinity to lose. On the other hand, if we see male athletes and frat boys as sexual assault victims/survivors rather than as hazees, we would be pushed toward the recognition of all men as permeable and prone to feminization, and perhaps to question the putative heterosexuality of their perpetrators.

Pattern 2

Rarely were negative impacts on victims/survivors mentioned in the sexual assault-focused articles. The negative impacts on hazing victims, however, were frequently detailed. For example: “The impact of hazing is notable as there have been cases of death, burns, cold exposure, acute alcohol intoxication, blood loss, blunt trauma, and sexual abuse reported in the media and documented through empirical study ... Beyond the physical ramifications of hazing, psychological consequences include suicide ideation, loneliness, embarrassment, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder [citations omitted]” (Hamilton et al. 2016, 256).

While sexual assault victims/survivors experience a range physical and psychological traumas, as a matter of course, literature on campus sexual assault does not enumerate these impacts. We were surprised by this result, as we began with the expectation that victimhood was more culturally acceptable for women and would therefore be more readily recognized. We also expected that researchers of campus-based sexual violence would be largely motivated by concern over harm to student survivors, and that this concern would be expressed in written reports. There are a few possible underlying beliefs that could explain this lack of recognition regarding the harms of sexual violence on university campuses: (1) the belief that the negative effects of sexual violence on women are too obvious to require unpacking; (2) the belief

that men's suffering is culturally invisible and must therefore be spelled out; (3) the belief that men's suffering is more important than women's suffering; or (4) the belief that men suffer more from hazing than women do from sexual violence.

This fourth idea appears to animate a term coined by Brackenridge and Kirby (cited in Kirby and Wintrup 2002, 63), "The Stage of Imminent Achievement," when athletes are particularly at risk for hazing. At this time, "the athlete has the most to lose from dropping out as she or he has invested the most in terms of time, effort and dedication and has the most to gain from remaining." This notion closely mirrors the kind of discourse commonly applied in popular culture when men who are university students and often athletes perpetrate sexual violence. When former Stanford swimmer Brock Turner was sentenced to six months in jail, the judge, Aaron Persky, explained, "I think you have to take the whole picture in terms of what impact imprisonment has on a specific individual's life. And ... the character letters that have been submitted do show a huge collateral consequence for Mr. Turner based on the conviction" (2016).

The concept of the Stage of Imminent Achievement, exemplified by Persky's comments in the Brock Turner case, is interrelated with the homosocial maintenance of focus on men's experiences, and its concomitant neglect of women as people with interests. This focus is evidenced when we worry about the impacts of sexual assault conviction on promising young perpetrators. It is also evidenced by Pattern 2 identified by our study, whereby researchers pay little attention to the negative effects of sexual assault on survivors (typically women in the reviewed articles), and much attention to the negative effects of hazing on hazees (typically men in the reviewed articles). Homosociality positions women as objects between men, who therefore face no risk of losing anything by being objectified.

Consider that, whereas a defining question in an instance of hazing is whether the victim has been harmed and humiliated, defining questions in an instance of sexual assault are whether or not the victim "liked" it, was "looking" for it, or "asked" for it. In contrast, when we invoke the term "hazing," even where sexual abuse is a "physical ramification" (Hamilton et al. 2016, 256), we do not find bright young male victims facing interrogation about their sexual fantasies, desires, or histories, or about whether they might have sent mixed messages by going to that initiation party and acting as if they were having a good time. Someone might say that the hazee "took it like a man,"

others might say that he was “harmed by the humiliation,” but it is unlikely that anyone will suggest he was “turned on.” Again, foregrounding the concept of hazing over sexual assault protects hazees from the feminization of sexual assault.

Scholars often emphasize “humiliation” and “degradation” as negative impacts of hazing. In fact, one commonly cited definition of hazing includes both humiliation and degradation: hazing is “any activity expected of someone joining a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers, regardless of the person’s willingness to participate” (Hoover 1999, cited in Johnson 2011, 200). It is no accident that these humiliations take normatively feminizing forms, from dressing “like women” to anal penetration. As Lenskyj (2004, 87–8) argues: “In a more progressive social context, taking the female role in terms of dress or behaviour might not be seen as sexual degradation, but rather as an act of playfulness, or an ironic challenge to gender boundaries. However, a key component of male initiation is distancing from and domination over women ... and therefore enforced cross-dressing clearly constitutes sexual degradation in the context of male sport subcultures.”

The culturally unpalatable feminization of students valued for their masculinity may generate among researchers a fascination with the harms of hazing accompanied by a failure to consider including hazees in sexual assault research and policy.

Pattern 3

Given that LGBTQ people are disproportionately targets of sexual violence in Canada and the United States (Walters et al. 2013; Xavier et al. 2007; Bauer and Scheim 2016), it is curious and troubling that queer identities are erased by texts about sexual assault on campus and about hazing on campus. Hate crimes inflicted against LGBTQ people in Canada are shown to be more violent than hate crimes against any other Canadian population (Allen 2015), and yet LGBTQ survivors are absent in these literatures.

Meanwhile, the erasure of LGBTQ university students from analyses of hazing becomes especially worrisome when viewed through the framework of homosociality. As argued above, homosociality involves foreclosure of the very homosexuality that might appear to coexist logically with man-to-man commitments and passions. The homosociality of hazing implies that those hazers might be particularly

threatened by, and therefore violent toward, hazing who are read as queer. Indeed, Lenskyj (2004, 88) describes the homosocial dynamic of the "fratriarchy" as characterized by disproportionate involvement in "gay-bashings" among other forms of violence. For example, in the United States, many observers have suggested that the 2012 hazing-related murder of Florida A&M drum major Robert Champion was largely motivated by his sexual orientation. Our analyses of campus-based sexual assault and hazing should be alert to the experiences of LGBTQ students.

CONCLUSION

We do not imagine that authors of any of the texts we have examined intend to operate through homosocial lenses. On the contrary, these authors are clearly motivated to critique and counteract gender-based forms of oppression. However, academic and other understandings of both sexual assault and hazing emerge from a social context so pervaded with gendered and misogynist ideologies that these ideologies can subtly frame even politically forward texts. In particular: (1) Hazing-focused articles in our sample sometimes referred to sexual assault as a form of hazing, and sometimes referred to female hazing, but sexual assault-focused articles made no reference to hazing, and no reference to male victims. (2) Diverse traumas sustained by hazing victims were regularly enumerated with a particular focus on "humiliation" and "degradation," while articles on sexual assault included no such information. Finally, (3) Queer identities are virtually absent from all articles. To understand these patterns, we have drawn on the interventions of thinkers like Flood and Sedgwick who link misogyny and homophobia through homosociality to the prevalence and meaning of sexual assault and hazing practices. We suggest that researchers ought to be cautious of the ways in which their work reproduces these patterns, and with them, homosocial discourse and ideology.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We have discussed the tight relationship between male homosociality and fratriarchies such as athletic teams and fraternities, contexts in which there are high rates of hazing practices and of sexual assault

perpetration. While these fratriarchal contexts are clearly problematic, they will continue to be a part of North American culture in the foreseeable future. Therefore it is important that future research uncover ways to prevent the emergence of gendered violence from fratriarchal contexts in contemporary Canada.

We suggest that scholars and service providers working in this area of sexual violence should broaden their attention to include hazing-related sexual assault, which seems most commonly to take a man-to-man form. Homosocial initiation contexts should be analyzed as situations that pose important challenges to young men's capacities to consent, and appropriate sexual violence prevention measures should be put in place.

Some might object that by including these young men (who are in many cases strongly identified with a misogynistic version of heterosexuality) among sexual assault victims/survivors, we would risk evacuating gender-based analysis from sexual violence research. While it remains crucial to reserve safe spaces for people who identify as women, transgender, or queer, erasure of feminist concerns is by no means a necessary conclusion of the inclusion of male hazing victims in sexual assault research and prevention. In fact, critical theorizations of homosociality can provide a thoroughly queer and feminist framework that is better articulated in tandem with the introduction of fratriarchal violence than through its exclusion.² If the maintenance of male homosocial ideology – that fragile and fearful investment in hetero-patriarchy – is conducive to violent hazing, sexual violence, and homophobic attacks, then it is incumbent upon us to break that ideology down when and where we can. Framing fratriarchal violence as sexual assault when appropriate may help to corrode the boundaries that homosociality endeavours to erect between women and men. Furthermore, pointing out the man-to-man commitments and passions that animate sexual violence against women may challenge the notion that sexually assaulting women proves heterosexual orientation.

In conclusion, if Sedgwick argues correctly in her seminal text *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) that homosociality is the glue sustaining Anglo-European patriarchy, sexual violence research and anti-violence practice will be strengthened by analyzing and dismantling the homosocial triangle wherein women are objectified and inserted between men in order to heterosexualize male-male passions.

NOTES

- 1 Thanks to Ardath Whynacht and El Jones for conversations that helped make connections between literatures.
- 2 Malinen (2013a, 2013b, 2014, and 2018) elaborates on how feminist and queer concerns can be synthesized in anti-sexual violence work.

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