“Carrying their stories”: The experience of active listening at Concordia’s Sexual Assault Resource Centre

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Abstract

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Samantha Ilacqua

Although the pervasiveness of sexual violence on Canadian university campuses is becoming a common feature of news stories, the sociological literature only addresses some elements of the problem. While the rates and roots of sexual violence are well known – as is its impact on those who survive it – less knowledge has been produced regarding the support of survivors. Scholars have demonstrated that supporting survivors is key to their healing (Ahrens, 2006; Ahrens et al., 2007; Ullman & Filipas, 2001), and that the presence of high quality support services on campus is associated with a greater likelihood that survivors will maintain academic performance and seek out healthy coping mechanisms (Campbell et al., 2001). However, university-funded support services – especially those that target sexual violence specifically – are not widely-established, and thus are a new entity on many university campuses. Due to the steady increase of university corporatization since 2008/2009, the financial resources necessary for implementing such services are often either nonexistent or allocated elsewhere (Newson & Polster, 2015). Consequently, very little research has examined the support side of sexual violence, and no prior research – to my knowledge – has been conducted on on-campus support. Yet, there is a great deal of insight to be gained from the experiences of those who professionally support survivors of sexual violence. This thesis helps to fill that dearth in the literature by drawing on the results of a qualitative research project involving auto-ethnographic participant observation, and interviews with social workers and volunteers working in Concordia University's Sexual Assault Resource Centre.

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Introduction

On October 6th, 2018, The US Senate elected Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, with a vote of 50 in favour and 48 against (Foran & Collinson, 2018). Kavanaugh's nomination provoked a bitter fight, as the public came to know of his potential past as a physical and sexual abuser. The survivor, Dr. Ford, subjected herself to the verbal abuse of Kavanaugh's supporters, namely the Republicans and their base in the US population. She faced, publicly, all classic arguments made against survivors who decide to come forward: why did she wait so long to speak up? Where is the evidence from that night? Is she making this up to undermine Kavanaugh's career? Ford knew what she was getting herself into, which is why she did not reveal her identity at first. As she told *The Washington Post*, "why suffer through the annihilation if it's not going to matter?" (Watkins, 2018).

The trial leading up to Kavanaugh's election was painful to watch. The grueling process that Ford experienced was nothing new, but symbolic for survivors of sexual violence. If a woman like Dr. Ford – intelligent, successful, established – could not come forward with allegations, pass a polygraph test, present evidence, and subsequently dismantle a perpetrator, who could? I watched Republican senators defend his nomination with tears in my eyes, fury in my stomach and an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness. It was heartbreaking, and I was not the only one who felt it. Not only did social media blaze with mournful and outraged women, but frequently Kavanaugh's hearing was interrupted by muffled chants of "Shame! Shame! Shame!" looming in the background (Foran & Collinson, 2018).

This election was not just a symbolic defeat of survivors, but a triumph of what many scholars and activists refer to as "rape culture," (Gavey, 2005; Quinlan et al., 2017; Strain et al., 2015; Phipps et al., 2018; Keller et al., 2018). The term encompasses the treatment of Dr. Ford in the Kavanaugh trials, as well as the widely accepted social norms regarding men and women's sexual behaviour that condone men's abuse of women. The fundamentals of rape culture often involve the assumption that men are naturally dominant and women are naturally passive (Gavey, 2005). Further, these assumptions maintain that women are supposed to present themselves as pure and unsexual, but have an underlying desire to be sexually active (ibid). Thus, men – dominant, possessive, and forward – must unleash women's sexuality by force (ibid). Rape culture fosters an environment in which dismissing allegations of sexual violence is simple and routine.

Despite decades of activism and gains for women's rights, rape culture is alive and well. The number of news publications featuring reports of sexual violence has only increased over the past few years, and has paid special attention to how it plays out on university campuses. More and more, students find the need to report their experiences of sexual violence to the media if they want to see their university act. Concordia University made headlines several times over the past eighteen months precisely for this reason (Rukavina, 2018a; McKenna, January 2018a; McKenna, March 2018; Peritz, 2018; Hendry, April 2018; Global News). Today, a tour through the university's Hall Building starts with a view of the Concordia Student Union's enormous magenta banner reading "END RAPE CULTURE," which hangs between the mezzanine and ground floor.

Unfortunately, activists today face not only rape culture, but also the trend of university corporatization, as another immense barrier to progressive change (Newson & Polster, 2015). Convincing administrations to implement better resources for survivors and sexual violence prevention campaigns is difficult on its own (Quinlan et al., 2017). The gains that have been made thus far have resulted in large part from student initiatives and public exposure via mass media. Today, with the lack of government funding to education following the world financial crisis of 2008, universities are more reluctant to allocate funding to projects that do not produce measurable, financial, returns (Newson & Polster, 2015; Quinlan et al., 2017). This includes prevention initiatives and resources for survivors. That said, faced with public scrutiny, more universities are moving in the direction of positive change, if for no other reason than to save their reputations.

The context of rape culture and corporatization masks the necessity of on-campus support services, despite it being confirmed by scientific literature (Campbell et al., 2001; Eisenberg et al., 2016; Quinlan et al., 2017). While studies have revealed that accessible, high-quality support resources for student survivors can be key to their healing and maintaining their academic performance, this type of service is relatively new and understudied. Therefore, as scholars, we know very little about which methods of support are most effective. My Master's thesis will attend to this gap in the literature, with a view to understanding the experience of providing support – in the form of active listening – to survivors in a university resource centre. This specifically has not yet been studied.

My thesis opens with a contextual chapter – called "Setting the scene" – which outlines the past several years of media coverage of sexual violence on university campuses in Canada; the most updated policies on sexual violence from the major

Montreal universities (that is, Concordia University, Université de Montréal, McGill University, and Université du Québec à Montréal); the response of students to issues of sexual violence on their campuses; and Concordia's SARC. My literature review then covers various areas of research pertaining to sexual violence, including debates on rape culture, statistics, and impacts on survivors as well as the role of universities, support services, different types of support relevant to SARC, and the impact of support work and emotional labour on those performing it. These two chapters help to accentuate both the necessity of support workers like those at SARC, and the necessity to understand how they do their work. This thesis not only investigates the experience of supporters, but in turn opens the door to a more scientific approach to improving university-provided services for survivors.

To deepen my insight into the experience of a supporter, this study draws from the theoretical perspectives of Symbolic Interactionism and the Sociology of Emotions, with a focus on the theory pertaining to emotional labour. The symbolic interactionist writings of Mead (1934), Blumer (1986), and Goffman (1997), provide this study with the framework for understanding the mind of supporters, and how they use the verbal and non-verbal signals of a survivor to determine the best way to support her. Additionally, the work of Hochschild (2012) and de Courville Nicol (2011), on the theory on emotions and emotional labour, act as the lens through which I interpret supporters' connections to survivors, the role of empathy in their work, and how they choose to express certain emotions over others.

Focusing on Concordia University's Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC), my thesis employed a dual-pronged qualitative research design. This involved, firstly,

interviews with volunteers and social workers at SARC, whereby participants were recruited via a purposive and snowball sampling technique (Morse, 2004), and asked questions about their experiences with active listening. The second part of this research design consisted of an auto-ethnographic approach to participant observation (Ellis, 2003), where I underwent active listening training at SARC and worked as a volunteer. Combining my first-hand experience as an active listener at SARC with my interview data provided rich insight into the perspective of the supporter. I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis – analyzing a corpus of data thoroughly for significant themes that help to answer a research question – to analyse my interview data. As this study reveals, not only is the work of a supporter valuable and often difficult, but it requires an intricate understanding of oneself, and an ability to silence one's own needs as they arise, to better support survivors. The concluding chapter then outlines my interpretation of the implications of this study, and discusses future areas of research related to support services for victims and survivors of sexual assault.

My motivation to pursue this topic was fueled by the crushing reality of my own experiences as a woman in a society characterized by rape culture; a woman who has had boyfriends who were taught, as children, that they are entitled to women's bodies, and to the world. For a few months during the first year of my Master's degree, I experienced a lull in my motivation. Originally, I was pursuing a project on a topic I carried over from my Bachelor's Honour's thesis. This topic was one which I found intellectually interesting and unquestionably important, but it was also one for which I was not passionate. As I found it increasingly difficult to advance my work, I began to realize that, for me, it was essential that a piece of my heart be invested in my project. One

afternoon, I experienced what the dialecticians call a "qualitative shift," in my understanding of my relationship to my work. It came suddenly, the idea for this project, and it came with a roaring passion that I had not felt for far too long.

That is all to say, in approaching this project, I do not come from a place of complete researcher neutrality and objectivity; a place free of any bias whatsoever. While this may be frowned upon by scholars who take a more classical approach to methodology, as a researcher, I follow in the footsteps of the feminist scholars who came before me, and challenged classical assumptions. I draw from the writings of feminist researchers the assumption that, reducing one's research topics to those from which she can distance herself to the point of neutrality leads to a situation in which most areas of life will not be studied (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). To counter the issue of bias simply requires that researchers hold themselves accountable for their assumptions and prejudices, and practice consistent reflexivity (Adler & Adler, 1987; Ellis, 2003). Further, my approach embodies the sentiments expressed in Jackson's "Radical Empiricism," which asserts that a focus on objectivity places researchers at risk of losing touch with the very thing they hope to understand (Ellis, 2003). Thus, in this thesis I follow suit and build on the theories of feminist researchers and ethnographers, by placing emphasis not on objectivity, but on researcher self-accountability.

Before proceeding, a note on terminology is required. More specifically, I feel it is essential to draw attention to the debate within and outside of sexual violence survivor circles on the topic of how best to refer to those who have experienced sexual violence. Should they be called victims? Survivors? Neither? Often the answer boils down to personal preference. Some, like myself, have trouble using one term to the exclusion of

the other. On some days, we might feel like survivors, while on others we might feel more like victims. Then arises the question of whether we should use these terms at all, given that they may imply that an experience of sexual violence defines someone's entire experience as an individual. There does not appear to be a consensus on this terminological issue. At SARC, we most frequently use "survivor." It is the more empowering of the two. Throughout the thesis, I will use survivor most frequently, but I may use victim depending on the context.

Setting the scene

Considering the exceptional rise in attention given to the issue of sexual violence (hereafter SV) on Canadian campuses, it is necessary to understand how sexual assault is being discussed. This chapter contains four sections: Media Coverage, Policy, Student Response, and About SARC. The first section will summarize how the rise of media coverage on sexual assault has developed and shaped public discourse. The second section will briefly outline the sexual assault policies of the four major universities in Montreal: Concordia University (CU), McGill University (MU), Université de Montréal (UdeM), and Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). As Concordia University is the site of this thesis project, I will outline Concordia's policy first and discuss the other three in comparison. The third section will describe how students have responded to reports of SV on their campuses over the course of the past several years. The section "About SARC," will introduce CU's Sexual Assault Resource Centre in terms of what it does and how it works.

Media Coverage

In early October 2017, decades of sexual harassment allegations against former film producer Harvey Weinstein were published in a report by the *New York Times* (Kantor & Twohey, 2017). As the month unfolded, more women came forward to disclose instances in which Weinstein made sexual advances that he proposed in exchange for boosting their career (BBC News). Renowned filmmaker Quentin Tarantino subsequently admitted that he was aware, for years, of Weinstein's alleged misconduct towards women (ibid). The allegations generated an enormous response internationally, sparking advancement in

the social media-based movement "#MeToo." The movement was originally founded in 2006, and intended to help survivors of sexual violence find ways to heal, by connecting them to resources and peers. Registering similar levels of scandal in Canada were the sexual assault allegations against the Just for Laughs festival co-founder Gilbert Rozon, made in the wake of the #MeToo movement in November 2017. The allegations against Weinstein and Rozon, important cultural figures in the US and Canadian contexts respectively, reflect a larger issue of sexual violence in both countries.

Canadian universities have been featured frequently in the media for allegedly mishandling complaints of sexual assault and harassment, and Quebec's universities are no exception to this trend. In 2013, both Saint Mary's University and the University of British Columbia (UBC) made headlines when groups of male students were reported shouting a chant encouraging sexual assault against underage girls (Saint Mary's University, 2013; CBC News, 2013a). During the Fall of that same year, a Lakehead University student decided to inform the media of her experience disclosing her sexual assault to university administration. When inquiring as to how she could switch out of the classes that she had with the perpetrator, they advised her to register herself as having a 'learning disability' so she could avoid taking her exams in the same room as the offender (CBC News, 2013b).

March of 2014 saw two accusations on the University of Ottawa campus. The first accusation involved the Student Federation's president, Anne-Marie Roy, who publicized a Facebook conversation between five other students on the Federation's leadership in which they refer to Roy in graphic sexual terms. The second accusation involved two men's varsity hockey players, who were suspended from the university's program when

they were accused of sexual assault of a 21-year-old woman at a Thunder Bay hotel (Lalonde, 2015; Andrew-Gee & Armstrong, 2014). In November of that year, a student association at UQAM accused three professors of sexual harassment on Facebook. The university administration refused to launch an investigation because the complaint was of an unofficial nature. An investigation began, however, when at least one of the professors filed an official complaint concerning the accusations (Lalonde, 2015).

December 2014, a female dental student at Dalhousie University was discouraged from filing a formal complaint against her fellow male students who had been promoting the use of sexual violence against female colleagues (Quinlan et al., 2017). Just one month later, in January of 2015, thirteen members of Dalhousie's faculty of dentistry were suspended from clinical practice when offensive posts about women they made on Facebook were brought to the attention of the university administration (Lalonde, 2015). UBC made headlines again in the Fall of 2015, when several female students had filed complaints with the university against a male doctoral student for perpetrating sexual violence; the university failed to act in response to the complaints until after the story was featured in the media (Mayor, 2015).

Two CBC articles point to events in 2016 that pressured universities in Canada and the United States to start revisiting and revising their sexual assault policies. The case of Brock Turner, former Stanford University student who received attention for sexually assaulting an unconscious woman behind a dumpster, was discussed internationally and resonated with students on campuses all over the US and Canada (Weikle, 2016). When Quebec City police arrested two men who seemed to be connected to a series of break-ins at a Laval University residence, many of which resulted in sexual assault, it became

clearer that the issue of sexual assault on Canadian campuses could not continue to be ignored. In response, the Quebec government announced plans to draft a policy mandating activity of higher education institutions regarding sexual assault (Shingler, 2016).

On January 8th, 2018, Mike Spry, former Concordia University creative writing student, published a blog entry detailing the abuse he had witnessed male professors in the department commit against young female students (Spry, 2018). He paints a picture of a toxic academic community riddled with nepotism, egoism, and sexual assault. The abuse of power described in Spry's post echoes the stories of Weinstein's victims, where a young professional hoping to advance her career stays silent about inappropriate sexual advances from powerful men, the gatekeepers to success (ibid). The blog entry sparked a reaction from CU administration, which vowed to investigate the allegations against the department on the same day Spry published (Shepard, 2018). The follow day, CBC News published an article containing testimonies from two former students which agreed with Spry's characterization of the creative writing department (Rukavina, 2018a). Just three days later, CBC reported that over a dozen women had spoken to the media agency confirming the allegations, and two professors from the CU creative writing program had been stripped of their teaching privileges (McKenna, January 2018a).

Although the CU president at the time, Alan Shepard, claimed that he had not previously known of any existing rumors regarding the culture of the department, Spry's essay specifically references another written by former student Emma Healey, in which Healy (2014) describes in detail an experience of sexual assault with a CU professor. That essay was published in October of 2014. In 2015, six students wrote and signed a

letter to the chair of the English department describing the toxicity of the creative writing department faced by young female students (McKenna, January 2018a). The letter did not amount to anything beyond a non-impactful meeting with a Human Resources representative (ibid). Regardless of whether CU president Shepard was aware of the issues within the department, they were well-known amongst those who made up the departmental administration. One of the accused professors was later cleared of harassment allegations, and the complainants only found out about what had happened after a CBC article published on the topic made it their way (Rukavina, 2019).

In the wake of what seemed to be Concordia's own #MeToo movement, another story brought the university into the limelight in March of 2018, when a former philosophy student decided to file a complaint with Quebec's Human Rights Commission after the university failed to appropriately handle her report of sexual harassment from a professor (McKenna, March 2018). The events resulted in the student failing two of her courses and transferring to another university (ibid). Unfortunately, she is not the only one who felt the university could not help her in the fight against sexual harassment and/or assault; at least six former Concordia students have filed complaints with the province's Human Right Commission (ibid).

Inspired by the brave Concordia students, April of 2018 saw MU face publicly-made allegations of 'predatory' professors in five different departments (Peritz, 2018). Student leaders at McGill wrote a letter released to Principal Suzanne Fortier claiming that the university had failed to appropriately handle student complaints of sexual misconduct by professors, and was thereby placing its students at risk (ibid). The letter explains that, amongst the student population, it is well known to stay away from specific

professors in the history, psychology, philosophy, political science, and Middle East Studies departments, because they were notorious for making sexual advances toward students (ibid). The MU administration released a statement in response to the letter, stating that staff, resources, and policies had been put in place for anyone wishing to come forward and report inappropriate behaviour. Despite this, one of the student leaders explained that the process for filing complaints is "difficult and places undue burden on the students," (ibid). The university appointed a new 'special investigator' for sexual misconduct complaints, in May, but the results of this action have yet to be made public (Rukavina, May 2018; Hendry, April 2018).

Later in the year, complaints were raised against professors in Concordia's English department (Global News). A retired Quebec court of appeal judge and two psychologists conducted an independent review of the climate of the department from April to September 2018, taking input from 109 students, faculty and staff. In a report published in early March, 2019, they identify several key issues including "real or perceived" acts of sexual violence, unwanted flirtation reported by students, and a declaration that student-instructor relationships should be strongly discouraged. They then describe the overall climate as "unhealthy" (ibid).

Another investigation took place in CU's psychology department in early 2019 regarding allegations made against a specific professor, Jim Pfaus (Hendry, 2019). Due to a confidentiality agreement between Pfaus and the university, CU cannot confirm the outcome of the investigation, nor whether an investigation has taken place at all. However, CBC informants, including faculty, staff and students, have verified that many members of the department (faculty, current and former students, etc.) have been

questioned about Pfaus' behaviour and romantic relationships. According to the information provided to CBC, Pfaus' pattern of pursuing students is nothing new, as he would give special attention to his romantic interests regularly in his lab, invite them to prestigious conferences, and so on. Many informants considered this a clear conflict of interest. As one former student said, "we did not have his professional attention" (ibid). CBC also reported that Pfaus' relationships tended to "spillover" into the lab, as ending those relationships was often "messy" and not kept private (ibid). This case has sparked further outrage amongst certain professors, and some (e.g., Shirley Katz & Martine Delvaux) have publicly spoken out against the confidentiality agreements, claiming that they allow abusers to "control the narrative" of what the public hears about what has happened (ibid).

Existing Policy

In 2017, the Quebec government passed Bill 151 in 2017, titled "An act to prevent and fight sexual violence in higher education institutions." The Bill required that Quebec institutions of higher education adopt policies on SV specifically, by January 1st, 2019, and implement them by September 2019 (David, 2017). The Quebec Education Ministry published a list of complying institutions in early January. Missing from the list were MU, UQAM, and 26 CEGEPS (Gouvernement du Quebéc, 2019). MU finally released its new policy on March 28th, 2019. From UQAM I have been able to find a policy from July 2018 that does not seem to be complete, containing crossed-out segments covering several paragraphs throughout the document.

Concordia University

Concordia's new policy, effective as of December 12, 2018, fulfills the requirements of Bill 151. As a standalone policy on SV, its stated purpose is a six-item list outlining the university's commitment to the following: 1) promoting a safe learning and working environment where SV is not tolerated; 2) providing assistance and support to those affected by SV in the CU community; 3) using a 'trauma-informed and intersectional understanding' in its handling of complaints and disclosures; 4) developing and implementing plans/materials for educating members of the university on how to best promote the safe environment mentioned in the first point; 5) providing survivors with relevant and appropriate information and resources on their options should they decide to disclose their experience and/or take action in response to an experience of SV, 6) providing appropriate support for any member of the Concordia community accused of committing SV (Concordia University, 2018). The policy subsequently defines terms used in the document, including *consent*, *sexual assault*, *sexual harassment*, and *sexual violence*. The document also outlines the university's commitment to employ an intersectional approach toward SV, and states: "To this end, the support or assistance provided under this Policy shall take into account, as needed and as requested, the different perspectives, voices or circumstances of each survivor/victim" (ibid, page 5). However, it is quite unclear as to what this could amount to concretely, beyond merely 'recognizing' the fact that such dynamics and factors are at play.

The policy names the Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) as the primary on-campus structure that will handle cases of SV, and outlines the resources of support available to survivors through SARC. The document states that support will be provided

regardless of whether alcohol and/or drugs were involved in the reported incident. The policy goes on to outline in detail the process of filing a SV complaint, and what the survivor can expect to happen. A separate set of guidelines was published in 2018 outlining what the university expects regarding relationships between faculty and students. The guidelines strongly discourage instructors from entering instructor-student relationships, but do not ban them entirely. If such a relationship arises, it must be reported to the university and documented as consensual.

Université de Montréal

The updated policy at UdeM, to be in effect as of August 1, 2019, is nearly identical to that of CU, with the most noticeable exception being the absence of recognition of intersectionality as outlined by CU.

McGill University

McGill's new policy was reviewed well past the deadline required by Bill 151. Much like UdeM's policy, McGill's is similar in many ways to the one released by CU. Although intersectionality is mentioned in McGill's policy, much less time is spent on the university's position on what it means to adopt an intersectional framework as compared to the new CU policy. In both UdeM and CU's polices, the role of an on-campus resource centre dedicated to handling SV is very central to the support, complaint, and prevention process. While McGill's resource centre is described as guiding the actions that the university will take in the face of SV, its centrality to these actions seems less important as presented in the university's newly reviewed policy.

Université du Québec à Montréal

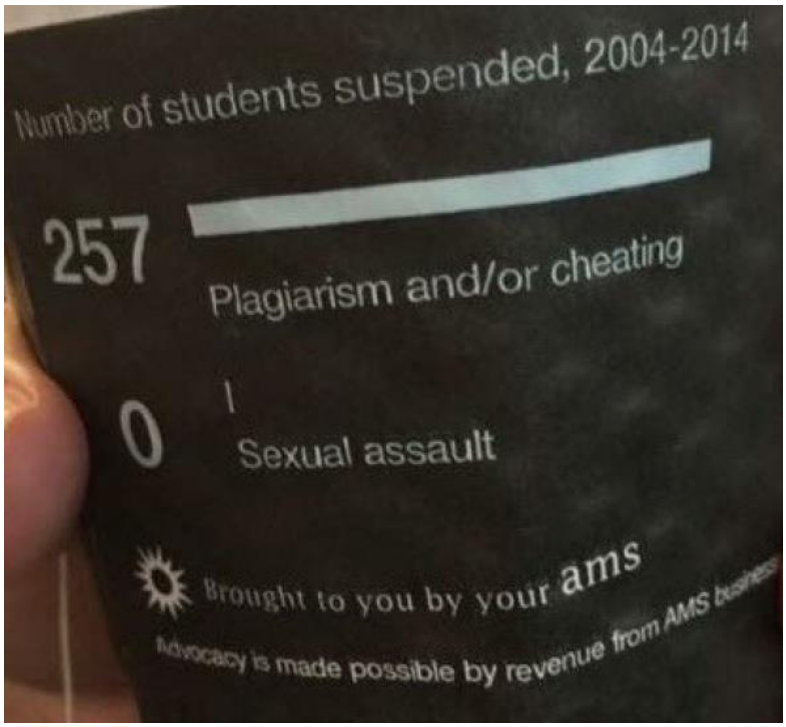
UQAM's most updated policy is significantly shorter than the others with, as mentioned above, several paragraphs crossed out, amounting to a loss of two pages altogether. As a result, the policy is less thorough, and certainly does not mention intersectionality or specific guidelines for how a complaint of SV will be handled. Similar to MU's policy, an office for preventing harassment – though not specific to SV – is mentioned, and its duties are outlined briefly. Although the office may be central to UQAM's procedures, the policy does not make this clear.

Not only is CU's policy the most thorough of those coming from the major Montreal universities, but CU has also most comprehensively covered all of the bases required by Bill 151. That said, while CU can be commended for adhering to these requirements, as they are a step in the right direction, there is always room for improvement. CU students seem to agree, and it is to this that I will now turn.

Student Response

Students have become increasingly vocal on issues of sexual violence on campus, often feeling that – if they do not make noise about these issues – their university administrations will not do anything to help them. Following the break-ins and assaults at Laval University in 2016, protests were organized in four cities in Quebec – Montreal, Sherbrooke, Chicoutimi and Quebec City – to bring attention to the pervasiveness of sexual violence (Shingler, 2016). In response to the Brock Turner case of that same year, UBC's Alma Mater Society launched an awareness campaign featuring coffee cup

sleeves that visually demonstrated how rare it is at UBC for a student to face consequences for sexual assault, by comparing the number of student suspensions due to plagiarism to those due to sexual assault from 2004 to 2014 (Weikle, 2016).



(Source: Weikle, 2016)

Students from Carleton University who felt dissatisfied with the university sexual violence policies they saw in place decided to take matters into their own hands. These students created the group called Our Turn (OT), uniting 20 student unions across Canada. In 2017, OT systematically reviewed the contents of Canadian university sexual assault policies, according to 45 criteria[1] (Salvino et al., 2017). They subsequently ranked the universities under review with letter grades based on the outcome of their evaluation. The OT report states that the majority of the policies assessed scored average, C, or

[1] These criteria included general points like the existence of a policy specific for handling cases of sexual violence and whether that policy defined consent, to more specific issues like whether rape culture and intersectionality are recognized.

below, the lowest grade being D-. The D- was awarded to CU, with MU receiving a C-. UQAM and UdeM were not evaluated by the OT team.

In the official report of their findings, the group included an outlined action plan for universities to follow to help alleviate the issue of sexual violence on campus. The action plan consists of five steps: 1) pass a student union motion acknowledging the existence of rape culture on campus and commit to fighting against it; 2) create an Our Turn task force on campus; 3) hold consultation meetings during the creation and implementation of the task force; 4) conduct a student campus sexual violence survey to understand the experience of survivors on campus; and 5) adopt the practices for prevention, support, and advocacy suggested further in the action plan (Salvino et al., 2017). The practices referred to in this last point can be broken down into three parts: prevention, support and advocacy. With respect to prevention, the suggestions consist of developing or adopting peer-to-peer sexual violence prevention and support training, mandating club and student group officers and student representatives to have similar training, and creating an awareness campaign. For support, OT recommends creating a network of survivors on campus available for peer-to-peer support and raising awareness of community resources. Regarding advocacy, OT suggests reevaluating and revising university policy according to the OT guidelines and advocating for policy reforms at the campus, local, provincial, and federal levels of government (Salvino et al., 2017). OT's plan places an emphasis on the role that peer-to-peer networks can play in both prevention and support for victims. The report points out that "some survivors might not feel comfortable seeking support from the same institution involved in their cases" (Salvino et al., 2017, p. 8). In that case, OT suggest that a peer-support option, ideally

provided in a centre designated specifically for dealing with sexual violence, is an important component to the services offered by a university (ibid).

In early April of 2018, students at CU and McGill organized a walk-out to rally against sexual misconduct and a general campus culture that encourages such behaviour (Parillo, 2018). Later that month, student leaders in Quebec expressed disappointment that, despite all of the mobilization they had done to push for better policies, they were not going to be included on the committee set up by the government to help universities deal with sexual violence (Hendry, 2018).

A small demonstration was held in April 2019 in Concordia's GM building, as a statement against the standing committee on sexual violence, because they were unhappy with the progress – or lack thereof, from their perspective – made thus far with the state of the policy and accountability to students. I could not find much information on this aside from a Facebook event page advertising the demonstration. The coordinator of SARC, who is on the standing committee, informed me that the demonstration was at the time of the meeting, as the students involved intended to boycott the committee. I also heard that, while small, it was fairly raucous, with students shouting profanities at committee members as they entered and exited the room of the meeting.

In addition to this, the Concordia Student Union (CSU) launched a campaign within in past year, to "End Rape Culture." The organization put posters up around campus with messages about consent and hung a large magenta banner from the mezzanine of the university's main downtown building (the Hall building), reading "END RAPE CULTURE" in massive letters. The campaign attempts to place additional

pressure on the university to implement better policy and integrate better prevention practices.

In some cases, student activism achieves what it sets out to accomplish, so it is no surprise that – when push comes to shove – students make their voices heard. The development of CU's Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC), which was established in 2013 – even ahead of Bill 151 and the more recent accusations featured in media headlines – also required a push from the student population (McGroarty, 2013). In 2013, the Centre for Gender Advocacy at CU started a petition demanding the university provide a resource centre specifically to handle sexual violence (ibid). Supported by the Concordia Student Union and Women's Studies Student Association, the petition collected over 1,000 signatures (ibid). In an interview, the programming and campaigns director for the Gender Advocacy Centre explained that the biggest obstacle to creating SARC was "a lack of funding from the university for sexual assault services, a space and someone to coordinate," (ibid).

About SARC

Concordia University's Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) is still a relatively new campus entity, but has become a robust source for information and support for survivors of sexual assault. According to the SARC website, the centre tasks itself with the prevention of SV and harassment, and thus offers from its arsenal of services, crisis intervention, advocacy, accompaniment, outreach and referrals. They pride themselves on being survivor-centred – supporting survivors in making decisions for themselves – feminist, and intersectional, and thus allowing these values to guide their approach to service delivery and other initiatives.

A plethora of information on consent, SV statistics and definitions, supporting survivors, and how to stop SV, can be found on the SARC website for anyone who is curious. Those interested can also find CU's most updated SV policy, as well as a report of the Sexual Assault Policy Working Group, in the same place. The centre is staffed with two social workers – one of whom doubles as the centre's coordinator – a service assistant, and a lead workshop facilitator. Anyone who decides to come in-person for information and/or support, however, will most likely meet the service assistant at the front desk first – who will offer them coffee, tea, water, or a snack – and then sit down in another room with a SARC volunteer. Monday through Friday, SARC offers drop-in hours for those looking to do just that – talk to someone about an experience they, or someone they know, has had with SV, and/or learn more about available resources. The very possibility of drop-in hours relies on the presence of volunteers. They are the front line.

Conclusion

It can always be argued that the media will report on what is considered newsworthy – that is, what will attract the attention of the most people most quickly – and is thus biased in terms of how it reports certain topics. It can be argued further that the recent media coverage of SV is sensationalist, and serving witch hunts. However, the media-painted picture of the state of SV in Canadian universities just barely scratches the surface of the epidemic that this society faces. As will be outlined in the literature review, the statistics of SV back up the reports. This is why students are speaking up, and making sure they are heard. They have had enough.

As a survivor of sexual assault and a student and member of Concordia's community for nearly five years now, I find it comforting to be on a campus with different forces – students, SARC staff – fighting to improve the life of students where SV is concerned. But there is hard work ahead. I myself have both received inappropriate advances from a professor, and had a professor unjustifiably assume I was making advances toward him, during my undergraduate career at CU. I feel lucky to not have been subjected to the toxic environments reported in the Creative Writing and English departments. It is sad that I feel lucky for something like this. So, I maintain, our work is far from over, and that is precisely the motivation behind this project.

Literature Review

Understanding Sexual Violence

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines sexual violence (SV) as "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, any unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim in any setting, including but not limited to home and work" (p. 149). SV includes sexual assault – that is, "[any] form of assault involving a sexual organ" – as well as unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment (ibid).

Sexual violence (SV) is considered a symptom or product of 'rape culture'. This term, coined by US feminists in the 1970s, is used by scholars and activists to describe the social norms regarding sexuality, or commonly held-beliefs about men and women's "natural" sexual desires, that contribute to high rates of sexual assault and harassment in Canada, the United States, and beyond (e.g., Quinlan et al., 2017; Strain et al., 2015; Phipps et al., 2018; Keller et al., 2018). Gavey (2005) defined rape culture as "the complex social processes by which sexual violence is treated as normal, natural, and insignificant." In her book, *Just sex? The cultural scaffolding of rape*, Gavey (2005) explored rape culture in the context of the evolving public perspectives on rape in Western nations. Especially prior to the resurgence of the women's movement in the 70s, Gavey explained, 'victim blaming' – the act of blaming victims of sexual assault for the assault itself – was the default reaction of the so-called justice system to allegations of SV. The alternative to blaming the victim was often not believing the victim at all: "'it

was not a real rape but a seduction, and if it *was* rape then the woman was already morally inferior'" (ibid, p. 19).

The tendency to blame victims is rooted in what many scholars including Gavey (see also Bohner, 1998; Burt, 1978; etc.) refer to as "rape myths" and "rape myth acceptance," (RMA). The dominant perspective of rape has traditionally been rooted in the words of male scholars, psychologists, and so on, and relies on an analysis of heterosexual relations based in biological and/or evolutionary assumptions about what is natural behaviour for men and women (Gavey, 2005). According to this perspective, women were considered sexually passive by nature, and men born with an inherent 'rampant' sexuality (ibid, p.19). Women's sexuality is not, however, *merely* passive. Rather, it is also accompanied by an underlying desire to be sexual, hindered by social conventions that prevent women from being able to freely and openly experience their sexuality. Thus, this perspective concludes, a woman's sexuality must be "unleashed by force in order for their female virtue to be protected" (ibid, p. 19). Following this logic, a woman cannot *really* be raped because she is seen to encourage or even want SV. As Gavey explained, elements of this perspective remain present in many corners of Western society, including the justice system. As Bohner and colleagues put it, rape myth acceptance is the tolerance of "stereotypical beliefs about rape that blame the [woman who has been raped] and exonerate the rapist," and acts as a key component to the pervasiveness of rape culture and its sustentation (Bohner et al., 1998**).**

In groundbreaking study conducted in 1977, principal investigator Martha Burt (1978) described 'rape-supportive attitudes' – i.e., attitudes held by individuals who accept rape myths and are thereby at least passively supportive of rape – as

"psychological releasers or neutralizers, allowing potential rapists to turn off social prohibitions against injuring or using others when they want to commit an assault" (p. 5). In a later article, Burt (1980) elaborated on one section of the 1977 study, involving the data from interviews with 598 randomly-sampled Minnesota adults administered in 1977. The findings of this study, intended to investigate 'rape myths' as initially theorized by social psychologists and feminist theorists, revealed that rape myths *are* commonly believed. She also found that attitudes toward rape and rape myths had a strong connection to other deeply-imbedded cultural values around heterosexual relations, such as a tolerance of interpersonal violence and acceptance of stereotypical sex roles. The author noted that more than half of the sample agreed with statements suggesting that women who go to a man's residence following a date are implying a willingness to have sex; that most rape victims are of questionable character; and that the majority of rape accusations are made as an act of revenge or an attempt to cover-up behavior they deem shameful (ibid). Overall, Burt found that the largest predictor of rape myth acceptance was acceptance of interpersonal violence. Thus, she hypothesized that the latter may be the "attitudinal releaser of assaultive action" (p.299). Another article from Burt and colleagues (1981), which also uses the 1977 data mentioned above, expanded on the dangers of rape myth acceptance, explaining that one's acceptance of rape myths necessitates that their definition of rape itself be distorted in accordance with rape myths. That is, without recognizing that rape myths – such as "women never mean 'no'" – are in fact myths, one is likely to be reluctant to taking victims of SV at their word (ibid, p. 213).

In 1998, Bohner and colleagues ventured to find a causal pathway between men's rape myth acceptance (RMA) and rape proclivity. They conducted two experiments to assess the possibility that such a pathway exists. In the first experiment, 125 male students completed a questionnaire on 'attitudes toward different aspects of sexuality,' consisting of a 20-item scale assessing rape myth acceptance (VMAS), as well as an 'Attraction Toward Sexual Aggression Scale,' (ASA) which assessed feelings and attitudes towards various sexual activities. In the second experiment, 113 male students completed a questionnaire also containing the VMAS, but were subsequently asked to respond to questions about how they felt towards five written scenarios describing 'realistic situations of date rape,' and were not asked to respond to the ASA (p. 263). Using the data from these questionnaires, Bohner et al. tested two hypotheses: 1) there is a causal impact of rape myth acceptance on men's rape proclivity, and 2) rape myth acceptance may serve as a justification of already existing behaviour and/or inclinations. The data from both experiments confirmed that the first hypothesis was correct, and ruled out the possibility that both variables are primarily influenced by a third variable (ibid).

A 2006 study from Bohner et al. expanded upon the 1998 work. The researchers decided, this time, to explore the relationship between the social normativity of rape myths – perceived acceptance of others' RMA – and men's rape proclivity. Two experiments on a German university campus assessed, via questionnaires, the degree to which receiving information on how other students allegedly responded to an RMA scale impacted male students' RMA and rape proclivity scores (ibid). Findings confirmed the researchers' suspicions that men's proclivity toward SV "is causally affected by the

perceived rape myth acceptance of others," as demonstrated RMA within one's peer group leads respondents to report higher scores of rape proclivity (ibid, p. 292).

A study from Strain et al. (2015) continued the work above by assessing the relationship between individuals' acceptance of rape myths and their acceptance of 'attempts to pressure' (ATP) – that is, how likely an individual is to condone pressuring women into sex based on his acceptance of rape myths. The goal was to examine the role of "less blatantly aggressive behaviours," which may not directly result in SV, in the perpetuation of rape culture (p. 323). In this study, 193 introductory psychology students – both male and female – completed an online questionnaire consisting of a 50-item list of pressuring behaviours that may occur when a man is sexually interested in a woman. The list was intended to target university students, the situations in which they may find themselves and the language they might use. The items on this list were based on popular culture references, the experiences of students on Strain et al.'s research team, commonly known behaviours, and so on. The scholars ultimately confirmed that which they had predicted: an individual's attitude towards women who have been raped, and men's rape proclivity to rape, were both strongly linked to acceptance of ATP. That is, individuals who were accepting of ATP scenarios were also more likely to demonstrate an acceptance of rape myths and/or have a higher inclination towards sexually violent behaviour (ibid).

Along the same lines, a more recent study by Keller et al. (2018) explored harmful social practices that are perhaps "less blatantly aggressive behaviours" (Strain et al., 2015, p. 323), but are both born from and perpetuate rape culture. According to Keller and colleagues, examples of these practices include, "rape jokes, sexual harassments, cat-

calling, sexualized 'banter'; the routine policing of women's bodies, dress, appearance, and code of conduct; the re-direction of blame from the perpetrator in an assault to the victim; and impunity for perpetrators, despite their conduct or crimes" (ibid, p. 24). For these scholars, rape culture manifests not just SV and rape myths, but a more diffuse 'popular misogyny,' whereby women's empowerment and movements that advocate it (i.e., feminism) are perceived and represented, often by men, as a threat. The popularity of these movements and the gains they have made often incite fear and an aggressive defensiveness over the current – or more traditional – order of things. This ultimately amounts to the defense of rape culture (ibid). In the sea of popular misogyny is also complete rejection of the notion of rape culture. Several articles, and even books, have been written attempting to 'debunk' the 'myth' of rape culture, claiming that the concept is used to disadvantage white men and is not supported by statistics (see McElroy's *"Rape Culture" Hysteria*, Kitchen's "The Rape 'Epidemic' Doesn't Actually Exist," Margaret Wente's "Rape is real, just not epidemic," or Rosin's *End of Men*).

Summary

According to the WHO, sexual violence (SV) includes any unwanted sexual contact, physical or verbal, including sexual harassment and unwanted sexual advances. Although the term has been contested by some conservative and/or right-wing figures, many scholars consider SV as part and parcel of "rape culture" (Gavey, 2005; Quinlan et al., 2017; Strain et al., 2015; Phipps et al., 2018; Keller et al., 2018). Rape culture involves the culmination of all social norms pertaining to sexuality, the nature of male and female sex drives, and the "natural" desires of men and women (Gavey, 2005). It also includes

beliefs about SV which are often referred to as "rape myths," which maintain that rape does not exist because women secretly desire to be sexually violated (ibid). Scholars interested in what sustains rape culture have investigated, for example, the influence of a man's acceptance of rape myths on his rape proclivity (Bohner et al., 1998; Bohner et al., 2006; Burt, 1978; Burt, 1980). Certain studies have revealed that perceived rape myth acceptance amongst one's peers is associated with greater likelihood to believe rape myths and condone acts of SV (Strain et al., 2015). The concept of rape culture has received backlash from certain individuals – e.g., McElroy and Kitchen – who claim it is a tool used by feminists to disadvantage men (Keller et al., 2018).

The Canadian Context

Prevalence rates for sexual violence on campus have not been collected regularly in Canada – only one study using primary data has been conducted since the 1990s. Research from 2014, however, suggested that little has changed since data was collected in the 1990s (Senn et al., 2014). Results from DeKeseredy and Kelly's (1993) study of 44 Canadian universities and colleges revealed that 27.8% of female students had experienced SV in some form. A smaller study conducted by DeKesesredy, Schwartz, and Tait (1993) at an Ontario university resulted in a similar figure: 32.8% of women experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months. Finally in 2014, Senn and colleagues conducted a study on the experiences of 899 women in their first year of university in three Canadian cities. This study found that rates of SV have not improved, as 58.7% of participants experienced one or more forms of sexual victimization since the age of 14 years, and 35% had experienced at least one attempted or completed rape. Furthermore,

only a minority of women in this study had previous education on sexual assault (ibid). Women are, of course, not the only victims of SV, as men have reportedly also experienced SV. That said, as research (e.g., Krebs et al., 2007; Senn et al., 2014) has shown that women are overwhelmingly victimized by male perpetrators of SV, this thesis will primarily refer to women when discussing the experience of SV.

In their book, *Sexual violence at Canadian universities: Activism, institutional responses, and strategies*, Quinlan and colleagues (2017) described the situation that Canadian university students face on their campuses. Aside from providing statistics similar to those presented above, the authors agreed that SV on Canadian university campuses is also a product of rape culture. They explained that, due to the deeply-embedded values that constitute rape culture, most of the pressure to effect change on campuses has fallen onto the shoulders of the students. That is, in the absence of public scrutiny, university administrations have been reluctant to effect change themselves, and as a result, student activism has been the primary impetus for many improvements made thus far. Drawing on a Toronto court case involving SV, Quinlan et al. (2017) highlighted a statement from the expert testimony of former police officer and current professor of sociology James Hodgson's expert testimony: "traditionally, status apparatus has not treated gender issues and gender crimes with an equitable and appropriate level of importance until such time as public or political pressure or litigation induce policy and procedure change" (ibid, p. 235). In reaction to negative media attention, many universities – e.g., Concordia University, Laurentian University, Brandon University, etc. – have launched task forces specifically aimed towards assessing the severity of SV and the needs of those on campus (ibid). Similarly, provincial governments including Quebec

and Ontario have ratified bills requiring universities to create a more sufficient apparatus for handling cases of SV (ibid).

Despite governmental efforts, many Canadian universities have been slow to draw up policies on sexual violence that are sufficient for combating the issue. A study from Lee and Wong (2017) evaluated "sexual assault-related" policies from all public Canadian universities. The scholars found that only 66 of the 199 studied institutions had at least one policy relating to sexual assault, and only one-fifth (ibid, p. 27) of the universities had a policy classified as specific to sexual assault. One-third had a policy defining consent, and 32 universities had policies that delineate possible consequences or sanctions for perpetrators of sexual assault. The article concluded that "many Canadian universities have much work to do" (ibid, p. 13).

Summary

Between the early 1990s and 2014, prevalence rates for SV on Canadian campuses were not collected. The study from 2014 (Senn et al.) revealed that, in the meantime, conditions for Canadian women in university have not improved. In the early 1990s, two studies revealed that the rate of SV on campus was between 27.8% and 32.8% (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; DeKesesredy, Schwartz, & Tait, 1993). The 2014 study revealed that 58.7% of participants had experienced one or more forms of sexual victimization since the age of 14 years. Despite the staggering numbers and governmental efforts to mandate reform, universities have been slow to change. More often than not, it is public scrutiny – via the involvement of the media – that is most likely to spark improvements, especially those that have been made thus far. Lee and Wong (2017)

evaluated the sexual assault policies of all Canadian Universities, finding most did not have a policy specific to sexual assault.

Impacts and repercussions

Several studies have documented the strong connection between sexual assault victimization and the development of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders (PSTD) (Fedina et al., 2018). One study conducted specifically on sexual harassment in the university setting revealed that the experience of harassment contributed directly to higher levels psychological distress (Huerta et al., 2006). The same study reported that higher levels of psychological distress had a direct and negative impact on physical health and academic satisfaction and performance.

A study from Jenkins et al. (1998; 2000), examined the impact of general SV trauma, and PTSD, in rape survivors. The research team found that, when PTSD develops as an outcome of victimization, depression levels tend to be more persistent – that is, not diminishing over time – at least eight years post-trauma (Jenkins et al., 2000). The data also revealed a connection between SV trauma and concentration that is consistent with the experience of combat veterans who develop PTSD. Women who have trauma associated with rape have been found to perform more poorly on short-term and long-delay memory recall tests, and suffer from attentional impairment (Jenkins et al., 1998; 2000). Comparing participants to the normative standards for their age and education, the study found one-third of those with PTSD fell significantly (at least two standard deviations) below the mean for some memory recall tests (Jenkins, 1998). The authors of that study hypothesized factors responsible for reduced concentration to be intrusive

thoughts, poor sleep, dissociation, and the tendency for victims to be easily startled by environmental stimuli (ibid). Even when attentional dysfunction was considered 'mild,' participants with PTSD still reported that it significantly impaired their day-to-day functioning (Jenkins et al., 2000).

Wagner and Magnussen (2005) expanded on the possible trauma-related barriers victims might face in the classroom, adding flashbacks, hyper-vigilance, low self-esteem, and shame to the list of common symptoms survivors experience that may be especially intrusive. Adding to the literature on the challenges women face pursuing higher education, Wagner and Magnussen explored the impact of trauma on female university students in Canada. Participants were asked to record their experiences in their first year of university in a journal. On the question of violence, the participants' journal entries revealed that memories of abuse from the past can be triggered by content discussed in the classroom. One of the participants acknowledged the difficulty of separating her history from her daily experience, although many participants admitted they regularly attempt to compartmentalize (ibid). Wagner and Magnussen posited that societal pressures to hide pain and consider abuse as shameful for both perpetrator and victim, combined with the "unwritten rules" of the academy that decree emotion as having no place in spaces for sharing and producing knowledge, foster an environment that is not conducive to advancing an understanding of the experience of survivors (ibid, p. 457-458). Thus, the university environment as is may be counter-productive to any progress made in the sphere of gendered and sexual violence on campus (ibid). As the scholars put it: "we are impeding women's ability to learn to their full potential […] By pretending

that violence is outside of the realm of most women's experience, we collude in the silencing" (p. 460).

A 2014 study involving 750 female participants at a Kentucky university assessed the relationship between sexual assault victimization and academic performance (Jordan et al., 2014). Accounting for the timing of participants' victimization in accordance with changes to their academic performance – namely Grade Point Average (GPA) – the results of the study were clear: participants who had experienced SV prior to entering university entered with lower GPAs and tended to earn lower grades during their first year than those who had not experienced SV. Additionally, the GPA of participants victimized during their first semester subsequently dropped (ibid). When the form of victimization participants experienced was rape, the likelihood of them having a lower GPA was more significant (ibid). The scholars hypothesized that a lower GPA following sexual victimization may be attributable to decreased ability to concentrate, energy diminished by depression or anxiety, or substance abuse.

Huerta and colleagues (2006) conducted a study on the experience of sexual harassment on a US university campus, and its relationship to student mental health and academic satisfaction. The scholars determined not only that sexual harassment remains an issue in academic settings, but it is also directly related to psychological distress in students who experience it. Women who endured more harassment also described more symptoms of anxiety and depression. Additionally, higher levels of distress were associated with disordered eating behaviour (ibid). Women who reported lower satisfaction with their university experience were also more likely to report disengagement from academic life and lower academic performance. Thus, Huerta et al.

(2006) conclude that sexual harassment in university settings has negative repercussions for student's well-being and academic performance.

Jenny Horsman's (2000) book, *Too Scared to Learn: Women, Violence and Education*, explored in great depth the struggles that experiencing violence poses for women pursuing education. One of the most valuable lessons to be taken from Horsman's work is that victims of violence, especially gendered and sexual violence, have a completely different experience in educational environments than do non-victims. More specifically, the experience of victimization has the potential to completely change the way the survivor relates to her environment and to others. Aside from the challenges survivors may face regarding concentration and memory, they may also develop fears around certain places – perhaps where the victimization occurred, or places the perpetrator might frequent – or types of people (i.e., those who remind them of their abuser), adding further challenges to the learning experience (ibid). SV can thus be seen as a barrier to learning that interferes with the primary objective of institutions of higher education: that is, the education and academic success of its students (Huerta et al., 2005; Wagner and Magnusson, 2005).

Summary

The impact of SV on the victim can take many forms, including but not limited to: depression, anxiety, PTSD, worsened memory recall and academic performance, and lower satisfaction with academic experience (Fedina et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2006; Jenkins, 1998; Jenkins et al., 1998; Jenkins et al., 2000). Some scholars have argued that survivors can have a more difficult time in classroom settings due to intrusive thoughts,

difficulty concentrating, flashbacks, and the like (Wagner & Magnussen, 2005; Jordan et al., 2014). The fear of encountering her perpetrator can also lead a survivor to avoid certain parts of campus, transfer universities, or drop-out altogether (Horsman, 2000). Many researchers agree that it is essential for university administrations to understand the impact of SV and care for survivors appropriately.

The decision to disclose

The decision to disclose an experience of SV to another person is a serious step for a victim to take, and may not happen at all (Ahrens, 2006; Ahrens et al., 2007; Moors-Webber, 2012). Several studies on SV have discussed the difficulties associated with the decision victims make on whether to disclose, and have emphasized the importance of a positive response to disclosure. A 2007 study on SV victim disclosure found that most participants turned to informal support providers – i.e., family and friends – first (Ahrens et al., 2007). And although most of the participants in that study reported a positive reaction to their disclosure, another study from 2006 found that a negative reaction discouraged victims from disclosing in the future (Ahrens, 2006). That is, these survivors felt silenced by reactions including victim blaming, doubt, and generally insensitive responses, and became more skeptical of future disclosure opportunities, which could include disclosing to professional personnel (ibid).

Not only can a negative response be discouraging, but a study from Ullman and Filipas (2001) highlighted the possibility that such responses contributed to damaging psychological impacts on the survivor. This study examined the relationship between various demographic variables, event characteristics, and post-assault reactions (to

disclosure), and PTSD symptom severity. Survey data from 323 adult sexual assault victims revealed that variables such as lower education level, perceived threat of life at the time of the assault, and negative reaction to disclosure, are associated with greater PTSD symptom severity (ibid). In other words, negative reactions like victim-blaming, controlling reactions, treating the victim differently, and so on, are related to greater symptom severity.

It is for reasons such as those just outlined that an unsupportive reaction is sometimes referred to as the *second assault*, or, *second victimization* (Campbell et al., 2001; Campbell & Raja, 1999; Martin & Powell, 1994). In 1994, Martin and Powell published a study in which they conducted on-site interviews with personnel working for 130 rape processing organizations in Florida. While it is possible that much has changed in the processing of rape cases in Florida and elsewhere since the study was released, the authors maintain that certain legal practices – such as unresponsiveness to victims' needs and placing the victims' needs below those of the legal system to prioritize building a case, etc. – contribute to the second assault phenomenon. This phenomenon can be summarized as the experience of survivors being doubted, unsupported, and embarrassed by those to whom they reach out for help post-assault (ibid).

Investigating the perspective of therapists who treat victims of SV, Campbell and Raja (1999) surveyed 415 mental health professionals on their experience with the concept of second victimization. They found that most respondents believed that trauma from SV can be worsened by survivor contact with community resources, especially when those resources involve practices like the medical rape exam used to collect evidence that SV occurred. Many of the participants also agreed that contact with

community professionals, often due to bad counselling practices, can leave victims feeling guilty, distrustful, and in a worse mental state more generally (ibid). Thus, not only is availability of resources highly important, but so too is the quality of the services that those resources provide.

Another study from 2001 explored survivors' experience accessing community resources, and their physical and psychological health in relation to that experience (Campbell et al., 2001). By conducting interviews with 112 women survivors, the study found that 52% of the participants found contact with the *legal* system was hurtful, whereas nearly half of those who sought out *medical* attention found it to be healing, and one-third found medical attention hurtful; contact with *mental health* professionals was overwhelmingly experienced as healing. Those victims who rated their experience with the legal system as harmful also reported higher levels of physical and psychological distress. As for those who accessed medical services, those who rated their experience as hurtful also exhibited higher distress. The researchers did not, however, observe a significant relationship between a healing experience with community services and psychological and physical health outcomes (ibid). They thus deemed the negative experience as a form of second victimization that must be prevented.

Campbell and colleagues (2009) constructed an ecological model of predictors of women's mental health post-assault, comparing the impact of individual characteristics, assault characteristics, support from close relations, experiences with legal and health systems, as well as broader social factors. The study noted that the impact of a negative reaction weighed more heavily than that of a positive reaction. That is, supportive responses certainly have a positive influence on a survivor's mental health, but

unsupportive responses were found to be “more central” to the likelihood that the survivor would develop more severe PTSD and/or depression, especially if that reaction is unexpected (ibid). The same study found that the presence of community mental health services and rape crisis centres in a survivor’s disclosure process can mitigate the effects of an unsupportive reaction insofar as they are associated with more positive experiences following the assault and less mental health distress (ibid).

Eisenberg and colleagues (2016) evaluated the impact of sexual violence resources on campus, by examining the association between the presence of resources and mental health of women survivors of SV. The scholars used data from the 2010 and 2011 administration of the College Student Health Survey (CSHS) of Minnesota, which assesses health problems and behaviour of Minnesota college students from 28 campuses. Eisenberg et. al’s analysis showed that greater mental health was associated with the presence of SV resources on campuses. Similarly, universities with fewer available resources were more likely to have student survivors report a greater number of days when their health prohibited them from participating in their normal daily activities, like studying or attending class (ibid).

In 2012, Moors-Webber analyzed 32 disclosures of SV on Yahoo! Answers Australia. Frequently expressed sentiments in this dataset included: uncertainty over whether what one experienced qualified as sexual assault, shame and guilt, loneliness, fear, and feeling of having nowhere else to safely discuss the experience. This research is consistent with past research asserting that survivors are more likely to disclose to informal support networks before going to a formal service such as counselling or the police (e.g., Ahrens et al., 2007). The Moors-Webber study furthers our knowledge of the

subject of disclosure by confirming that, when a survivor does not feel comfortable disclosing to someone she knows or to a formal service, she may resort to confiding in those on anonymous social media platforms.

Lisa Stermac, Sarah Horowitz, and Sheena Bance reported results from an education research program implemented in southern Ontario universities, in a chapter featured in Quinlan et al.'s (2017) *Sexual Violence at Canadian Universities: Activism, institutional responses, and strategies for change*. The program involved 15 in-depth interviews with female undergraduate university students who had experienced sexual coercion since enrolling in courses at their university. The researchers noted that all participants indicated their educational experience or performance had been impacted by sexual victimization in some way, and very few of them disclosed to formal university-provided supports. When disclosure was avoided, participants reported increased social isolation and decreased access to services and accommodations. They also observed that reasons for avoiding disclosure often included coping and maintaining a sense of self-worth via diving into academic tasks. That said, participants who felt supported by their university and their peers were better able to maintain academic performance, and described their disclosure experiences as central to coping in a positive way (ibid). The authors called for universities to further orient themselves towards stigma reduction and discovering new ways to tailor services to the needs of student survivors.

A scientific investigation of the resources provided on university campuses in Canada has, to my knowledge, yet to be conducted. However, Hayes-Smith and Hayes-Smith (2009) compiled a sample of 60 universities across the United States and assessed their websites in terms of the presence and quality of women's resource centres, as well

as the nature of the sexual assault-related information they provide. Within their sample, the authors found that only 33% had a women's resource facility. Of the services provided by these centres, most common was a resource library, as well as a mission statement outlining how they plan to tackle issues of gender inequality. Thirty-five per cent of the schools assessed were considered to be lacking in terms of sexual assault literature and programming, meaning they either had no literature, very little literature, or potentially harmful literature on SV. Another 32% fit the basic requirements outlined by law, often meaning they provided some literature that was very limited. The authors assert that, overall, many institutions of higher education in the United States fail to provide sufficient educational resources on SV (ibid). While there may not be comparable scientific evidence relating to the Canadian context, the results of the above-mentioned Our Turn (Salvino et al., 2017) student-led investigation of university policies, combined with the above-mentioned study from Lee and Wong (2017), suggests that trends may be similar in the two countries.

Summary

Due to the social tendencies fostered by rape culture – such as victim blaming, refusal to believe survivors, etc. – disclosing an experience of SV can be a difficult step for a survivor to take. In addition to the social pressures generated by rape culture, many survivors have a negative experience when disclosing (Ahrens, 2006). These interactions are often characterized by those very aspects of rape culture – such as victim blaming – that survivors fear. Not only are these interactions unpleasant for the survivor, but they can damage her healing trajectory. Scholars have come to name harmful disclosure

interactions as the *second assault* (Campbell et al., 2001; Campbell & Raja, 1999; Martin & Powell, 1994). Although many survivors turn to friends or family for support first (Ahrens et al., 2007), it is common for harmful disclosures to occur in the context of official support services, the hospital, and the courtroom (Campbell et al., 2001; Campbell & Raja, 1999). On the other hand, survivors who had a positive disclosure have reported that feeling supported by peers was key to their continued academic success post-SV (Quinlan et al., 2017). Thus, both the availability and quality of survivor support services on campus are essential to ensuring the personal, psychologic and academic success of student survivors (Eisenberg et al., 2016; Campbell & Raja, 1999).

The potential and plight of women's centres

The increased availability and visibility of women's centres, women's health centres, and more specifically rape crisis centres, grew out of the resurgence of the women's movement in the 1960s (Looker, 1993; Basen et al., 2004; Bengiveno, 2000). In large part these centres focused on providing women with resources and services that had not been so easily available to them in the past. Women's health centres aimed to provide women with information and education on women's issues, such as SV, sexual health, pregnancy options, and so on (Basen, et al., 2004). They also emphasized empowerment and self-sufficiency, often coupled with peer support (ibid). *Women's centres*, on the other hand, offered services similar to those offered by women's health centres – especially when it comes to educational efforts – but overall, they tended offer a broader range of informational resources and had a propensity to be more politically-oriented (Zaytoun Byrne, 2000; Kasper, 2004).

On-campus women's centres have often encouraged students to engage in gender-related issues, and focus on empowering female students by providing resources and support (ibid). They also hold the potential to bring people together based on common interests and issues, thus breaking down hierarchical barriers linked to faculty, staff, and student divisions (ibid). In an assessment of the Women's Centre at Wright State University, Kelli Zaytoun Byrne (2000) observed the potential role that women's centres can play in improving conditions for women students on campus. She explained that, without the presence of women's centres, the opportunities to engage with social, economic, and/or political issues on- and off-campus might not exist. For example, a woman student may not feel empowered – on a campus without a women's centre – to pursue her idea to develop a help-line for women's issues. The women's centre could potentially provide not only moral support, but help in finding resources and space necessary for such an initiative (ibid). On-campus women's centres can also facilitate the intellectual empowerment of women students, especially those studying in a male-dominated field (ibid). But such support is not guaranteed. Just as women's centres and women's health centres in larger communities were born out of activism, campus-based centres for women have traditionally required grassroots organizing for their creation and maintenance (Basen et al., 2004; Kasper, 2004).

Basen and colleagues (2004) explain that, despite the efforts of women organizers, many women's centres in Canada that grew out of the women's movement in the 60's, 70's and 80's, remain excluded from traditional avenues for care – such as health care – and/or faced severe cuts to their funding (p. 9). Campus-based support is no different (Kasper, 2004; Quinlan et al., 2017). Barbara Kasper (2004) conducted a study

of 72 campus-based women's centres in the United States, asking each of them to name the three biggest obstacles that they, as centres, have faced. The most common problem, as 69% of respondents indicated, was funding: 37% reported a lack of funding for programming, and 36% reported a lack of funding for staffing. Of course, many also indicated a need for more of both.

Although there is a dearth of literature on the state of campus-based women's centres in Canada, the literature has suggested that university budgets may not work in favour of establishments like women's centres. Newson and Polster (2015) highlighted the fact that government funding for universities in Canada has been dropping steadily since the mid-1990's, and even more since the world financial crisis in 2008. As a result, universities have been resorting to more private funding or cutting resources deemed 'unnecessary' (ibid). We can see this process as one of *corporatization* where higher education is concerned. In step with this process, university administration comes to view students as consumers – that is, sources of revenue – rather than learners (Newson & Polster, 2015). As noted by Newson and Polster (2015), "the university of today has become a well-honed instrument of economy policy and wealth creation, to the detriment of its broader public-serving mission," (p. 6). That is, the university's assurances to create an environment conducive for education and learning are often undermined by its newfound obligations to increase profit margins and satisfy investors.

Ultimately, rarely any parcel of university life will go untouched by corporatization, whether to its benefit or demise. The foundational perspective for university development becomes one of cost efficiency, and campus programs are evaluated according to potential 'returns,' (Quinlan et al., 2017). As noted by Quinlan

and colleagues (2017), the outcomes of services geared toward eliminating sexual assault and/or supporting survivors are not the most quantifiable, and to approach them as if they are is highly problematic. For instance, quantifying the outcomes of a program designed to prevent SV would likely take the form of measuring reported incidents of SV before and after implementing the program, whereas reporting rates are already low (ibid; Sabina & Ho, 2014). To quantify the impact of a SV support service is arguably even less conceivable.

The seemingly un- or underappreciated value that such services add to a community is, however, not unique to campuses – that is, off-campus community rape crisis centres (RCCs) across the US and Canada have been increasingly forced to rely heavily on volunteer and, at best, underpaid labour, as they have struggled to find sufficient funding since the beginning (Beres et al., 2009). The leaders of many RCCs reportedly struggle with the baggage that comes with securing funding, and having to 'collaborate with the very structures they sought to transform' (ibid, p. 139).

In 2003, Beres et al. (2009) conducted a questionnaire-based study of 53 Canadian community sexual assault centres and rape crisis centres. The centres that responded varied greatly in size, but all relied heavily on volunteer labour. Most respondents also indicated that reduced or stagnating government funding for organizations like sexual assault and rape crisis centres has made it difficult to provide important services and programs like crisis phone lines and public education campaigns; many also reported having to restructure, reduce paid staff, and/or reduce operating costs. The budgetary pressures resultant thereof has further limited the centres' autonomy, as they often have no choice but to censor their politics in the process of negotiating with funding sources

(ibid). Despite increased demand for services, some centres reported an incapacity to fund new staff and thus the staff faced an increased workload and often no increase in pay (ibid).

Summary

Emerging from the women's movement of the 1960s, women's centres have been central to women's empowerment (Looker, 1993; Basen et al., 2004; Bengiveno, 2000). Women's centres, women's health centres, and rape crisis centres, have striven to provide women with various resources – such as information and birth control – that were not readily available elsewhere (ibid). Despite their critical role, women's centres, on- and off-campus, have struggled to stay afloat and/or maintain political independence – particularly from the influence of government mandates – due to funding issues (Basen et al., 2004). As a result, these centres often resort to cutting resources and/or staff, and rely on volunteers work or government grants with strings attached (ibid). Women's centres – like other organizations of a similar nature – have been subject to encroaching corporatization, especially since the global financial crisis of 2008 (Basen et al., 2004; Newson & Polster, 2015). As far as universities are concerned, the lack of government funding post-crisis has forced administrations to rely more heavily on private sources (Newson & Polster, 2015). In the eyes of the corporatized university, students are consumers and funding is allocated according to returns on investments (ibid). As a result, on-campus services that cannot guarantee financial returns – such as support for victims of SV – are less likely to receive funding.

The emotion work of volunteering & support

Volunteering

By definition, volunteered labour is labour that is not financially compensated (McAllum, 2017). It is a process by which individuals donate their time and abilities to an organization, community, or cause, to help that entity progress (ibid). Volunteering has been found to be beneficial to both the helper and the helped, with the potential for the helper to reap the benefits of greater life satisfaction, self-esteem, self-rated quality of health, and so on (Wilson, 2000). While there is little agreement within the literature on the motivations that individuals have for donating their time and abilities for volunteer activities, it seems generally accepted that volunteer work draws on individual's resources as would any other form of productive labour – the difference is that the former is simply unpaid (Son & Wilson, 2017). Some scholars, in fact, have begun exploring the centrality of emotional labour in both performing and sustaining volunteer work (e.g., Froyum, 2017; Lois, 2001).

The sociological literature on volunteering is sparse, and much of what exists is becoming dated. As explained by Wilson (2000), we can conceptualize volunteering as "part of a general cluster of helping activities," but which is proactive and often requires a certain level of commitment of time and effort on behalf of the volunteer (p. 216). The main theoretical divide in the sociological debate on volunteering comes down to explaining why individuals choose to volunteer. The two sides of this debate boil down to a more subjectivist approach and a more behaviourist one; the former dominated by the search for motives behind volunteering, the latter assuming that the decision to volunteer is the outcome of merely a rational cost-benefit analysis (ibid). While a review of various

studies from the 1990s leads us to the conclusion that there is no specific set of values and beliefs that bears a causal relationship with volunteer work, more conclusive evidence came from studying the impact of education and occupational status. That is, as educational level increases so does the tendency that an individual will choose to volunteer; the same goes for occupational status (ibid). There seems to be a lack of consensus when it comes to determining whether volunteers are motivated to donate their labour simply because it makes them feel good (ibid). A similar literature view from McAllum (2017) revealed a concurring account of the literature on volunteering.

A more recent study from Son and Wilson (2017) explored in greater depth the relationship between education and volunteering, paying special attention to the mediating variable of 'perceived control.' The researchers hypothesized that the belief that volunteering provides volunteers with opportunity to exercise control over their environment – i.e., they feel as though they are 'making a difference' – accounts for part of the explanation as to why education level holds influence over one's likelihood to volunteer. They predicted that those who feel in control of their lives and perceive their social environment as malleable are more likely to participate in volunteer work. Son and Wilson (2017) analyzed secondary data from the United States two-wave (1995 and 2004-2006) National Survey of Midlife, which randomly selected 3,487 English-speaking adults between the ages of 20 and 77, maintaining a retention rate of 71% for the follow-up survey. Focusing on the measures that assessed volunteer hours and sense of control, the researchers found that participants' sense of control did in fact influence volunteering, but the reverse did not hold true (ibid).

As volunteering can occur in an endless number of locations, organizations, and positions, some types of volunteer work will be more emotionally charged or emotionally taxing than others. In a study of search and rescue volunteers, Jennifer Lois (2001) examined the role of emotions and emotion management in a specific type of volunteer work. The 21 interviewed participants in this study were all volunteers working for the rescue team of a skiing resort community, called Peak, in the United States. In addition to the interviews, Lois kept detailed field notes of her experiences (also as a volunteer for the same organization) for five-and-a-half years. In her data, Lois uncovered important themes that defined the daily work of a volunteer rescuer in Peak. As she noted, "one of the rescuers' most important duties during the missions was to manage other people's emotions, specifically, those of the victims they rescued and their family members" (ibid, p. 138). This might involve the rescuers finding ways to 'neutralize embarrassment,' alleviate anxiety, validating grief, or even strike a fine balance of calming seriously injured victims without downplaying their injuries so much that their body's natural defenses come down – all-in-all, a big part of their job is to define the emotional character of the situation (ibid).

Froyum (2017) argued that emotion work – a concept further expanded upon below – is central to sustaining volunteerism. More specifically, in 42 in-depth interviews with volunteers, Froyum found that cultivating sympathy amongst volunteers serves frequently to remind them why it is that they began volunteering. In this sample, participants worked with a variety of organizations, but nearly all of them worked with marginalized individuals. The interviews revealed that there were times when the volunteers felt, for a variety of reasons, that certain individuals they worked with were not deserving of help.

In these situations, volunteers found themselves feeling discomfort and even helplessness. Sometimes, Froyum observed, volunteers experiencing waning sympathy would discontinue their work – however, those who chose to stay often did so because of a re-engagment with their sympathy in new ways (e.g., finding a different perspective through which to look at someone's worthiness of their services). It is the emotional aspect of the work, and more importantly the ability to connect with their clients on an emotional level, that sustained them (ibid).

Support

Kenneth Kolb (2014) explored the experience of performing underpaid care work in his ethnography of Stop Abuse in Family Environments (SAFE), an organization in the United States that provides support and advocacy for women who are victims of domestic abuse. While the work of the advocates (the individuals that Kolb spends most of his time with) is paid, Kolb explained that budget cuts have led to reduced quality and availability of services, reduction of work hours, and shifting responsibility on to fewer workers. The advocates often felt overwhelmed by their workload, but also did not want to limit their availability to clients. While coworkers may provide advice for how to handle the weight of the work – that is, the actual amount of work plus the emotional toll of working with victims of abuse – the organization is not able to provide more hours or hire more staff to alleviate some of that weight in an effective way (ibid). The advocates at SAFE work financially precarious positions in what Kolb considers an "emotionally risky arena" (ibid, p. 7). Kolb explored why it is that advocates choose to continue working, despite that the work is heavier than other jobs and the pay does not reflect the value of their

work. Noting that advocates are "sustained by something more than just their wages," Kolb developed the concept of "Moral Wages" to name that thing that sustains this kind of work (21). Moral wages account for the emotional and psychological benefits that advocates gain from effectively helping clients, allowing them to claim a 'moral identity,' as someone who does truly valuable work that serves an important need in society (ibid). However, the existence of this moral dimension, Kolb explained, does not justify underpaying advocates. Highlighting just how emotionally taxing this work can be, he noted that those he interviewed believed their paycheck would never match the emotional costs of their work (ibid).

Peer Support

Peer support (PS) can be defined as a type of mental health intervention in which individuals receive help from others (known as 'helpers,' or 'supporters') who have struggled with experiences akin to those they are currently facing, or who are in a relatable life position (i.e., students at the same school, etc.) to themselves (Mead et al., 2001). Otherwise put, "it occurs when people share common concerns and draw on their own experiences to offer emotional and practical support to help each other move forwards" (Repper et al., 2013, p. 4). According to scholars supportive of PS, the fundamental advantage to PS work lies in the way in which the position of the supporter transforms the power dynamic often present in the traditional therapy or counseling model. As opposed to the latter, in which the counselor or therapist holds all the keys to the client's healing, these scholars have argued that the PS model makes for a more level playing field, and an ultimately more empowering experience for the victim –

empowerment being a value that many resource centres maintain as an integral component of their philosophy (Mead et al., 2001; Mahlke, Kramer, Becker, & Bock, 2014; Davidson, Bellamy, Guy & Miller, 2012; Kolb, 2014).

Over the past couple of decades, peer support has become an increasingly popular practice in the treatment of various mental health difficulties (Davidson et al., 2012). In an evaluation of several studies that assess the effectiveness of PS, Davidson et al. (2012) concluded that peer supporters do, in fact, foster a unique and effective healing experience. The exchange between supporter and supported is "characterized by trust, acceptance, understanding, and the use of empathy" (ibid, p. 124). Peer supporters can also be perceived as role-models to those they are supporting, acting as living proof that recovery is possible (Mahlke et al., 2014). While one concern may be the potentially negative impact that this work could have on the supporters themselves, Repper (2013) noted that as long as peer workers are well-trained and receive support from others in the work environment, the challenges "are outweighed by the potential benefits" (p. 10). Volunteers at SARC are considered peer supporters, mainly on the basis of being students or members of the CU community.

Emotion Work

Arlie R. Hochschild introduced the term 'emotional labour' in 1979, to describe the efforts required in certain lines of work – often in the service industry – to internally regulate one's emotions, with the aim of producing an outward expression that will satisfy clients and, by extension, employers. Following the development of Hoschschild's foundational work *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling* (2012), both the sociological and psychological conceptualizations of emotions

demonstrated a more pronounced interest in the impact that employer- or organization-mandated emotional regulation can have on the wellbeing of workers.

Hochschild's work focused mainly on the negative consequences of emotional dissonance – i.e., the misalignment between genuine feeling and emotional performance, caused by an attempt to fulfill what has been deemed appropriate workplace behaviour. Although she conceived of that phenomenon as the normative experience for workers in the service industry, studies have suggested that the relationship between emotion-performance and worker wellbeing is significantly more complicated (Bolton, 2001; Bodarenko, et al. 2017, Mann & Cowburn, 2005). Hochschild recognized the potential good that could be done by emotional labour, but did not heavily expanded upon that idea in her work. It has since been explored more extensively by scholars researching employee experience in various lines of work.

Briefly echoing Hochschild's work in a chapter from *The Emotional Organization: Passions and Power*, Martin and colleagues (2008) discussed aspects of organization-mandated emotions in the context of rape crisis work. Although most of the chapter does not align well with the current project, the authors elaborated on certain concepts that are useful for understanding emotion work, namely, *emotion culture* and *emotional discourse*. The first refers to the generally-held ideas about how individuals in an organization should interpret and express emotions in different situations. This may include specific rules regarding how an employee/member is expected to conduct herself. The latter, *emotional discourse*, contributes to the overall emotion culture by justifying – and thereby theoretically making sense of – the expectations around emotional conduct (ibid).

Revealing evidence from studies of frontline mental health work highlighted both the positive and negative effects of the emotional labour required in this field. A study from Bodarenko et al. (2017), examining fieldworkers at a community mental health organisation, suggested that frontline workers 'surface act' for their clients – that is, they provide an outward expression of an emotion for their clients that they do not genuinely feel – a concept introduced in Hochschild's work, which can potentially invoke emotional dissonance. Surface acting in this context, however, is mostly used when workers' felt emotions would not be beneficial to their client's development. According to the workers interviewed for this study, this specific relationship to surface acting – i.e., using it to genuinely benefit clients – is less associated with emotional dissonance (ibid). In addition to surface acting, participants also demonstrated 'deep acting,' which is the actual process of controlling one's thoughts and feelings to display mandated rules for emotional behaviour. While this could potentially be negative in certain contexts, the participants in this study found that being aware of, and having control over, their emotions allowed them to better regulate the negative feelings, be genuinely empathetic, and provide a non-judgemental space for their clients (ibid).

That said, this type of work can present certain risks for the worker. Zapf et al. (2006) conducted a study of employees working for (a) a home for children with disabilities, (b) hotels, and (c) call-centres. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing the relationship between emotion work and psychological impact on employees. Their analysis found an association between emotional labour and worker burnout – burnout involving emotional exhaustion, depersonalization from clients, and decreased sense of personal achievement. Thus, reaching the point of burnout has

negative consequences for both worker and client. Where emotional exhaustion can change one's perspective of her work to be frustrating and over-demanding, depersonalization can involve becoming indifferent towards clients and even treating them like objects. Personal accomplishment, the feeling of being competent in one's line of work and meeting aspirations, is also crucial to fueling the maintenance of workers performing emotion work (ibid). Each of these components occupies a key position in the value of moral wages as discussed by Kolb (2014).

Naring and colleagues (2006) conducted a study of the emotion work involved in the teaching profession. Naring et al. maintained that surface acting, deep acting, and suppression of emotion are all involved in teaching, and that emotional labour has an unique relationship with burnout, echoing the themes discussed by Zapf et al. (2006). In a questionnaire completed by 365 secondary school teachers, Naring et al. assessed the amount of emotional labour they perform, burnout (emotional exhaustion), social support, workers' autonomy, and the level of quantitative demands they faced. The researchers found that higher levels of surface acting was specifically linked to greater emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Likewise, more suppression of felt emotions was related to more depersonalization. On the other hand, emotional consonance (the opposite of emotional dissonance) was connected to less depersonalization, as well as a greater sense of personal accomplishment (ibid). Thus, the findings of this study support the theory that being in a position where one must hide certain emotions and perform others may have a negative impact on that individual.

Active Listening

Active listening (AL) is a specific type of emotional labour, and the object of this study. Sometimes referred to as empathetic listening, active listening is often described as a basic component of social work practice (Nugent & Halvorson, 1995). It has been contended in the literature that the practice of AL has an immediate impact on clients. Although it is a basic skill, to master it is no easy task (ibid). The fundamental pieces of AL involve: (1) Minimal Encouragers, which are short, timed responses that indicate the listener is paying attention, and can take verbal form or can be indicated through body language such as nodding; (2) Paraphrasing, which is when the listener will repeat the message being conveyed by the client in his or her own words, and can be used to help clarify the client's experience; (3) Emotional labeling, or picking up on the underlying emotions present in the client's words and giving verbal recognition to those emotions; (4) Mirroring, or repeating a word or phrase used by the client, can further indicate that the listener is engaged, and may help to encourage a client to expand on something specific; (5) Open-ended questions, or questions that cannot be answered with one word (i.e., 'yes,' or 'no'), (6) Effective pauses, or allowing a period of silence to exist un-filled because it allows the client to reflect or come to conclusions on her own; (7) Reflecting meaning, which is similar to paraphrasing, but involves simultaneously drawing out the underlying emotions and generally summarizing how the client has indicated she or he feels in certain situations, or during a specific experience (McMains, 2002).

In an experimental study with graduate social work students, Nugent and Halvorson (1995) highlighted the amount of care and precision that active listeners must exercise when listening to a client's experience. In each experiment, students were

assigned either the role of listener or client, and a hypothetical scenario outlining why the client was seeking the listener's help that day. The participants also observed a simulated interaction of five minutes between a 'client' and a 'social worker,' in which the 'social worker,' may or may not make errors known to the social work community. The simulations were short to demonstrate the more immediate impact that such errors may have on the client. They found that mistakes, like implying potential inaccuracy of a client's interpretation of events, while paraphrasing, can increase the client's levels of anger, anxiety and/or depression. This dynamic was consistently replicated across three of the four experiments conducted for the study.

To my knowledge, the sociological literature has not covered the topic AL. The majority of writings on AL – of which there is little – come from the discipline of social work or other hands-on profession-targeted literature bases. That is, work on AL is mainly geared towards explaining how to do active listening and/or ways in which individuals using active listening can aim to improve their practice. I did not come across any literature that assessed the impact of AL on the person doing the listening, only the impact of certain techniques or mistakes on the person receiving the support.

Summary

While the debate on individual motivations behind volunteer work remains divided, there is some agreement between scholars on what sustains volunteers and workers in fields that are more emotionally taxing. In one study, advocates for victims of abuse argued that their paycheck would never accurately reflect the emotional costs of their work (Kolb, 2014). In more emotional lines of work, it is often the case that an emotional connection

to their subject, or clients, is what compels individuals to continue volunteering (Froyum, 2017). Over the past couple of decades, Peer Support (PS) has become an increasingly popular form of mental health intervention (Davidson et al., 2012). Pertinent debates on the question of PS include those concerned with the risks that this type of support poses for the supporter (Repper, 2013). There are also debates at play on the risks of performing emotional labour more generally. Some scholars have expressed concern for the well-being of workers who are required to perform emotions according to rules outlined by their employer. As Hochschild (2012) cautioned, being required to perform emotions that do not align with what is felt inside could lead to emotional dissonance. Other scholars have revealed, this dissonance can result in worker burnout and depersonalisation from one's field, clients, and so forth. (Zapf et al., 2006). Hypothetically, Active Listening (AL) poses the same risks, although this has not been discussed in the literature.

Conclusion

The emphasis on the role of university structures in supporting and preventing SV has recently come back into the spotlight due to the public demands of students. The literature reviewed above highlights the complexities of implementing new services and programs for support and prevention. The impact of an experience of SV on the survivor has been thoroughly examined and established as potentially detrimental to the survivor's psychological, physical, and academic well-being. As outlined above, the quality of the interaction that takes place when a survivor discloses her experience of SV can be decisive in her healing process. That is, if a survivor receives a negative reaction characterized by disbelief and/or blame, she is likely to develop more severe

psychological symptoms in relation to the SV than someone who receives a positive, supportive reaction. University administrations, then, are uniquely positioned to solve the problem of SV on campus in various ways, one of them being to provide on-campus SV resources that will support survivors.

While the quality of services and its importance has been well established in the literature, the subjective role and experiences of those supporting survivors has not. That is, we know little of the experience of providing support, which could be a fundamental component to honing our understanding of which types of support work best and why. The same is true for what has been reflected in the literature on AL. As Kenneth Kolb (2014) said in his ethnography cited above, "If we want to understand why some forms of help are more effective than others, then we should probably know more about those doing the help" (p. 6). To further explore this side of support, this Master's thesis will delve into the experience of active listeners – volunteers and social workers – at Concordia University's Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC). For the purposes of this project, my fundamental research questions are:

(1) How do active listeners at SARC interpret their role as supporter? What does it mean to them to be supportive and support well?

and

(2) How do they perceive its impact on themselves personally and professionally?

Theoretical Framework

The scholarly literature describes Active Listening (AL) as a practice in which the listener employs various techniques – minimal encouragers, paraphrasing, emotional labeling, mirroring, open-ended questions, effective pauses, and reflecting meaning – according to her judgement, based on what she receives from the person needing support, whether verbal, physical, or implied (McMains, 2002). To better my understanding of the experience of active listeners who work specifically with survivors of SV in the university setting, I will draw from the symbolic interactionist (SI) and sociology of emotions literature. There is overlap between the two, especially in the literature on emotion work, which is what I will focus on for the purposes of the study. Despite the overlap, however, an emphasis on SI will deepen my understanding of the emotion work involved in AL insofar as it will help me draw out the importance that the practice of AL places on more subtle behaviours, such as body language and tone of voice.

From symbolic interactionism (SI), rooted in Mead's work on the self and society, we gain insight into how human interaction is largely guided by societally-determined meaning attached to gestures and symbols. By means of a brief introduction to SI based on Blumer's interpretation, followed by a discussion of Mead's work on gesture and the self and Goffman's theorization of how individuals present themselves to others, I will situate AL as a conscious implementation and utilization of patterns of human interaction as observed by SI. I will then engage with Hochschild (2012) and de Courville Nicol's (2011) work in the sociology of emotions to guide not only my conceptualization of the

emotion work – or management – consistently performed by active listeners, but also the impact that this work has on the listeners themselves.

Symbols, the self, and gesture

Blumer (1986) describes SI as based upon three premises: 1) human action is guided by the meanings attached to the things upon which action is taken, 2) such meaning comes from the social interactions that individuals have with others, and 3) these meanings are filtered through the minds of the individuals involved in the interaction, and in turn undergo an interpretative process that may result in those meanings being modified. That is, the meanings of 'things,' – objects, body language, etc. – are not simply taken from one social interaction and applied to another in which those things are present. Rather, the application of meanings involves a formative process, in which the individuals, or actors, applying meaning will check and modify that meaning depending on the particularities of the situation with which they are presently confronted. SI maintains that human society "exists in action, and must be seen in terms of action," and thus sees social interaction as a *process* (ibid, p. 6). This process is then what forms human conduct, as opposed to being a mere platform for human conduct (ibid).

As noted by Blumer, much of SI is rooted in the work of Mead. More specifically in his book *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, Mead (1934) outlined his conceptualization of the formation of the "self," which he considers to be a fundamental component of what is specifically *human* consciousness. According to Mead, the human "self" arises out of a social process and is necessarily socially produced. What is more, the self has a dialectical relationship with the 'organisation,' or

social groupings from which it arises, meaning that its existence and participating within the group will not only impact itself, but will also have an impact on the other selves in the group and thus potentially upon the group as an entity (ibid). For Mead, an individual becomes a 'self' only when she become self-conscious – that is, she adopts reflexive thinking, the recognition of her experience as their own, and is able to recognize the ways in which others view her and apply that attitude toward herself (i.e., see herself as others do). Just as human society exists in action, so too did Mead perceive of the self as not a mere product of interaction, but a process – something that is internally dynamic and ever-changing in relation to the conditions within which it exists, and upon which it acts (ibid).

Mead placed the significance of the concept 'gesture' as central to the genesis and existence of the self, and it is through this concept that the roots of SI become most clear. Mead defined gestures as social acts that serve as stimuli for the response of other beings – these can be attitudes, movements, etc., that illicit a response in another - but makes a distinction between 'gesture' and 'significant gesture.' According to Mead, it is by the existence, interaction with, and use of significant gestures – those gestures that are performed with the conscious intention to draw out of another/others a specific response – that the existence of the mind, intelligence, thinking, and thus self-consciousness, are possible.

Mead's conceptualization of 'gesture' is rooted deeply in Wundt's theory of the origins of language, which, according to Mead, draws an important link between gestures, or symbols, and meaning. The meaning associated with different symbols, which is socially determined, fosters the space for the development of selves. That is, the

implications of significant gestures, which -- if used effectively -- stimulate the responder to perceive of himself as others do, become the foundation of the mere possibility that an individual will become a 'self,' or self-conscious being.

According to Goffman (1997), all individuals have a performing capacity, which is exercised in different ways to live up to social norms and standards for how they should conduct themselves. He described this dynamic in terms of characters and roles. That is, due to the moral expectations to which individuals in our society are consistently compared, they perform a character. This character, although a performance, is "somewhat equated" with the individual's true self – it is not totally divorced from the individual's identity. That said, Goffman also observed that the character one performs is not always the same depending on the context, because individuals occupy various roles in society. Depending on the role the individual is currently filling, she will have to convey behaviours and qualities which fit with that specific role. In other words, the way one chooses to behave, or the characteristics she decides to perform, will change accordingly when she switches between her work role, personal role, volunteer role, and so on.

Just as one's character is not completely divorced from her true self, the different characters she exudes in her varying roles are not completely divorced from one another. Goffman explained that as different roles are 'activated' for different occasions, this allows the individual to possess conflicting qualities. Thus, the individual must be cautious to avoid 'role conflict,' or, expressing qualities of one of his/her many inactive roles that would be inappropriate for the active role. However, for Goffman this did not necessarily mean that zero overlap between role characteristics will exist. Instead, he

emphasizes that all of the selves that manifest in an individual's various roles are contained within our true self. Thus, when one role necessitates the dominance of one self or character over another, this does not imply the momentary complete silencing or pausing of the other selves. As Goffman explained, "even while the local scene establishes what the individual will mainly be, many of his affiliations will be simultaneously given little bits of credit" (p. 41).

Emotional labour

Arlie R. Hochschild's (2012) groundbreaking contribution to the sociology of emotions shed light on the negative impact that emotional labour in the service industry can have on workers. Her book, *The Managed Heart*, opened with commentary on Karl Marx's description of a young boy who worked in a wallpaper factory, demonstrating the way that modern wage labourers had become mere appendages of the machines with which they worked.[2] Through her study of the training and work of flight attendants, Hochschild demonstrated the common ground shared between the labour performed by the boy in the wallpaper factory, and workers situated in our more contemporary service-based economy. She defined *emotional labour* along lines similar to that of Marx's conceptualization of exploitation and alienation. That is, Hochschild's emotional labour involves the suppression of one's own feelings to produce an outwardly demonstrated emotion that will incite a desired emotion or 'state of mind' in others.

[2] Marx draws upon the testimony from the mother of the boy, in which she explains how she would have to spoon-feed him while he worked 16-hour days in the factory.

She continued to warn readers of the *emotional dissonance* - a tension between one's genuine, or felt, emotions and the performed emotions – that may develop within workers in the service industry. According to Hochschild, ongoing emotional dissonance within an individual could be harmful to their psychological well-being. This dissonance, as noted in an earlier section, is born from the dynamic in which control over very natural, human, behaviour is taken from the hands of the individual concerned, by corporations, bosses, managers. That is, conducting emotional regulation upon oneself via reflection and a desire to improve or change that way one feels or reacts to certain situations, is replaced by the way the individual is supposed to feel or perform their feelings in a given situation as dictated by their job training manual.

As noted by Cas Wooters (1989), Hochschild assumed a problematic divide between the private and public spheres, in which one's emotions can only exist authentically and freely if they are managed by the individual with no influence from outside authority; if there exists the presence of outsider guidelines for how the individual should regulate their emotions, this can only take the form of deliberate control and result in suffering. In her book, *Social Economies of Fear and Desire,* Valerie de Courville Nicol (2011) recognized this and agrees that Hochschild's formulation of emotional labour is too narrow and simplified. De Courville Nicol's perception of "emotion management" accounts for more positive interactions between the public and private spheres, and takes what could be considered a dialectical approach to understanding emotions, reminiscent of Erving Goffman's work on the self and self-presentation. She emphasized the potentially positive or neutral impacts of attempting to influence the

emotions and/or perceptions of others by presenting or managing one's own emotions in certain ways.

De Courville Nicol also discussed the potential danger of the "emotional display labour" – akin to Hochschild's surface acting mentioned earlier in the literature review chapter – that is often involved in frontline service jobs. There is a certain risk, given the likelihood that workers are required to place the needs of customers above their own, that they will come to disregard their own needs. To mitigate this, de Courville Nicol suggested that frontline service workers develop a method for detaching themselves from their work, to maintain their existence as individuals with unique needs. That is, she aimed to emphasize the fact that emotion management, or emotional labour, does not merely involve repressing or correcting one's feelings, but may also involve activation, active expression, and/or formation of one's desires. It is not only a repressive, but a creative force, that may be involved in what de Courville Nicol deems "healthy self-realization," (p. 6). She explained that even in situations in which the goal is to influence or manage the emotions of others, management of one's own emotions and visibly displaying emotion are not the only methods through which managing others can be achieved.

De Courville Nicol's perspective on emotion maintained that "emotional experience is governed by the anticipation of an outcome, not by the probability of its actualization" (p. 149). That is, all emotions are triggered by an anticipation of either pleasure or pain, and the context in which emotions arise, or the nature of the stimulus that triggers those emotions (i.e., as a direct reaction to an event or experience, vs. a reaction to an 'artificial' or 'manufactured' stimulus, such as imagining an unpleasant

event), does not determine the genuine or natural character of those felt emotions. De Courville Nicol presented this argument as a critique of Hochschild's claim that any emotions derived from practices of emotion management are artificial – and that only emotions produced when performing emotional labour are problematic – as this claim runs the risk of alienating the worker from their own emotions. Instead, de Courville Nicol insisted that even frontline service workers can experience genuine connection to the emotions that they are trained to display or convey while on-the-clock, and that is not necessarily a bad thing.

Conclusion

Considering again the seven AL techniques outlined above, AL comes across as an unique practice that applies many of the principles of SI, including the attention to meaning attached to gesture and the recognition of the potential significance of certain gestures, which are not only present but seem to shape the very practice of AL. I did not find any mention of SI in the AL literature, but it is interesting nonetheless that the same assumptions made by symbolic interactionists where human behaviour is concerned are consciously applied as the means by which AL is conducted. Furthermore, what is unique so far about AL in the context of gesture and SI, is that AL involves the act of one self being hyper-aware of gesture – that is, the listener interprets every gesture made by the survivor as significant and acts accordingly. The listener is similarly hyper-aware of their own conduct, and may come to treat all their behaviour as significant gesture. As mentioned above, applying this framework to AL will allow me to better understand the intricacies of AL, what AL means to the listener, and the effect it has on the listeners

themselves and their interpretation of the effect. Do the listeners' perspectives align more smoothly with Hochschild's or de Courville Nicol's conceptualization of emotion work and emotion management? Do they feel themselves consciously applying AL techniques to manage other's emotions? How do they perceive the dynamic of managing another's emotions?

Method and Methodology

This research was intended to grasp in depth the experience of volunteers and social workers working in Concordia's SARC, with the aim to make an unique contribution to debates on SV and methods for supporting survivors. More specifically, the subject of this study was the practice of AL and its use at SARC. I chose SARC as the location of my project for a few reasons. I was motivated to confine my scope to the CU community due to the characteristics highlighted in my contextualizing chapter, "Setting the scene." Especially compelling is CU's position among the forerunners in the initiative to improve conditions for survivors on campus compared to other Montreal universities, as is the extent to which SARC has developed into a robust centre for survivor support. To achieve a rich understanding of AL work, I combined interviews and an auto-ethnographic approach to participant observation, in which I underwent SARC's volunteer training and proceeded to volunteer as an active listener. This allowed me to gather the perspectives of several volunteers and social workers so as to be able to analyze and reflect upon the experience of active listeners first-hand.

Methodological approach

My methodology takes its cue from feminist scholars' efforts to challenge and change methodological tendencies dominant within the social sciences, especially those regarding issues of "objectivity" and researcher neutrality. According to Pillow and Mayo (2012), research that is considered feminist has its roots in a general intellectual questioning of "who has the right to write culture for whom," particularly concerning the societal issues that women face in their everyday lives (p. 7). While historically,

conducting research on a topic that is 'too close' to the researcher had been considered unscientific, or invalid, feminist research challenges that notion, since avoiding all issues close to researchers means that many things would go un-researched (9). Thus, some key features of feminist research include using pre-existing situations as the focus of the project and the source of data, and adopting heightened reflexivity so that the researcher critically examines and explores the nature of her research process. It also involves s greater focus on the everyday world and the lived experience of those studied. This research tends to be more dynamic and spontaneous, as the level of reflexivity involved may lead the researcher to decide on changes to the original research plan.

Feminist research can often be situated within Jackson's (1989) Radical Empiricism (Ellis, 2003). Radical Empiricism is a response to traditional forms of empiricism, which emphasize the necessity for a barrier between the researcher and her subject. In place of this, Jackson insisted that the interaction between those two domains is essential, as the traditional barriers only serve to create estrangement. Jackson continued to explain that radical empiricism comes to treat the experiences of the researcher as primary data – he asserts, "a self cannot be treated as a thing among 'things,' it is a function of our involvement with others in a world of diverse and ever-altering interests and situations" (ibid, p. 3). Jackson maintained that distancing ourselves from our fieldwork – to increase objectivity or put things into perspective – brings with it the risk of losing touch with the very thing we aim to understand (ibid). Such an approach to empiricism echoes that of feminist research as referenced above, regarding the positive potential of a more intimate relationship between the researcher and her object of study. Both assert that, contrary to the assumptions of more classical-

minded theorists, not only is it impossible for a researcher to be completely neutral towards her object, but to create an artificial distance to reach that neutrality risks the opportunity to obtain a meaningful understanding of it. This is the impetus behind each of these paradigms: the objective is rich insight into those subjects previously neglected precisely because they have always been considered "too close" to the researcher.

Literature on ethnographic methodology acknowledges that researchers may choose to adopt varying degrees of involvement in the community in which they are conducting their study, depending on the objectives of the project itself and the topic upon which it is focused (Adler, 1987; Jackson, 1989; Pillow & Mayo, 2012; Tedlock, 1991; Ellis, 2003). My role as researcher at SARC aligns best with Adler and Adler's (1987) description of 'complete membership.' Complete membership is considered to involve the greatest level of commitment on the part of researchers, as they immerse themselves in the group completely, becoming a full member. They thus come closer to "approximating the emotional state" of others in the group, than could researchers taking up a less-involved role (ibid, p. 67). In line with others adopting complete membership, I took the opportunity to "become the phenomenon" I was studying (ibid, p. 68). Along with membership of this kind comes a higher level of trust and acceptance from the other members of the group, a dynamic which is essential in an environment like SARC. The ethnographic component of my project, then, can be considered reflexive ethnography – a type of auto-ethnography in which researchers will "use the 'self' to learn about the other" (Ellis, 2003, p. 77). That is, by engaging will all their senses, including their bodies and felt emotions, they engage with the experiences of others to (critically) reflect on their own (ibid).

Adler and Adler (1987) discussed the potential dangers surrounding the relationship between different levels of researcher membership and bias. The scholars explained some of the classical concerns around ethnographic work more generally, namely the potential of the researchers "going native" or assuming the "natural attitude." Both situations involve the researcher aligning herself too closely with the group she is studying. In the former, she develops an "overrapport" with the group and becomes a full member, which may lead her to accept the views of other members uncritically. In the latter, she gets too comfortable with her surroundings and begins to take regularly-occurring events for granted, thus potentially failing to recognize their significance. In both situations, there manifests the concern of researcher bias, lack of critical reflection, and potentially missing important data as a result. Adler and Adler addressed these concerns, and pointed to the notion of objectivity: "scientific analysis does not occur within the realm of objective detachment" (p. 23). Rather, they explained, analysis is always and necessarily situated within the researcher's theoretical framework – or sociological perspective – and is an act which requires self-reflection and a periodic detachment from the subject of interest, no matter how immersed the researcher may be during periods of data collection. Put slightly differently, objectivity does not enhance self-reflection (ibid).

As noted by Goffman (1989) and many other qualitative researchers (see for example Ellis, 2003; Atkinson et al., 2011; etc.), a researcher with an emotional connection to her object may experience emotions that mirror those of 'natives' to the group, thus allowing her the more authentic insight into the group. What is more, emotional reactions that the researcher notices in herself could be indicative of areas in

the work that she needs to explore further (Atkinson et al., 2011). Ethnographers have also argued that recording one's emotions in her fieldnotes will make is easier to identify biases as she reads through them (ibid).

Personality & reflexivity

As a survivor of sexual assault my interest in this project was fueled by my personal experience. This posed potential risks to both my project and myself, as a certain level of bias could potentially skew my analysis, and diving into a subject as heavy as SV could have an impact on my mental health. On the other hand, my identity as a survivor fostered greater trust between myself and those at SARC. As for the risks to myself, I proceeded with great caution in navigating this project, prioritizing care for myself. I was very open with the social workers at SARC about my history, and was assured that I would receive their full support whenever I might need it. I also maintained regular appointments with a counselor from Concordia's Counseling and Psychological Services to further support my mental health. I thus took a proactive and preventative approach when embarking upon my fieldwork.

Regarding any potential bias, my survivor identity did not have much effect on the way in which I interpreted my data, as my focus was on the volunteer experience itself and not the outcomes of the journeys of any survivors with whom I spoke while working at SARC. In the unlikely event that my identity crossed paths with my work, I was open and reflexive regarding this matter in my field notes.

Research Steps

Ethnography

For this project, I spent 24 hours -- eight shifts at three hours each -- working in the drop-in area at SARC between March 15th and May 10th, which is where anyone looking for information, resources, or support, can visit without an appointment. I spent an additional 24 hours in training over the course of one week in February, prior to volunteering in the drop-in. Except for one shift, I took all my ethnographic notes immediately after, in a quiet space on campus, where I would record all my thoughts by hand in a notebook. There was one session where someone came in just to have a space but did not want to talk. I did not want to get too mentally involved in another activity, so I took that time to write down how I felt about that interaction. It is important to note that I used my ethnographic notes as supplementary to my interview data. That is, they are featured in my analysis in places where I found them useful for additional emphasis in agreeance with my interview data, or where my own experience provided a useful take in contrast with what my participants expressed. Given that my time spent as a listener was short compared to that of other participants, I decided to prioritize their voices over my own.

I also conducted an additional self-interview exercise to help deepen my understanding of my own experience as a researcher. For this exercise, I took time to respond to the same questions I asked my participants during their interviews. I did this after I had collected all of my other data. I did not include this interview data in my sample. Instead of conducting a proper verbal self-interview, I responded to my questions

on paper. Thus, my self-interview did not mirror exactly the conditions of those I conducted with my participants. This exercise was not specifically recommended by any of the auto-ethnographers I read. Rather, I used it more experimentally, as an opportunity to expand my understanding of my experience and enhance my own self-accountability as a researcher.

Interviews

I interviewed eight active listeners between January 23rd, 2019 and April 19th, 2019. Interviews lasted between 38 minutes and 73 minutes. The average interview length was 55 minutes. Participants were asked questions about their experiences as an active listener and how those experiences made them feel. They were also asked to reflect on how they handle certain situations and how they have come to be self-aware in the act of active listening. I created an interview guide based on my previous knowledge of SARC volunteer work, as well as the knowledge I gained from the literature on active listening and my theoretical framework. All interviews were semi-structured – I asked many of the same base questions to all participants, but each interview took on a unique shape as I prompted the interviewees to expand on certain aspects of their experience.

Inclusion criteria for participants included the following:

1) the individual must be a current or previous volunteer or social worker at SARC,

2) the individual must work, volunteer, or have volunteered, for the drop-in (active listening) or counseling service offered by SARC,

3) the individual must be 18 years of age or older.

There was one exception to these criteria, specifically under the second point. I came to know of one person interested in participating in my study who was not an active listener for SARC, but who had experience working as a listener in a survivor advocacy centre at another university in Montreal, as well as at Concordia's Centre for Gender Advocacy. This person found out about my study through word of mouth. In this case, recruitment resulted from a snowball effect (Morse, 2004). I used this data in two ways: 1) to further inform my knowledge on active listening, and 2) as a contrasting take on the practice in a setting similar to SARC.

All other participants were initially recruited using a purposive theoretical sampling technique (Morse, 2004). I originally leaned on my access to volunteers via a loose connection I previously established with the coordinator of SARC in the preceding summer of 2018. I communicated with prospective volunteer participants primarily via an email message that I crafted, and the director of SARC sent to her email listserv of current and past volunteers. Once the message was sent, participants contacted me expressing their interest in participating. An appointment for interview was promptly set up. During monthly volunteer meetings, I would remind everyone that the study was still being conducted and that anyone interested in participating was welcome to set up an appointment for an interview. The email was sent out in two waves, one in January and one in March. During our March volunteer meeting, one of the social workers expressed interest in being interviewed. I had not initially intended on interviewing the social workers at SARC until this moment, when I realized that their experience with AL could

be valuable to my understanding of the subject. I then reached out to both social workers directly via email, inviting then to participate in my study.

Participants were guaranteed confidentiality upon participation, meaning that their names are not disclosed in my report. Instead, I assigned each participant a fictitious name. All participants signed a consent form prior to beginning the interview.

Analysis

My analysis of the interview data followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis is an approach to studying qualitative data, in which patterns – or themes - are identified and analysed for the purposes of answering a research question or understanding certain aspects of a dataset. Thematic analysis, as per Braun and Clarke, is conducted in six phases. However, the scholars point out that thematic analysis is not always conducted in a completely linear fashion. That is, certain phases may overlap, or a researcher might find themselves going back to a previous phase after realizing something new in a more advanced phase (ibid). I used their guidelines as follows:

(1) *Transcribing and getting familiar with the data* - My analysis began as I transcribed the interview audio files myself. While transcribing, I would note down any interesting elements that could become potential codes and contribute to the answer to my research question.

(2) *Initial coding* – Upon finishing the transcriptions, I began coding my data for characteristics that seemed interesting and important. I paid special attention to the more technical elements of active listening, the role of the listener's self in the act of listening, and the impact of the work on the listener.

(3) *Potential themes* – After an initial coding of all interview data, I used an automatically-generated code map using qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA. This map helped me to better understand the relationship between my codes, as well as which codes were used most frequently. I used this, along with my familiarity with the data, to start grouping together codes into potential themes. I recoded the data according to these potential themes, of which there were four at the time.

(4) *Review of initial themes* – I used another feature in MAXQDA which generates a table compiling all the data coded into the different codes or themes. I transferred the data excerpts into an excel file to more easily rearrange things and better visualize how I wanted to construct my analysis section. Following the advice of Braun and Clarke (ibid), I also generated a thematic map by hand (see appendix), to create a visual representation of how the themes connected. This also helped me notice any gaps.

(5) *Defining and naming themes* – As a result of this process, I ended up collapsing two themes into one, with a total of three themes in the end: "Presentation of the self," "Holding space," and "Carrying stories." These themes then contained sub-themes, of which I created 10 in total.

(6) *Producing the report* – This is where I took the time to identify the most compelling excepts of the interview data and constructed a report of my findings accordingly. It is also in this phase that I integrated my experiences as a volunteer – drawing mainly on my ethnographic field notes – into my analysis section to provide a more robust illustration of active listening at SARC. My own experiences are represented in italics, separated from the main body of the text and aligned to the centre of the page, at the beginning of new sections.

Study Participants

Before proceeding with my analysis, I will describe my participants, briefly, and their experiences with AL. Many of them had previous experience with AL from other centres and/or workplaces, which impacted their experience at SARC and the how they related to my questions. Only two participants did not refer to previous AL experience. They were also the two volunteers who had been working at SARC the longest. When I started this project, SARC only had four volunteers running the drop-in. By the end of the February training session, SARC compiled a team of 10 volunteers, myself included. Out of these 10, I interviewed five volunteers, along with two social workers, and one volunteer with experience at another university's survivor advocacy centre, for a total of eight participants.

Volunteers

Michelle is the volunteer from another university's centre, which will be referred to as "the centre" in my results section. Now a student at Concordia, Michelle is also an AL volunteer at the Centre for Gender Advocacy at Concordia. While her experience was quite different from SARC volunteers and social workers, her interview provided an interesting opportunity to contrast the way different campus-based centres operate, and the impact that those differences seem to have on their respective volunteers.

Jill is one of SARC's first volunteers and has been with the centre for approximately four years. Working at SARC was where she was first introduced to AL and where she had

her first experiences as a listener. She has been around for the ups and downs of building a resource centre like SARC. She is pursuing social work in her studies.

Joey is the other volunteer who has been with SARC the longest, approximately three years. Joey is a Concordia student who learned about SARC and its need for volunteers through Jill, who used to be one of his classmates.

Alice is a graduate student at Concordia who used to volunteer at a listening centre at another university while completing her undergraduate degree. During her first year at Concordia, she heard of the need for volunteers at SARC. While motivated by the cause of supporting survivors, Alice was also interested in SARC because of her previous experience as an active listener.

Alex is a social work student at another university and began working at SARC as part of his internship placement. Alex has also had previous experience as a listener from working at Concordia's Centre for Gender Advocacy.

Amanda is a new volunteer at SARC and completed her training in February 2019. Although she is new to SARC, Amanda has AL experience from her job working on a crisis line. In her interviews, she referred to these past experiences frequently and compared them to her experiences at SARC.

Social Workers

Lucy was the first social worker at SARC and was hired nearly six years ago. Lucy is also the coordinator of SARC, and built it from the ground up. She has worked in a range of environments and navigated both shorter-term "crisis" situations, as well as longer-term counselling of survivors.

Olivia is a new addition to the SARC team and was hired as a social worker in January 2019. As this is the first time SARC has had more than one social worker -- Lucy was the only one until now -- Olivia received a very warm welcome, and has lifted a lot of weight off Lucy's shoulders. She currently takes care of most of the long-term counselling.

Results & Discussion

Presentation of the self

As my first task in understanding the experience of an active listener was to get familiar with what listeners do, I asked my participants about certain active listening techniques, how they react to certain situations or information that is being disclosed to them, and the types of thoughts that they have while listening. Following Mead's (1934) conceptualization, I found that becoming an active listener involves the creation of a new and unique self – new because it did not previously exist, and was borne out of a process of learning the rules for behaviour associated with a group, i.e., training, and unique because it involves active and continuous self-consciousness and consideration for how the other person, the survivor, perceives us, the listeners. This self-consciousness is most apparent in the period immediately following my training, as illustrated below.

Training Blisters

> *There are many things running through my head as I search for cues that will better guide me in how I should conduct myself, the things I should say. Slipping into the role of active listener is no easy task. It does not come entirely naturally. It takes careful consideration, rationalization. Am I talking too much? […] Is what I'm doing with my hands right now weird?* (Fieldnotes, p. 1, para. 2)

Nearly all the volunteers expressed a type of anxiety that accompanies the first few listening sessions post-training. The week-long training provides new volunteers with a plethora of knowledge on AL, i.e., what it is and how to do it properly, as well as SV and its impact on survivors, consent, oppression, cyber safety, how to fill out specific forms

in case a survivor comes needing help with them, and so on. At the end of the week, volunteers – myself included – can head home feeling overwhelmed, and the impending first shift in the drop-in can feel daunting. We just want to do well, say the right things, make people feel better, and most importantly not make them feel worse. One of the social workers, Olivia, remembered a time when she was a "baby social worker" and felt similarly: "when I first started out it was just like, I felt like every sentence I said and everything was gonna like shatter the person, and make or break the session and things like that" (p. 6, para. 6).

The awareness of gesture in the practice of active listening adds a unique layer to Mead's original conceptualization. Alex described his first few times active listening as being not just more in his head, but "more active on my self-awareness than on the other person" (p.4, para. 1). However, over time, Alex agreed that this self-awareness dissipated, and that he even found himself worrying less about what to say to survivors, "because I know it's not really about what I have to say, and it's just about making sure that they feel heard" (p. 4, para. 1). Alex is still cautious with some reactions he might have. For example, he tries not to react in a way that could be interpreted as judgemental, such as saying things like "oh, really?" in a surprised tone, when listening to a survivor's story.

Jill, on the other hand, expressed that certain things like body language, and other 'attending behaviours,' have become more automatic and feel more natural to her now, but she still has that thought in the back of her head "like, don't say the wrong thing and don't ruin their day even more than it already is right now" (p. 5, para. 4). Even though she has been an active listener with SARC for several years, she still pays a great deal of

attention to the way she formulates questions and paraphrases the survivor's dictation. In AL, most the listener's gestures are intended, at least from the perspective of the listener. Especially during the first few shifts, there is hardly a division between gesture and significant gesture. Listeners are trained to have a heightened consciousness regarding their self-presentation, the maintenance of which requires them to expend significant emotional energy.

I call these initial anxieties *training blisters*, like the blisters one might get on her fingertips while learning to play the guitar, or on the palm of her hands from rock climbing. If one continues to practice that skill, the blisters eventually callous over, and that part of the body where the blister first formed becomes more resilient to the thing that caused it. AL is a skill, a psychological skill, that must be strengthened like any other. When we leave training, we can become so involved in the feeling of the blister – the blow our mind takes from all of this new information – that our ability to carry out our task is stunted in the process. Through practice, the building of the skill and confidence in one's ability to use it well, the blister transforms from injury into aptitude. As Joey put it, "there's less of that need to be perfect […] it's just, I feel more confident in what I'm able to do" (p. 7, para. 1). Eventually, as the social workers in my sample also described, some attentive behaviours – like nodding one's head – become automatic, as listeners worry less about the impact of smaller gestures on the other person.

The one exception to this was Michelle, the participant who volunteered for a resource centre at another university in Montreal. She expressed that her training left her in a position where she felt "hyper micro-managed" (p. 4, para. 5). She mentioned that phase – the blister phase – that all new listeners go through, but Michelle "never got out

of that zone" (p. 5, para. 3). Something what particularly bothered her was a tool that the centre gave her in training called the "validation bank," (p. 4, para. 7) which consisted of various phrases that the centre considered sound examples of what a volunteer could say to help validate a survivor's experience. Michelle understood that the bank was intended to be a resource for the volunteers to refer to during a listening session. For her, however, it "just got in the way of feeling the situation" (p. 5, para. 1). She explained how the centre also made the volunteers practice the way they said "mhm", including the intonation they used when they said it. The combination of these micro-managed techniques for listening made Michelle feel that "in the very beginning, it was a performance, in the sense of... I'm performing the rules of what someone has told me about how to do it," and, "it was like all about, where are my legs, what am I doing, how is my face?" (p. 12, para. 4). To summarize how she felt, she said: "with [the centre] it was more like ‘ok I just wanna get this right. Like I wanna get an 85 on this exam, and I just wanna be fucking done with it’ And that’s what it sort of felt like, it felt like a test" (p. 5, para. 3).

Michelle’s example interestingly echoes the cautionary words of Hochschild (2012), when she warned her readers of the dangers of emotional dissonance. While, Hochschild argued, emotional labour has the potential to be useful, the influence of externally imposed rules have the potential to cause harm to labourers by creating a dissonance between their true emotions and those they are taught to feel or display on the job. This holds true, in some ways, in Michelle’s case. The rules she was given were not conducive to her supporting others; they felt unnatural to her. De Courville Nicol (2011) pointed out that Hochschild used data collected while flight attendants were still in

training, assuming that being in training has a very specific impact on one's perception of the tasks she is being asked to execute. That perspective is reflected in most of the data here, with the exception of Michelle's experience.

The training at SARC is consistent with the literature on active listening and emotion work. Trainees learn the techniques for active listening, more of which will be demonstrated below, and learn about the 'emotion culture' and 'emotion discourse' of our organization (Martin et al., 2008). That is, trainees learn that there are certain expectations for how to act in different situations, as well as the justification for why it is or is not appropriate to react to survivors in certain ways. However, at SARC trainees are not trained with validation banks or sessions for practicing our "mhm," but instead we are given the space to adopt our own style to active listening. My participants who underwent SARC's training were remarkably unanimous regarding the feeling of having some freedom in their approach to AL. Thus, these rules applied from an outside source are not inherently oppressive from the perspective of listeners. The feelings associated with training blisters are more of a reaction to the shock elicited by the challenging nature of the work, than a reaction to rules that are imposed on them. Michelle's case highlights something else, namely that the approach taken to training new listeners is important, and perhaps not one-size-fits-all.

The Balancing Act

> *I have never been so aware of the volume of my pencil as I write, or the pages of my book as I turn them* […] *I've never been so aware of my body language, the direction in which I face, and I've never had to strike the balance between giving just enough attention and not giving any.* (Fieldnotes, p. 1, para.2)

It feels even more important this time to be careful, and match the client's disposition. The quieter, the harder, the higher the risk, the easier it is to make them uncomfortable. (Fieldnotes, p. 2, para. 5)

While all the listener's gestures can be considered significant, they are also highly flexible. According to Mead, the aspect of a gesture that makes is significant is in the purposefulness behind it, the intention of the person performing it. Something that this research highlights is the heightened importance also placed on the *interpretation* of gesture in AL. For the listener, every gesture made by the survivor is interpreted as communicating something. While we understand that the survivor may not purposefully be making her body small by hugging her arms around her waist, for example, we interpret it as if the survivor intends for us to react a specific way in relation to that behaviour. The unintended nature of certain gestures does not imply that they are unimportant. The opposite is true for active listeners. Gestures of this nature – which are perhaps not significant for the survivor, but are significant for the listener – often say more than what the survivor communicates verbally. That is, the more subliminal messages conveyed through body language or tone of voice give us valuable insight into what the survivor needs and how we should care for her in the moment.

The term "active listening," implies that AL is more active than it truly is. That is, AL is only "active" to the extent that it is not completely passive: the listener is focused and engaged in what the survivor is saying. Volunteers learn various "attentive behaviours," like eye contact, nodding along as someone talks, indicating attention via small utterances such as "mhm," and so on. As useful as attentive behaviours are, one can easily go overboard. As Alice described it:

> "I really like I try to look them in the eyes. And I try, without it being, 'I'm looking at you! I'm staring at you.' But like, more like, I understand. And I think I move my head a lot, like 'yes'. And I don't talk a lot, I try to restrain myself from talking as much as possible. Sometimes maybe I say 'ah, ok,' or stuff like that. But even then I try not to make too many sounds. Because when you say something, like 'ok,' sometimes the person will stop and be like 'ok, what were you trying to say,' 'oh I was just saying ok,' you know? So it kind of breaks the flow of the conversation" (p. 9, para. 4).

In fact, it was also Alice who explained to me the usefulness of silence, consistent with the literature on "effective pauses" (McMains, 2002), or what Alice called "useful silence" (p. 8, para. 1). Although AL usually involves a lot of listening to what someone else has to say, being an active listener involves more than listening. Sometimes people just need to share a space with supportive people. As Alice explained, a survivor might just need a couple minutes to collect her thoughts, to process what happened or what has been said so far in the listening session. It can be difficult as an active listener to, firstly, decipher whether a given silence is a useful one, and secondly, not break a useful silence. As Alice said,

> "Silence can be easily awkward. But it's awkward for who? It's awkward for the listener, not the person who's experiencing that. So, I think, sometimes listeners just want to break the silence, because it feels awkward to them. They're like 'Oh my god I should be helping, I should be saying something'" (p. 7, para. 5).

There is an important balance to strike between the active side of active listening, and the more patient, listening side.

Many participants also described a need to observe the non-verbal indicators of how the survivor is feeling in order to properly conduct oneself as a listener in a way that will make the survivor most comfortable. This technique was often referred to as mirroring – when listeners observe the body language, energy, tone of voice, etc., of the survivor, and match it in their own behaviour. While mirroring was explained in the literature as restricted to words or phrases (McMains, 2002), at SARC we are taught to apply mirroring on many other levels. Lucy explained that one of her primary tasks in session as a social worker is to assess where the survivor stands in the healing process, what she needs, and the level of risk involved in her situation, regarding, for instance, any potential for her to harm herself, or whether the perpetrator is still actively involved in her life. However, Lucy's job is not just to assess, but to comfort. She must get through all the assessment items without the process being cold or discomforting. She will even tailor her approach based on the survivor's verbal and non-verbal indications of her comfort level. For example, she says, "if I notice that the person's like really nervous and can't make eye contact, then I won't either, and I'll like ask them questions and be writing notes like this and not look at them, so that's its easier for them to verbalize stuff" (p. 5, para. 9). Thus, the practice of AL involves a hyper self-awareness of the listener's body and body language. In other words, it involves conscious consideration of the way we present ourselves. It requires consistent monitoring of our performance and the impression we provide of our role as active listeners.

The Calm Exterior

Goffman's (1997) work on the presentation of the self becomes most clearly relevant in the listeners' notion of the 'calm exterior.' In addition to the balancing act described just

above, and despite the nervousness that is symptomatic of the training blisters, active listeners are taught to present themselves in a way that encourages the survivor's comfort. There are certain expectations for how listeners are supposed to act in front of survivors. This was alluded to above in the discussion of mirroring, which is one way that listeners can present themselves to best foster a safe environment. However, even in times of crisis – when the survivor is in an unsafe situation or possibly suicidal - listeners need to act in a way that will de-escalate and relax the situation. In those cases, mirroring is not advised. When Amanda spoke about her experience working with people who were suicidal, she said, "I felt that if I didn't panic then they wouldn't panic" (p. 4, para., 1). The technique here is portraying a state of being that you hope will influence the other person to act similarly. The listener's job reflects that of the search and rescue volunteers described by Lois (2001). On the search and rescue teams, the volunteers often operate in highly stressful situations, involving injuring, worried family members, and so on. Sometimes, active listeners at SARC are presented with similar situations. In both contexts, the task of the volunteers or listeners is to conduct themselves in a way that will diffuse the tension of the situation as much as possible.

For Amanda, it was quite easy for her to remain calm in a crisis. For others, it was not always so easy to project an exterior that did not reflect exactly how they felt on the inside, even outside of crisis situations. Something that Olivia said when mentioning how certain attentive behaviours have become more automatic, was, "I recognize that I do have my like therapist face," (p. 12, para. 11) and then later, "I think what most therapists, or social workers, get good at, is not letting that show verbal – or, non-verbally, right? On your face, right? Like you can still internally be like 'oh, mm' but

that's not gonna show on your face" (p. 13, para. 1). However, Lucy's reflection on the matter was quite different. She explained to me that filtering her reactions to what she is hearing is "actually one of the harder things. It's like because I think I have one of those faces that like, everything is visible like everything I'm thinking, and so I get really worried that like. Like I don't ever wanna look upset or shocked or um sad in front of a client" (p. 5, para. 15). She continued to describe how it is even more difficult on days where she is feeling especially tired or low-energy. On those days, when she has to pay special attention to her body language, to make sure it is not too closed off, or keep her face "like pleasant and neutral and like, I'm listening face" she finds the work more draining (p. 6, para. 1).

It could be argued that AL is a performance, or that listeners are acting. However, I asked participants directly if they felt that sometimes they were performing as an active listener, and the response was overwhelmingly to the contrary. Amanda's response was very clearly put:

> "I don't have to like perform it. 'Cause you're already in that kind of space, you're just like, ready to be empathetic and present. Um… And so, it's kind, for me it's kind of like impossible to fake, like if I'm being present with someone, um, and they're telling me something horrible, like, I will be horrified. But then it's… I think it's more taming the outrage at what's happening to the person, more than performing the emotion" (p. 7, para. 7).

Other participants gave similar responses, in the sense that they would not call AL performing *exactly*, although recognizing that they cannot be perfectly candid in their sessions with survivors. Even though it may not feel like a proper performance, all

participants expressed in one way or another the necessity of filtering their emotions, or dialing back what they were feeling internally, before projecting that feeling externally. In AL, empathy is key – and we will dive deeper into the role of empathy in the next section – but even that is filtered. Lucy agreed that empathy is important, so long as it is "controlled empathy" (p. 6, para., 9). As Joey said, it is a matter of "just trying to display your compassion without going too far" (p. 6, para. 10), where "too far" is getting emotional in front of the survivor, to the extent that it takes over the space that is meant for the survivor to use. Here we see bits of Hochschild's 'feeling rules' shine through, as listeners describe their hypothetical felt emotions in relation to the emotions that are considered conventional in the SARC context.

The phenomenon of "performance" in active listening points to Goffman's theory that all individuals contain a performing capacity, which they use to effectively follow the expectations associated with the roles that they occupy. Although many listeners may not define AL as a performance, there is nevertheless an element of performance involved. After all, performance -- according to SI -- is integral to all social interaction. Through the filtering of expressed emotion and navigation of SARC's feeling rules, sometimes listeners perform the absence of expression. In sum, as authentic as their motivations to restrain themselves may be, listeners continue to perform for survivors.

Holding space

The training that is required for all SARC volunteers clearly responds to the literature on the needs of survivors, especially that literature explaining the importance of the character of the response a survivor receives when disclosing her experience. Sometimes,

at SARC, we are the first people to whom a survivor decides to talk. The term “holding space” is something that was first introduced to me by Joey back in January when I interviewed him, and came up again during my training. Listeners frequently reference the concept of space, and the importance of providing space for survivors. Following Joey’s interview I started asking participants to describe to me what that meant for them, and what they think it looks like to “hold space.”

Openness

It is clear that much thought goes into constructing a safe space. I lean back in the office chair and rest my back against the pillows. My hands are a bit clammy, but mostly because I run cold. Problems feel smaller here. (Fieldnotes, p. 2, para. 9).

Alex described the act of holding space as providing a place, physically and emotionally, where the survivor feels that she can express herself fully. For Alex, this space could be summed up as follows:

> "like you’re allowed to be upset you’re allowed to be angry, you’re allowed to uh, say like, I don’t know, ‘fuck this faculty member,’ you know? Like just kind of allowing people to not feel like they have to monitor how they are reacting to an event that the whole world wants to monitor how people react to it and tell people what they should’ve done or should do. And I think it’s just about trying to undo that" (p. 5, para, 3).

However, Alex alluded to the balancing act that is involved in the process of creating this space, by pointing out that it's a matter of helping them feel comfortable or "softly giving that permission" (p. 5, para. 3) to get comfortable and express themselves, without being aggressive. That is, the point is not to insist that the survivor be comfortable or expect her to get comfortable, but rather providing the space where getting comfortable is an option.

For many participants, this required an ability to leave behind any ontological preconceptions about how survivors *should* react, what they *should* do with their situation. Listeners run the risk of what Goffman called 'role conflict.' As, according to Goffman, individuals hold many roles in their life, it is possible that they will accidentally let qualities of one of their many roles slip through while occupying a role for which they are not relevant. For example, I am an active listener at SARC, but I am also a student and an activist. It would be an unhealthy practice and a potentially harmful one, if I were to allow my perspectives as an activist slip through while I am supporting someone at SARC. Does that mean that my opinions never come to mind during listening sessions? Of course not. I have a clear position on what I think needs to be done to fight SV. It is a matter of not expressing those opinions that is important, as to avoid pushing the survivor towards solutions that I think are best, or making the session more about myself than her. Therefore, to use Goffman's terms, I do my best to avoid any conflict between those roles of mine.

Amanda explained that the most important component of holding space is fostering an openness within herself. This means not having any judgements, and being "willing to receive whatever the person has to let out" (Amanda, p. 5, para. 4). Jill talked about how something that is stressful for her is not knowing what is going to come through the door – is this person in a crisis situation? Is she upset and angry and needing to let that out? Is this person just stressed and needs a place to decompress? That is something that I have also felt during my time in the drop in. Anytime you hear an unfamiliar voice, you are alerted to the fact that this may be someone who needs your help, but as Jill said "you don't have any background information on what's coming in"

(p. 5, para. 6). As listeners, we are tasked with figuring out what the survivor needs, and it is frequently the case that we have to draw it out of her, and deduce her needs from her body language, her energy, or any information she gives us. It is counterproductive to impose our judgements. Michelle said it well: "I should just be a blank slate that they can bounce off of" (p. 4, para. 1). Are any of us truly a blank slate? The data presented thus far emphasizes the opposite. That is, listeners are constantly tasked with filtering their own emotions and opinions. However, we do our best to play the role of a blank slate, to make ourselves as blank and open as possible, for those we support. De Courville Nicol's (2011) concept of "healthy self-realization" achieved through emotion work applies here (p.6). While it may involve the suppression of certain opinions or states of mind, emotion work mandated by an organization, workplace, or field of work has the potential to be productive, via the opportunity it presents to become more familiar with one's emotions.

Hochschild (2012) briefly mentioned that it may be possible for emotional labour to take on a positive character. However, she was not optimistic regarding this potential in the context of the capitalist economy. For Hochschild, the triumph of the service industry left us in the world of the "managed heart," where most jobs involved emotional labour, and authenticity became an increasingly rare, sought-after aspect of life. More and more, we came to celebrate the "unmanaged heart," and interactions in which smiles, for example – especially from service workers – were genuine. Considering the present context, the most positive potential for emotional labour Hochschild spoke of involved "healthy estrangment," in which a worker consciously and purposefully distanced herself from her emotional labour to foster a clear division between herself and her work. The heart of volunteers and social workers at SARC is a managed one. SARC, however, is a

specific context, where we, the listeners, manage *our* hearts so that survivors can have a space where they do not have to manage theirs.

Guiding, but lightly

Listeners are also taught to refrain from giving any advice –with the exception of the social workers – as we are not trained therapists. Many volunteers find this quite difficult in the beginning, myself included. As Joey said, "it's very easy to get into that therapeutic, giving advice relationship, kind of mood, and that's, that's always the kind of hard part, if, having to refrain from doing that. And of course anybody who wants to give advice or help out is always doing it with compassion […] But we have to understand that we're only there to provide the absolute basic kind of necessities" (p. 8, para. 6). Instead, listeners are advised to, at most, help guide survivors toward their own solutions, by asking prompting questions like "what do *you* think you should do?" The importance of space also plays into the rationale behind wanting to avoid dictating solutions to survivors. In my time as a listener, I have found it impedes on the space. It sets limits to where the conversation can go and influences the extent to which a survivor will be willing to get comfortable or open up. Even when offering resources to a survivor, Alice is careful about being too suggestive: "I still have to open the door for some resources that might be helpful without pushing it too hard, without saying 'oh you should go there' but rather 'did you know that this resource existed?'" (p. 3, para. 1). When a survivor asks her what she should do about her situation, Alice will be clear with her, saying something like "well, it depends where you're at," (p. 3, para. 3) and then informing her about the different options available, so that she can choose for herself.

However, it is common for survivors to come in and ask “what should I do?” I was faced with a case like this, and as someone new to AL, who also has a history with sexual violence, I found it very difficult to hold back my instinct to give advice. Michelle explained that, in her opinion, successfully holding space is indicated by "getting up to that point where someone is going to ask me for advice" (p. 11, para. 1). However, she also said that "I don’t wanna give advice because that holds me accountable" (p. 11, para. 1). While Alice and Michelle are very cautious in this process, Amanda is comfortable providing survivors with lighter suggestions. For Amanda, the task of guiding is more about transparency: "the main thing that I’m trying to do is just to make sure that the person knows that it’s not anything, like anything I would suggest or anything I would say, it’s… like they can take it or leave it, like it’s not something that I’m imposing on them" (p. 3, para. 6).

Guiding usually consists of asking survivors more questions to get them thinking for themselves about possible solutions. I tend to gently insert suggestions into my questions by asking things like, “would you be comfortable with talking to [person] about this?” and waiting to see how they respond to that. It is, however, a very difficult tactic to master. I have found myself in moments where I am asking a lot of questions, only to receive short answers that do not get us any closer to a solution. I had one interaction where the person had very limited options, because her situation – involving a student from another university and ambiguous advances that occurred off-campus – did not fall within the domain of university policy. In times like these, one might have to go ask the coordinator of SARC for advice, which is what I did. Sometimes guiding is just not

possible. Michelle, who has volunteered as a listener at, at least, two different centres, still struggles with it:

> "I haven't really had enough experience to properly get to the point where, as I'm going through the emotion and the experience, they're navigating their own, like you know, like a guided navigation. I'm not really good at that. I'm able to connect, but getting them to an end space, I don't know where the end space is. I don't know where they wanna go, I don't know how to get them there. So, I haven't figure that part out really, I'm still learning that" (p. 11, para. 1).

Not only is it a difficult tactic to master, but it also contradicts our training with respect to the use of significant gestures. We want to influence how survivors feel, to the extent that they are comfortable, but we do not want to influence their decisions. In those moments when a survivor is trying to decide on what action to take, our use of gesture becomes even more critical – a bit of doubt shown in our facial expression could raise doubt in the survivor. It is important to remain neutral. In those moments, our use of significant gesture changes character. As we intend for the survivor to interpret our behaviour in a certain way, the message we want to communicate is of an unique nature: supportive neutrality, lack of dictation, blank slate.

"Just pure supportive"

> *I do not repress myself in any meaningful way. I simply put someone else first. Once I could do that, a lot of the anxious thoughts began to disappear. Everything faded to the background and it was the client, their thoughts, and my help* (Fieldnotes, p. 1, para. 4).

When I asked Jill about what 'holding space' meant for her, and what it looks like to hold space, she talked about attentive behaviours and comfort, and then she said: "I think

that's like, the ideal situation is just support. Just pure supportive" (p. 4, para. 7). In the end, what this amounted to was, in part, the ability to use all the tactics learned in training, but also to being genuine in one's efforts to help. This involves a level of self-awareness and self-honesty allowing listeners to admit when they are not the right fit for a case, or when they are able to set themselves aside in a healthy manner.

As Michelle spoke at length about moments when she would start to feel emotional during a listening session, she explained that the discomfort that ensued made her "not a good supporter," (p. 4, para. 1) because it took her focus away from the person needing her help. Many participants took for granted the importance of setting aside their own needs to provide the best support. It was an absolute necessity and they recognized it as such. Joey explained that even when something a survivor says is particularly striking, the priority is "trying to yourself not get emotional, and realizing you have to maintain some level of professionalism, and get the person to where they need to be…" (p. 3, para. 4). Alternatively, Amanda explained that even when it came to being self-aware and potentially worrying about her performance as an active listener, for her that was not important, whether she was doing well or not. She explained, "In that moment, it's not about me, and it's not about… if I'm being good or not. It's more about what is their need, and how can I, like what's the best I can do with what I have?" (p. 4, para. 5).

In more intense situations, putting oneself aside can be more difficult, as was the case for Jill, who described when she first started volunteering and felt emotional about the experiences that were being disclosed to her. However, as difficult as it may be, the logic is still the same. As Jill put it "I don't really see it as a bad thing, it's more like being focused on someone. I see it as like, this isn't, like let's not be selfish, let's focus

on someone else" (p. 4, para. 5). She explained that not only should the focus be on the survivor and not herself, when she is in the active listener role, but shifting the focus to herself would not be helpful for anyone involved in the situation: "my emotions are not gonna help anyone right now, and they're not gonna help me and they're not gonna help, yeah, so I guess I don't really see it as a bad thing" (ibid).

Empathy

As mentioned in the previous section, Lucy explained to me that, for her, as important as empathy is, it is just as important to control that empathy, to not let it overpower you. This is a theme that echoes Bodarenko's (2017) fieldwork with mental health workers, where the researcher found that workers would exercise surface acting or deep acting according to whether it would benefit the client. Olivia, however, clarified:

> "I don't think you can be in this field, and I don't think you can be, an effective active listener if you're not coming from empathy as a very base. Like, yes, the reflecting and the paraphrasing and the summarizing, and all those things, are very important. But if you're not doing that empathy, it doesn't matter [...] that's sort of the main ingredient" (p. 14, para. 3).

It was interesting to find empathy so central to the work at SARC, as it is not given the same amount of attention in the literature on emotion work or active listening. De Courville Nicol did, however, speak to the potential in having a genuine connection to the emotions that frontline workers display to others, which could be productive and contribute to the "healthy self-realization," mentioned earlier (p. 6). This idea is consistent with the more 'empirical' (non-theoretical) literature on emotion work, such as

Froyum's (2017) discovery that volunteers' ability to connect emotionally with their clients was imperative to their sustenance as volunteers, something that was also reflected in Kolb's (2014) ethnographic work with advocates for women who have experienced abuse.

It could be argued that the ability to feel that empathy easily, to use it productively in a setting like SARC, is rooted in personality traits. Michelle alluded to this idea when explaining how she can operate well in a crisis and use her skills there, but struggled more with providing support on a more long-term basis:

> "I have no problem in a crisis; no matter how violent, no matter how bloody, all that stuff. It's ok. I'd lock down, and I do it, like it doesn't feel like anything. After, it might feel like something and then everything. But in the moment of crisis, when I have to take charge of the crisis situation, that's fine. So, I began to think, someone like me who might be able to do crisis and trauma, might not actually be very good at doing continuous support. Like maybe those are two different things, and two different types of brains go with those types of fields" (p. 13, para. 3).

Lucy also advanced a similar theory, where she felt that she would not have been able to continue doing the volume of long-term counselling that she was doing before SARC hired another social worker. Now that Olivia has taken on most of that counselling work, Lucy explained that she also thinks she is better tailored for crisis work. For her, the former is too draining:

> "I guess I think there's something about that that I find difficult, whereas the, like, crisis emergency response piece is like, you can see, like there's something that

> like changes, or that you can do right away with like an outcome, whereas that like longer-term counselling is like, there's not necessarily going to be any shift, or any positive change. And it might not be visible, and it might never happen, or it might happen in like a little bit in six months" (p. 8, para. 8).

She said that for her to continue to work the way she did before, when she was the only social worker, would have been unsustainable.

For some listeners in this study, controlling empathy, while rationalized and necessary, is still a difficult and draining process, but for others it is just par for the course. Alice, for example, fell into the latter category:

> "even when I feel sad, I mean I don't feel *sad,* it's just the empathy. It's just you know where the person is at, and sometimes yes you get to feel it to a certain extent, but it doesn't dominate me […] But if I were to be overwhelmed by that feeling, then I would stop the listening. Because it would not be beneficial to them, would not be beneficial to me" (p. 10, para. 2).

The connection between the listener's true self and listener self is not only clear in the utility of empathy, but the utility of empathy makes it clear that this connection is necessary to provide high quality active listening. As mentioned earlier, Goffman (1997) explained that while one occupies a specific role, "many of his affiliations will simultaneously be given little bits of credit," (p. 41). That is, certain characteristics that might be more central to another role will still shine though at particular moments, even if they are not central to the role currently being performed. This is certainly the case with empathy in active listening, and in fact what is perhaps most important is that

empathy is central to the listener's true self. That is, the general perspective communicated to me throughout this study was that someone who does not feel empathy for those who have suffered through sexual violence has no business in a supporting role. Empathy, for those that I interviewed, is key to who they are as individuals. One's true self must be connected, via empathy, to the listener self, otherwise his or her motives come into question.

This highlights Cas Wooters (1989) criticism of Hochschild's (2012) 'problematic' divide between the private and public spheres, where for Hochschild, emotion work – managing and regulating one's emotions – in the private sphere is fine, but applying this work in the public sphere, especially to satisfy one's boss, is potentially harmful. The connection between the private and public spheres of emotion management -- as de Courville Nicol (2011) calls it -- can foster a more positive collaboration between one's inner emotions and the way she displays them for others. This is something considered necessary by active listeners, and hardly ever negative, so long as the listener attends to the strength of the connection while in session.

That said, while a complete division between the private and public sphere may be problematic, the risk of emotional dissonance and other emotional "injuries," – such as burnout – still exists. Lucy highlighted the potential for such risk in her comment on the unsustainability of having only one social worker at SARC. While the empathy-driven connection between the public and private may be the fuel that maintains some listeners, it is also the very thing that, if exploited too heavily, can put the fire out. One of the fundamental issues that Hochschild (2012) found with emotional labour under capitalism was the lack of control workers had over their working conditions. That is, in an

economy where billionaires and the profit motive control production – how much of a product will be produced and when – emotional labour is exercised to fulfill the desires of the billionaires and the demands of the profit motive. Hochschild cautioned against emotional labour that is mass produced and subjected to the whims of those just mentioned. In the context of SARC, it is crucial to attend to the growing workload that Lucy and Olivia will face, as more students learn about SARC and decide to seek out support.

Carrying their stories

> *I try to make it clear that my heart is open for survivors – they can hold as much space in it as they want; they can stay as long as they like* (Fieldnotes, p. 3, para. 4).

The experiences that are disclosed to listeners are sometimes filled with heavy, painful details that are difficult to hear and forget. Some listeners have developed self-care skills that help them to not let survivors' experiences weigh them down. The task of holding space can have a dangerous impact on a listener's mental health, morale, supportive capacity, and so on. As Michelle put it: "To me, supporting someone is about, it's not just about hearing their story, it's about carrying their stories - it's exhausting, like you hold it in your body, you hold it with them" (p. 5, para. 1). Later in the interview, she returned to this theme: "It's space, it's on my body, it's in my head, it's in my heart, it's in my chest, it's, it's everywhere. You're holding it" (p. 9, para. 1).

The weight

Joey explained his experience with the weight of some of the stories he has heard: "I don't think it's… In my personal opinion, I don't think it's possible to not have some of it

come home with you a little bit. I've been thankful enough that… nothing's really bothered me too much where it's stayed with me more than a day…" (p. 4, para, 13). While some supporters, like Joey, do not find the work especially heavy, others, like Jill, have had a different experience. Jill spoke at length about one of the first sessions she had as a listener, when SARC was a new fixture on campus. She found the session emotionally intense, and needed support for herself immediately after. She said, "I really had to lean on the service assistant to kind of look for something, 'cause I felt like I was like 'oh man, I'm taking a lot of this with me, I'm like taking a lot of it with me when I leave,' and I didn't know how to like kind of differentiate that" (p. 2, para. 3).

Sometimes Jill would even have a more physical reaction to sessions that she found more stressful or intense. As she deals with her own mental health struggles outside of her work with SARC, her body will respond to stressful stimuli in the form of shakiness, migraines, and so on. She recounted a time when she had to accompany a survivor to the police station and help her though the process of filing a police report:

> "that experience, there was one that was just really really bad, and the questions they were asking and, like, oh it was really bad. I ended up having like a really physical like emotional reaction, like I was like shaking, I had like a migraine, and I'm like sitting here with a survivor who it's like, oh my god, like how do, how do I help in this situation like if I'm having this reaction, what reaction much they be going through right now? So yeah, it was a terrible, it was hard, some of them are really hard" (ibid).

The interaction between one's listener self and true self becomes important again when considering the impact that some listeners' conversations with survivors might have on

them. It has already been explained that when in the listener role, our connections to our other roles and our true self are not completely severed. The impact that certain interactions with survivors can have on us, and the fact that some listeners have trouble leaving what they have heard at work, is just proof of that.

Self-care

> *You are self-aware, but not for yourself.* (Fieldnotes, p. 1, para. 3).

Olivia admitted that she learned the importance of self-care the hard way, after facing a burnout earlier in her career:

> "there was a time where I think I wasn't as good at maintaining boundaries. I took a lot of stuff on. And so that, I think through that experience, and having like getting close to a burn out and having to take a break from work for a while I think that really helped me. Because at that time I realized I wasn't taking care of myself, like so I've, it's really been a major growing opportunity for me to realize that my physical health matters too and my diet matters and my sleep matters" (p. 4, para. 3).

Luckily, both social workers pass this lesson on to the volunteers by consistently reminding us of the importance of self-care. At every monthly volunteer meeting, we are each asked to name one thing that we have done in the past week to take care of ourselves. For me it is usually allowing myself to rest when my body is telling me that is

what I need. It is easy, in a field like this, for the needs of others – i.e., survivors – to take precedent over yours, even as volunteers. Jill recalled a situation in which

> "we had someone who was coming in and always wanting to speak with me, but we didn't have this limit of like one hour sessions, so they were going to like 2 hours or more, and like every week, so I spent a total of like 4 or 5 hours with one person, and I was just like realizing, oh, I'm hungry, I haven't eaten today" (p. 6, para. 7).

Even our self-care, however, is not just about us. Everything that we do, self-care included, helps us be better supporters, which acts as further encouragement to keep up a regular self-care practice. During our training session in February, I started to feel overwhelmed, not by the content of the training, but by the concentration of our discussions. That is, we spent long days, several in a row, discussing sexual violence and its impact on survivors. Just a month prior, in addition to my history with SV, I had an unfortunate and impactful encounter with a man at a bar. All of the old wounds were re-opened, and I felt deeply the discussions about rates of sexual violence and the banalization of SV deeply. I decided that, before I was to go forward and be a supporter, I needed to have a discussion with someone about what happened to me. On the last day, I asked Olivia if she had some time to talk about something, and we went to her office and talked it out. I felt a weight lift almost immediately. We are lucky volunteers in the sense that my experience being supported by Olivia is not uncommon. As we all understand how heavy this work can be, how important it is to take care both physically and emotionally, we are all supportive of one another. As Alex put it,

> "Yeah no I—you can tell both of [the social workers] understand the importance of, like the weight of this work, if that makes sense. And it doesn't feel like, um… I don't know, some like social work organizations can feel kind of like a factory, where just people go in and then they talk and then come out, and then all the workers are kind of burnt out. And it's just like, here does not have that vibe, which is great" (p. 8, para. 3).

De Courville Nicol (2011) described a potential threat that 'emotional display labour,' – what Hochschild called 'surface acting' – the act of displaying an emotion that one does not genuinely feel inside. De Courville Nicol explained this in the context of frontline service jobs, where workers might start placing needs of the customer above their own, to an unhealthy extent. In AL, we see that there is a danger to not taking care of oneself. However, this danger generally does not come from displaying emotions not representative of how one truly feels. The danger is more often found in an inability to recognize when listeners need rest – or that they are working under conditions in which they are unable to rest when they need it.

All worth it

It feels rewarding when you see the person begins to calm, rationalize, come to their own conclusions […] This work is highly improvisational and tiring, but worth it. (Fieldnotes, p. 1, para. 3).

The last question that I asked in most of the interviews was: "Overall, do you find this work rewarding?" Not one participant said "no." In the end, all the potential stress, and the weight of the stories we hear, is unquestionably worth it when we stop to think about

how much survivors benefit from our work. It is not always clear that the people we support are feeling better, or improving in any way – they do not always express that – but when it is clear, when someone has visibly improved, even in just the slightest way, it is one of the best feelings. As Lucy put it, even after being in the field for several years, "there's moments like that, that I'm like, 'oh yes, ok, this is awesome,' or like when someone leaves my office and they are just like so relieved or they've like figured something out, or, um, something's more clear to them, or they don't feel so alone anymore [...] that's really nice..." (p. 11, para. 1).

In response to the question above, Jill described a situation in which a person came into the drop-in and did not want to talk about sexual violence, or any experience of the like. This is not uncommon. Sometimes, the person is not yet in the place to discuss her experience directly, but she needs to be in a place that feels safe and supportive for a little while. Jill proceeded to make small talk about the weather and school, and she felt that, at the time, she was not doing much to help the person. She received an email later, from that person, thanking her and letting her know that she appreciated her being there. She said, "at the time I didn't think I did anything, but you know. Just the fact that it was something, I guess" (Jill, p. 10, para. 1). Amanda described it as follows: "it's really just the fact that I was there when someone needed, not me, but just someone" (p. 6, para. 7).

Olivia explained that even when her work is more difficult, that does not off-set how rewarding she finds the work in general. In fact, she said "it just makes them, the other parts, more amazing" (p. 18, para. 7). She continued to speak to the inspiration she feels from her interactions with her clients and watching them grow: "the resiliency of the human spirit is not something that I think people get to witness in a way I do" (ibid).

Even Michelle, who decided the work is not for her, gave an agreeable response. She said, "I'd be hard pressed I think to find a person to say that [it's not rewarding] … I mean come on, you're trying to help human suffering" (p. 14, para. 3). She was right. I was "hard-pressed" to find someone who felt that working as an active listener in the field of sexual violence was not rewarding in some way.

The AL self is not just unique due to its heightened self-conscious qualities, but also because this self is created and maintained completely at the service of others, and all by choice. There is much we can learn about human behaviour, care, and care work, from the practice of AL. There is plenty to learn about how we run our care services. Most of the active listeners I spoke with for this study are volunteers, meaning they are not paid. They are not paid, but are all glad, myself included, to continue the work for its role in the support of survivors on campus. The value of this work cannot be overemphasized.

Mead spoke of a dialectical relationship between selves and their organizations, or the social groupings through which they develop. The relationship between the AL self and SARC is a clear example of this. The very thing that forms them also depends upon them for success.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to fill a gap in the sociological literature pertaining to sexual violence on Canadian campuses and the individuals who support survivors. Prior to this study, one could find literature on many related subjects: sexual violence and its roots in society, the impact of sexual violence on those who survive it, the importance of supporting survivors, the role of university administration in ending sexual violence, emotional labour and its impact on the labourer, volunteering, support work, peer support and active listening. Yet I was not able to find one article that situated the combination of these subjects in the university setting. The explanation for this could be that on-campus survivor support funded by universities is a younger phenomenon. As far as active listening is concerned more generally, sociologists have yet to write about it at all.

As the conversation on women's rights and sexual violence has been rekindled more recently, studies like mine are timely. While students are saying "enough is enough," and demanding more support, it is essential that we know what that means, and how we can support survivors most effectively. Further, we need to understand the experience of supporting survivors, for the insight it provides into the skills required, and the working and training conditions that foster the growth of caring and confident supporters.

Michelle's commentary on her AL training at a resource centre other than SARC revealed that, first, there are different approaches to training listeners. Secondly, Michelle taught us that some training methods are better than others. As she explained, certain "tools" that she learned hindered her ability to provide what she felt was genuine support. Although all volunteers developed training blisters in some form, most healed with a bit

of time and experience. Training blisters should not become permanent fixtures in the lives of listeners. However, after three months, Michelle's had yet to heal. That said, all participants agreed, Michelle included, that the work was worth it. Considering what we now know about the level of active, deductive, psychological and emotional labour involved in active listening, the section "All worth it" reveals something about the type of self that is required for support work of this nature.

While my interviews revealed the commendable qualities of active listeners, they also shined a negative light on the university. Considering that active listeners tend to be dedicated, empathetic, and self-sacrificing individuals, it is alarming that of the twelve active listeners at SARC, only two of them are paid. While unpaid labour is a present issue, I am less concerned with its existence than I am with the university's near-complete reliance on it. As I mentioned earlier, the drop-in service at SARC would not exist without volunteers. In times when students are demanding their university administration take sexual violence seriously, the reliance on unpaid labour for progress raises red flags. If services like those provided at SARC are so valuable, why does the university treat them as less? For example, why is 2019 the first year after nearly six that SARC has had the means to hire a second social worker? Why did Lucy's workload have to become unmanageable before the university gave SARC the resources to hire Olivia? When I asked Lucy what she would change about the way the work at SARC is done, if she could change anything, the first thing she said was "more people would be doing it" (p. 11, para. 3).

Earlier in this thesis, I referenced Hochschild's (2012) assertion that, under capitalism, emotional labour will most likely always contain the risk of emotional

dissonance. The fundamental issue with capitalism, for Hochschild, was the lack of workers' control over production. She used the example of austerity measures that capitalists often implement to increase profit margins, such as reducing the number of paid positions and then requiring less workers to complete the same amount of work as before. When this happens to positions involving emotional labour, it increases the workload, the amount of emotional labour that must be performed by each worker, and thus heightens the risk of emotional dissonance as it increases the volume of labour. She asked her audience to think about "just whose capital a workers' feelings are and just who is putting their capital to work," as she proceeded to imagine that such situations would not develop in a world under workers' control (p. 185).

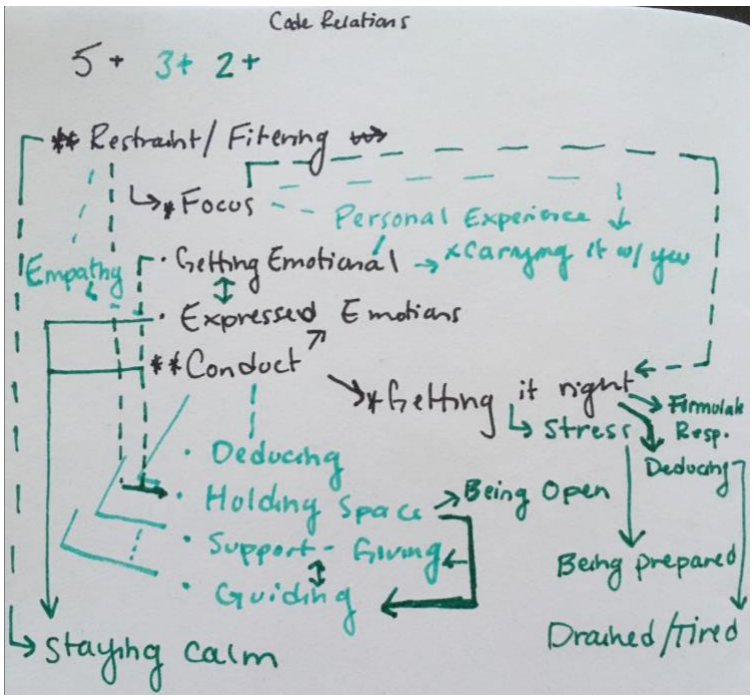
Although most of my participants did not express feeling significant emotional dissonance, other studies have found not just dissonance, but also worker burnout from emotional labour (Zapf et al., 2006). As Alex pointed out, SARC is not like other workplaces, where emotions are produced nearly assembly-line style: "some like social work organizations can feel kind of like a factory, where just people go in and then they talk and then come out, and then all the workers are kind of burnt out. And it's just like, here does not have that vibe, which is great" (p. 8, para. 3). That said, the outcomes of other studies should be read as a cautionary tale for places like SARC. In the corporatized university, funding will only be allocated to areas of necessity, or that will produce a return on investment (Newson & Polster, 2015; Quinlan et al., 2017). Distributing funding according to potential returns will not likely foster working conditions that can combat the risk of dissonance in a centre like SARC, especially as demand for services rises.

By combining in-depth interviews with auto-ethnography for this study, I was able to uncover a side of sexual violence that is too often forgotten. Namely, the perspective on their own work, of those who support survivors professionally. That said, the gap in the literature which this study helps to fill, is wide. For example, two of my participants identified as men, although I did not address gender dynamics in the thesis itself. Undoubtedly this is an important element of the support work and the presentation of the self, and one of those participants mentioned that his gender sometimes meant that survivors would choose to come back a different day to speak with another woman volunteer. However, I felt that the question of gender fell out of the scope of this thesis. Had this project been larger than a Master's thesis, I would have expanded on the impact of gender on the relationship between listeners and survivors.

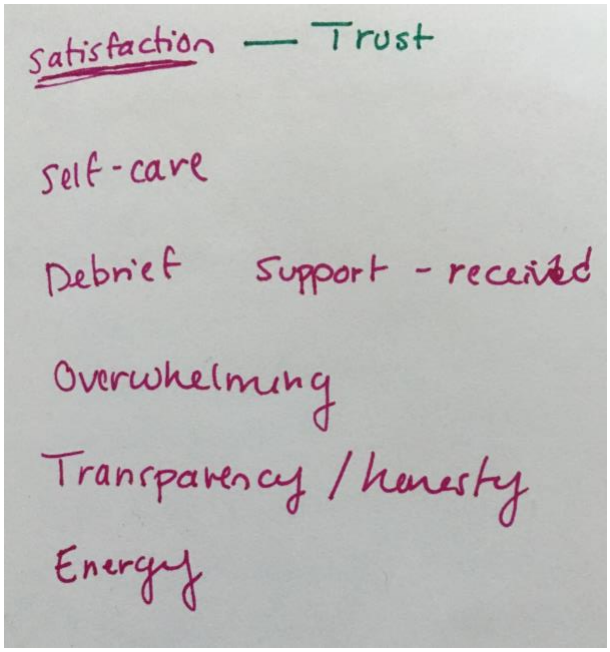
Aside from this, the perspective of support workers is only one element of the equation. To fully understand the dynamics involved in sexual violence on university campuses in a way that is productive and fosters change, requires that future research endeavours turn towards investigating what survivors want. We need to establish an understanding of student survivor demands and how best to implement them. We need to dive deeper into the rationale behind university administrations' refusal to listen to student demands. If it is indeed largely corporatization and finances which are holding universities back, we need to see the books that show where university money is going. We need to interview the individuals who sit on the boards of these administrations and acquire an explanation. Perhaps they will say things we will not expect. Furthermore, sociology needs to attempt to understand approaches to sexual violence prevention. Some universities are trying, but it is a wholly new phenomenon that requires our attention.

Today, in 2019, in the most powerful and supposedly advanced nations in the world, women's rights have come under attack. Politicians are openly and proactively questioning Roe v. Wade, making this epoch a terrifying time to be a woman. I think Hochschild raises a compelling point about control. Our current economy is organized according to the interests of a few billionaires, because they control the means of production. What this system has shown us is that not only is production out of our control, but so too are our rights. For women, the most basic right – that of control over what happens to our own bodies – is not guaranteed. I think that so long as the economy, as the very thing that produces the goods fundamental to our sustenance – food, shelter, etc. – is not under the control of the majority, neither will be the government and neither will be our rights. For what is "democracy" when politicians can pass laws that are not supported by the majority of the population, such as the new anti-choice 'heartbeat' bills being passed across the United States? Despite how worrying this epoch may be, we need not mourn. Women are fighting back; people are fighting back. The cases of challenging abortion and electing Kavanaugh have only added fuel to the fire. As Marx and Engels (2002) famously said, "What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers" (p. 7).

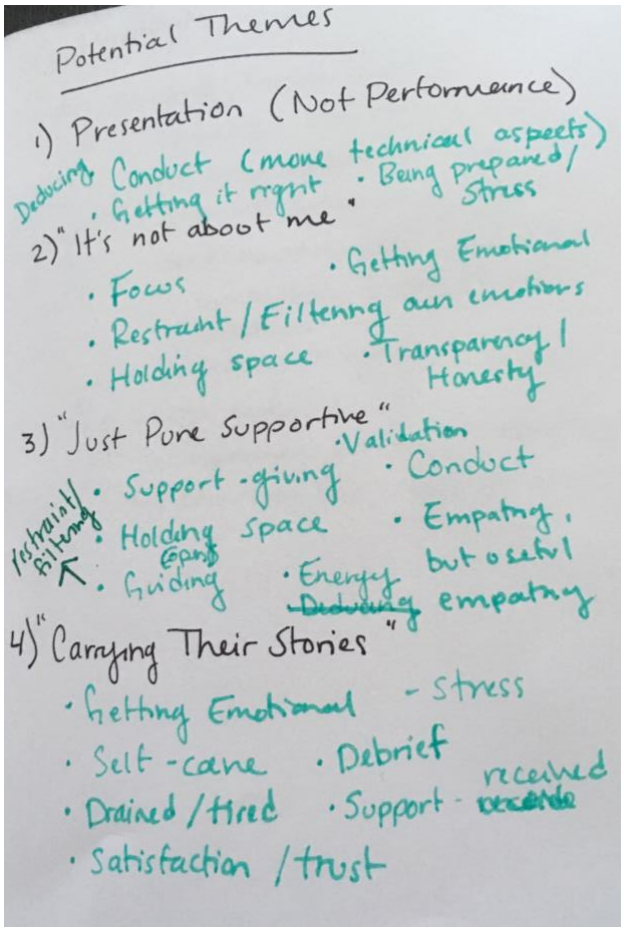
Appendix – thematic maps



1. Main code map, based on frequency of code relations according to my coding software. The color-coded numbers at the top refer to the number of times codes were used together.



2. List of codes that were used less frequently alone or with near other codes, but held significance in the context of the data. I kept this list just beside image number 1.



3. The beginning stages of sorting my codes into themes.

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