

Institutional Inquiry: Campus Responses to Gender-Based Violence in British Columbia

by

Nell Perry

B.A (Hons)., Concordia University, 2021

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We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. Tamara Humphrey, Supervisor
Department of Sociology

Dr. Katelin Albert, Committee Member
Department of Sociology

Abstract

Sexual assault is among the most common forms of violence perpetrated against women and gender-diverse people; in Canada, university and college campuses are among the most prevalent sites of this violence (MacKenzie, 2019). Since 2016, campuses in Canada have become increasingly responsible for responding to and preventing gender-based violence, including sexual violence related to their campuses. Responses have come in the form of sexual violence policy and, at some post-secondary institutions, the establishment of designated sexual violence response offices and support staff (Albert & Perry, 2024). This research focuses on the experiences and institutional processes of student survivors who seek institutional support for campus gender-based violence at their post-secondary institution in British Columbia, and the support staff who assist them with these processes. To understand these experiences, data come from eleven qualitative semi-structured interviews, six of which were with survivors who have been through the process of seeking support on campus, and five of which were with individuals in the role of supporting survivors on campus. Interview data are contextualized alongside a consideration of relevant post-secondary policies to facilitate a robust analysis of institutional support processes that both survivors and support staff engage with, and the policies that they are both organized and coordinated by. Findings indicate that campus response is critical for survivors to receive support to continue their education and feel supported by their institution. Experiences also showed that academic accommodations were one of the most helpful resources campuses can provide. Yet, the process of reporting gender-based violence is intertwined with institutional betrayal for both survivors and those who support them. The harm caused through institutional betrayal is upheld by policy documents that tend to state institutional values, often performatively, in the response process rather than outlining the entirety of the process. This leads to confusion, betrayal, and a lack of clarity for survivors, demonstrating a diffusion of responsibility for those seeking to support them. I conclude by highlighting promising practices such as providing less punitive responses when desired by the survivor; moving to a policy framework that centers collective safety not just individual safety; decreasing dismissals of disclosures; and, increasing transparency in the reporting process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In September 2021, numerous reports of sexual assault during orientation at Western University prompted a nationwide outcry about the crises of campus sexual violence, eliciting a student-led walkout to protest misogyny and rape culture on campus (CBC News, 2021). In response to the public outcry, administrators made changes on campus, such as the new inclusion of a mandatory gender-based violence course for first-year students, new training for orientation leaders, and the addition of "care hubs" with wellness resources (Bhargava, 2022). The events at Western University reveal how campus sexual violence is becoming publicly understood as a crisis that should have no place on campus. The corresponding overhaul highlights the reactive nature of sexual violence response during moments of public and media scrutiny of post-secondary institutions.

Campus sexual violence is a nationwide crisis. Yet, overwhelmingly students do not trust how their campuses respond. Only 42% of students in British Columbia (BC) trust that appropriate action will be taken if an assault is reported (Zussman, 2023). Less than one in ten students who experienced sexual violence on campus have reached out to someone at their institution for support (Burczycka, 2020). The student distrust highlights the disconnect between campus efforts toward sexual violence response and student experience. Distrust in campus responses leads to many survivors deciding not to report their experience at all (Lorenz et al., 2022). Students who decide to report often face institutional betrayal, reinforcing the lack of trust in campus responses. This distrust interacts with other systemic issues that uphold sexual violence. The under-reporting of sexual violence is amplified because of the normalization and insidious nature of everyday violence (Albert et al., 2024).

Due to the high prevalence, campus sexual violence response is vital to the safety of its students. Sexual assault is among the most prevalent forms of violent crime perpetrated against women, and university campuses are among the most common sites (MacKenzie, 2019). Research indicates that in Canada, women students between 18-24 are at the highest risk of being victimized by sexual violence (Burczycka, 2020). Moreover, a 2019 Statistics Canada survey found that 71% of post-secondary students have either witnessed or experienced unwanted sexualized behaviours, with 45% of respondents identifying as women and 32% of those identifying as men reporting experiencing unwanted sexualized behaviour (Burczycka, 2020). The same survey found that about one in six trans students were sexually assaulted during their time in post-secondary (Burczycka, 2020). Campus sexual violence impacts the majority of students, and impacts students across the gender spectrum, with increased impact for women and trans students.

Sexual violence is a form of gender-based violence, that is an all-encompassing umbrella term for forms of violence that are sexual in nature; this includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, stalking, technology-facilitated sexual violence, and sexual exploitation (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, n.d.). Gender-based violence is present in all facets of society due to the oppressive systems of domination that have instilled patriarchy and rape culture as prevailing social norms. Because gender-based violence is rooted in power, it does not affect all groups equally. In this research, I begin from the premise that rape culture is a complex set of beliefs driven by patriarchy and other systems of oppression, such as racism, colonialism, and nationalism that encourage power differences that condone and promote masculinized violence towards the feminized victim, often to reaffirm hegemonic forms of

masculinity¹ (Garcia & Vemuri, 2017). Moreover, rape culture associates “violence with sexuality and position[s] force as a normal aspect of sex” (p. 8). As such, within a rape culture, gender-based violence is normalized and excused as trivial. Rape culture perpetuates itself in all social settings, though post-secondary campuses play a role in upholding the norms of rape culture. The discussion regarding definitions and terminology continues in Chapter 2.

Progress towards decreasing campus sexual violence has stagnated in the last decades as research indicates rates of campus sexual violence have remained relatively stable over the last 30 years (Marques et al., 2020). The consequences of campus sexual violence range from direct harm and trauma for the survivor,² reinforcing rape culture within campus culture and other social institutions. Individual students who have been victimized by sexual assault have been reported to obtain lower academic achievement, higher school-related stress, increased self-harm, and increased levels of mental illness (Harris et al., 2020). On the collective level, campus sexual violence reinforces the oppression of students belonging to marginalized groups, especially when the violence is unchallenged by the educational institution (Prior & de Heer, 2021). When considering campuses as learning grounds for future generations, the presence of rape culture is particularly alarming. Normalizing rape culture on campuses sets the ground for students, and then graduates, to continue to normalize rape culture in their lives. The vast prevalence of gender-based violence on campuses is demonstrative of how rape culture is

¹ Hegemonic masculinity is defined as the dominant form of masculinity present in Western culture where the performance of hyper-masculine traits and heterosexuality is seen as the dominant and normalized way of performing masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

² This research uses the term “survivor” to refer to the person who has been harmed by gender-based violence. This is used instead of language like “complainant” or “victim,” in line with survivor-centred literature. This choice was made with the acknowledgement that not everyone who has been harmed by gender-based violence identifies with this language.

engrained in these spaces, which contributes to the cultural normalization, naturalization and treatment of gender-based violence as insignificant (Gavey, 2005 in Ilacqua, 2019).

There have been ongoing tensions regarding the role of educational institutions in providing discipline and safety. In the 1960s and 1970s, educational institutions moved away from the *loco parentis* (in place of a parent) role, contrasting how institutions were previously seen as responsible for enforcing morality, playing a disciplinary role, and generally safeguarding students, in addition to providing education (Novkov, 2016). In the last half-century, along with the neoliberalization of education, institutions have attempted to move away from this framing, upholding the narrative that students are responsible consumers within an institution who are not in need of a *loco parentis* role. In recent years, campuses have gained increasing responsibility in addressing *loco parentis* in a readopted way. This change has happened legally through newly adopted legislation put forth by governments and culturally, from increased public pressure and accountability on post-secondary institutions to ensure their campuses are safe spaces. The vast consequences of gender-based and sexual violence have been shifted to the forefront in the last six years, largely in part due to the growing prevalence of conversations about sexual violence in response to social movements and changes in pop culture (Xing, 2022).

Existing research has focused on the prevalence, prevention, consequences and impacts of campus gender-based violence, but less is known about the response process at post-secondary institutions. As Canadian scholars Busby and Birenbaum (2020) highlight, public knowledge surrounding the post-secondary response process is required to advocate for fair response processes and to hold institutions accountable for creating safe spaces. Given the increasing number of conversations about gender-based violence that have transpired in the last decade,

post-secondary institutions have been called on to ensure they are actively seeking to mitigate and adequately respond to this violence.

The movement towards change is mirrored on the other side of the border, in the United States, where Title IX exists -- federal legislation in the US that mandates federally funded institutions to ensure gendered and sex-based education does not inhibit access to education (KnowYourIX, n.d.). Although Title IX came into place in the 1970s, it was expanded to encompass sexual violence in 2009. The lack of federal legislation for campus sexual and gender-based violence in Canada makes research on this issue even more critical due to the absence of nationally standardized protocols. The ambiguity of how the response process works across institutions and Canadian provinces results in a lack of understanding and analysis of what the impacts of these processes are. There is a dearth of research regarding the response processes nationwide, which encourages a lack of transparency among institutions and inhibits change within these processes to better serve survivors, people who have caused harm and campus culture at large. BC was the second province to put sexual violence policy into provincial legislation in 2016, yet there is not any literature focused on the province specifically (British Columbia Government, 2022). By focusing this research on BC, this work will begin to fill in the gaps in provincial understandings of response processes and will provide specific context, insights, and recommendations for BC.

This research addresses two central questions:

1. In British Columbia, what is the impact of the post-secondary response process to gender-based violence on survivors?

- a. How do the organizational protocols³ coordinate the experiences of survivors and supporters?
- b. What are the outcomes in campus gender-based violence cases? And what are the effects on those involved? Here, outcomes refer to the result of a survivor seeking to report their experience.

2. How do campus policies guide the response and investigation process?

- a. How is the survivor textually and socially guided through the process?

To orient this research, I will draw on components of feminist theory and institutional ethnography. I focus on constructing a three-way analysis between the experiences of survivors, staff who support survivors, and the policy documents that are implicated in response processes. More specifically, I conducted six semi-structured qualitative interviews with individuals who have reported or attempted to report gender-based violence at a post-secondary institution in BC, 5 semi-structured qualitative interviews with sexual violence supporters from post-secondary institutions across BC, and an analysis of each participant's sexual violence policy.

Positionality

Coming to Sociology and Social Justice Work

Feminist research centers the importance of the researcher's positionality and social location in the research project, highlighting the values, biases, and assumptions that they bring to the work (McHugh, 2020). Understanding a researcher's positionality is essential in understanding how the knowledge and history of the researcher influence how the research is

³ Protocols will include how the institution first responds to a report about gender-based violence, the response process, and the outcomes of the process.

designed, conducted, and analyzed; thus, engaging in reflexive statements about the researcher's relationship to their research is common practice in feminist research (McHugh, 2020).

I grew up as a white settler in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Treaty 1 Territory, the lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the Homeland of the Métis Nation. My mother's family have been long-time settlers in BC, with far-reaching, distant roots in various European countries. My father's parents grew up in England during the Second World War and immigrated to Canada in their early twenties. My experiences are intrinsically shaped by my existence as an unwelcome settler on the lands of so-called Canada. The very fact that I am writing a master's thesis is a result of the social and cultural capital that is a result of the privileges that I have received because of my familial ties, generational privileges, and experience of being a settler living on stolen land.

I grew up in a middle-class family – both my mother and father are professors in history and political science, respectively. Much of my journey about understanding privilege, social location, and my positionality in the world began long before I can remember because of the orientations my parents embodied before I came into the world, which influenced our family structure and their parenting approaches. Part of what has drawn me to the topic of gender-based violence generally is a desire and vision that the status quo requires changing and an assumption that sociological research, in part, is a tool to do so. My faith that the academy is the space through which this change can be brought forth is also tied to the social location from which I approach this research. I also approach this research with the knowledge that not everyone, especially not every survivor, experiences the academy in this same way. I have kept this knowledge at the forefront as I have moved through research design, interviews, writing and positing what the outcomes of this research mean for participants and larger communities.

My interest in social sciences, social justice, and equity led me to study sociology for my undergraduate degree. My interest in these subjects further developed once I was in the classroom learning about sociological perspectives and beginning to work as a summer student for a non-profit that focused on coordinating domestic violence policy responses in Manitoba and becoming involved with social justice-oriented groups and organizations on campus during my undergrad. Most of this work pertained to environmental sustainability issues, intersectional environmentalism, and gender-based violence, including domestic violence and campus sexual violence. Support from my parents and their access to financial capital and generational wealth allowed me to dedicate time as an undergraduate to activities that I was passionate about rather than needing to focus on engaging in work that was financially rewarded. This privilege allowed me to spend significant time volunteering with on-campus opportunities and work in the non-profit sector. Ultimately, my ability to engage with work I was passionate about permitted me to gain skills and knowledge about working in social justice-oriented environments.

Situating Myself within the Research Context

My approach to this research comes from three years of working for an organization that partners with post-secondary institutions in Canada to provide online reporting for campus sexual violence with the goal of decreasing barriers to reporting and increasing access to data for decision makers. This work has largely contributed to my in-depth knowledge regarding the Canadian campus sexual violence ecosystem. Much of the work I have done in this capacity has been in the form of short policy reviews, compiling briefing information about provincial legislation pertaining to campus sexual violence, researching protocols and procedures used on campuses, and so forth. Having worked in the field of campus sexual violence and gender-based violence for about five years, I have been through training on subjects such as responding to

disclosures of gender-based violence and am a strong advocate and practitioner for approaching work on gender-based violence through a trauma-informed and survivor-centred lens.

The experience I garnered from paid and unpaid work during my undergraduate experience has greatly influenced how I approach sociology and my research. However, the desire to research gender-based violence, and ways that it can be better responded to, comes from lived experience being a young woman living in a society that is instilled with rape culture and frustration at institutions for continuously and inadequately responding to gender-based violence while watching the harms from gender-based violence. Working intimately within the space of campus sexual violence reporting and response has also shown me that most individuals who work in this area on the campus side are trying to make campuses safe spaces and make reporting processes less traumatic and fair for survivors. Simultaneously, literature and lived experiences from survivors have reported that their campus environments and processes show this well-intentioned approach is not functioning the way campuses or survivors hope. Of course, the goal of anti-gender-based violence work is for there to be an end to violence; though, until (or if ever) that point is reached, campuses can and must do better.

This thesis has six chapters. In Chapter 2, I will provide an overview of the literature to contextualize this research within the current policy context in BC. The literature review also situates this research within the field of campus sexual violence research in North America. Chapter 3 highlights the methodological concerns and theories that have shaped this research, primarily focusing on feminist thought and abolitionist feminism. I also outline the method of trauma-informed qualitative interviewing and policy review this research engaged with to collect data. Chapter 4 focuses on the interviews with the supporters, describing the structure of campus sexual violence support, including reporting and investigations. This chapter also highlights how

supporters use their agency to shape the response process. Chapter 5 focuses on survivors' experiences with attempting to report and through the reporting process. Survivor experiences with reporting underscored the importance of supportive campus responses, as well as the frustration and betrayal that survivors faced while reporting. Lastly, Chapter 6 includes a discussion and conclusion about the research, highlighting the importance of transparency and clarity for survivors throughout the reporting process as essential for their trust towards the institution, and towards their healing journeys. This last chapter suggests policy changes such as providing direct support to all survivors on campus, increasing transparency through communication with survivors and increasing alternative responses for reporting, ultimately to create more justice within the campus process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review contextualizes the current context of gender-based and sexual violence, beginning with a discussion about anti-violence movements and their impacts on campuses across North America. I then move to a discussion about the pervasiveness of sexual and gender-based violence on Canadian campuses, which contrasts with the low reporting rates from students. The discussion will highlight the ongoing debates surrounding the impacts of the definition of gender-based and sexual violence within post-secondary policies. In sum, this chapter discusses the prevalence of gender-based and sexual violence, low reporting rates and controversies regarding definitions of gender-based violence that affect how and if gender-based violence on campus is reported. To finish this section, I discuss critiques of current reporting systems, frameworks of justice, and student distrust, ending by highlighting survivor-centred and trauma-informed principles.

The Mainstreaming of Anti-Violence Movements and the Impact on Campuses

The landscape regarding public reaction to gender-based violence has significantly changed in the last decade. Numerous stories of gender-based violence have received public attention, such as the case of Channel Miller's victimization on Stanford's Campus in 2017 (León, 2019). Miller's victimization garnered outrage after the person who caused harm (Brock Turner) was portrayed and sentenced leniently, based on characterizations (steeped in white privilege and patriarchy) from the judge who took Turner's age, academic and athletic achievement into consideration, over the impact of his actions (Stack, 2016). Simultaneously, there have been large-scale cultural movements, such as the #MeToo movement and Canada's ongoing reckoning with the pervasiveness of sexual violence within youth hockey (Burke, 2022; Jaffe, 2018). Social media has facilitated this recent wave of awareness and has spread across

campus spaces, which has resulted in greater advocacy and numerous changes in responding to campus sexual violence (see Elpa, 2019; Khan et al., 2019; Salvino, et al., 2017; Silence is Violence, 2016). These cultural shifts have changed the context and expectations of public audience responses to gender-based violence. For example, we have seen a waterfall of public repudiations against powerful men who are perpetrating gender-based violence within their social groups and workplaces (Jaffe, 2018). From Harvey Weinstein's imprisonment for sexual violence to Dr. Christine Blasey Ford's public testimony against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh for sexually assaulting her in high school, there has been a significant shift away from accepting sexual violence as acceptable and normalized experience in North American culture (Nicolaou & Smith, 2019).

The cultural shifts can be pinpointed using specific examples that spurred the #MeToo Movement, and the watershed of public statements and reports made by survivors that occurred during its pinnacle and have seemingly continued since. For example, a review of campus sexual violence processes in the United States highlights that, prior to the 2011 Office of Civil Rights letter on new requirements for post-secondary institutions, campuses were using general codes of conduct to respond to sexual violence -- the same ones that were used for campus-related wrongdoings, including graffiti, plagiarism, stealing, illicit substances, and so forth (Novkov, 2016). The 2011 legislative shift was significant because categorizing sexual violence within a general student code of conduct, policy, and protocols is not trauma-informed and does not address the systemic ways that sexual violence is reinforced through individual and collective structures. Now, in most institutions, gender-based and sexual violence is categorized as a separate harm that is adjacent to, rather than within, student conduct frameworks. This separation

encourages the structural and trauma relations of gender-based violence to be considered in policy.

This cultural shift is not only apparent in the United States (US). This section will demonstrate how large cultural shifts have led to changes relating to campus gender-based and sexual violence. Canadian provinces began implementing legislation similar to the United States between 2015 and 2018 (Albert & Perry, 2024). Notably, provincial legislation was implemented across the country with BC's legislation adopted in 2016, second after Ontario (CBC News, 2015; Government of BC, 2016). Other provinces followed suit later, such as Nova Scotia in 2018 and Prince Edward Island in 2021 (Government of Nova Scotia, 2018; Government of Prince Edward Island, 2021). At the time that this legislation was implemented in BC, then Premier Christy Clark said, "The idea is to make sure that every young person on campus, in particular young women who may be the victims of sexual assault, know that they can report it, that they will be safe if they report it, and that they will get the assistance that they're requesting when they report it" (Dhillon & Hunter, 2016, para. 4:1). From Clark's comment, it is apparent that, before the implementation of this legislation, it was not universally known how to report or receive support on campus. The acknowledgement of systemic issues relating to gender-based and sexual violence on campus by the Premier demonstrates how governments seek to respond by implementing provincial policy.

This cultural shift in the way gender-based violence is treated is reflective of the calls from researchers and activists for tailored responses to acknowledge specific consequences of sexual violence like psychological, physical, social and economic consequences that differ from other forms of campus misconduct (Sheehy & Gilbert, 2017). Forms of campus misconduct like graffiti or plagiarism may leave a student with anxiety, or academic penalties. However, these

consequences differ from the severity of impacts from gender-based violence, where survivors may experience physical consequences from the manifestation of trauma in the body or economically as a result of missed time at work and in class, and from the costs of paying for counselling. Despite the profound changes in policy, activists and researchers still call for crucial changes within post-secondary institutions, which will be detailed in this literature review.

Explaining Campus Sexual Violence

Statistics about campus sexual violence help paint a picture of the prevalence, types of violence, and responses that occur. Statistics Canada reported a majority (71%) of students at Canadian post-secondary institutions experienced or witnessed unwanted sexual behaviours in a campus context, demonstrating the ubiquity of this type of violence (Burczycka, 2020). Of the one in ten women students in Canada who experience sexual assault on campus yearly, only a small number of students report their experience to their campus (12% of women and 9% of men; Burczycka, 2020). There are not similar quality statistics about the BC context specifically, which leads me to draw insights from the national statistics.

Gender-based and sexual violence statistics are inaccurate, in part, because of barriers to reporting (Harris et al., 2020). Many survivors opt instead to disclose to those in their immediate circles. An American survey from Fisher and colleagues (2003) using a random sample of female college students (n= 4,446) found that 69.9% of survivors of campus sexual violence disclosed the incident to someone other than police or campus authorities. In particular, they found that 87.9% disclosed to friends, 10% disclosed to family members, and 8.3% disclosed to an intimate partner. These findings illustrate that many student survivors share their experience of sexual violence with others, but there is a significant gap in reporting to the institution. These findings have been echoed in various studies across the last two decades. Statistics Canada's research

found that only 9% of women and 4% of women spoke about their experience with someone at the school (i.e. faculty member or support services; Burczycka, 2020). The considerable prevalence of gender-based violence on campuses alongside low reporting rates demonstrates a vital need for further investigation into the crisis of campus gender-based violence. With an understanding of the prevalence of gender-based violence and support-seeking, I move to discuss the definition of sexual violence.

Definitions

There is not one standard definition of sexual violence that is used across institutions or provinces. The ambiguity of definitions often compounds the issues relating to sexual violence response. To provide a more fulsome description of sexual violence on campus, I will also provide definitions of other key terms. For example, the definition of *campus* has profound impacts, influencing which incidents require campus involvement or investigation and researchers' conclusions.

Campuses in BC tend to use the terms sexual violence or sexual misconduct. Within the literature, *sexual violence* is categorized as a form of *gender-based violence*. *Gender-based violence* is “violence committed against someone based on their gender, gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender” (Sex Information and Education Council of Canada, 2023, p.10). *Gender-based violence* exists on a spectrum and comprises types of violence such as sexual, physical, economic, psychological, intimate partner or domestic violence, and violence facilitated by technology (SIECCAN, 2023, p. 95). Both *sexual* and *gender-based violence* relate to a range of systems of oppression which can intersect and overlap (more information to come in Chapter 3). Systems of oppression that are often related to and can intersect with *sexual* and *gender-based violence* are sexism, racism, transphobia, homophobia, and ableism. On campuses,

policies typically refer to *sexual violence* or *sexual misconduct*. However, scholars Khan, and colleagues (2019) have critiqued the use of the term *sexual violence* over the term *gender-based violence* because the term *gender-based violence* is more inclusive than the term *sexual violence*. They note that certain forms of *gender-based violence* can fall out of the scope of sexual violence policies when *sexual violence* is narrowly defined, urging that the term *gender-based violence* should be used as an umbrella term that encompasses sexual violence. However, the term *gender-based violence* is not often used in provincial and campus policies.

The BC *Sexual Violence and Misconduct Act* (The Act) summarizes the province's requirements for post-secondary institutions' responses to *sexual violence*. The definition of *sexual misconduct* in the Act includes

Sexual assault; sexual exploitation; sexual harassment; stalking; indecent exposure; voyeurism... the attempt to commit an act of sexual misconduct; the threat to commit an act of sexual misconduct” and the “Distribution of a sexually explicit photograph or video of a person to one or more persons other than the person in the photograph or video without the consent of the person in the photograph or video, with the intent to distress the person in the photograph or video (Government of BC, 2016, para. 2:1-10).

This definition includes a broad inclusion of sexually violent behaviours, importantly capturing the dynamic forms that *sexual violence* can take. Notably, the Act utilizes the language of *sexual misconduct*, which is used in a broad sense, and includes “any unwanted act – physical, verbal, or psychological – carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality” (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017, p.17). However, there have been criticisms about using the term *sexual misconduct* in referring to *sexual* and *gender-based violence*, because *misconduct* is used to describe other academic wrongdoings on campus, such as plagiarism (BC Government, 2022).

There have been critiques from students highlighting that either the term *sexual misconduct* or *sexual violence* requires a clearer definition and a list of included behaviours in the provincial legislation (BC Government, 2022). Students highlighted this issue based on the concern that students would be less likely to report if a range of behaviours were not specifically highlighted (BC Government, 2022). The term *sexual violence* is aligned with highlighting the violence involved with *sexual* and *gender-based violence*, which is a more appropriate alignment.

In this research, I utilize the term *sexual violence* rather than *sexual misconduct*. This choice is in line with recommendations made by the BC Government (2022) and the Anti-Violence Project (2022). Although the two terms can be seen as synonyms, the term *sexual violence* is chosen to center the violence that is inherent in an unwanted act carried out through sexual means or targeting sexuality. Based on the recommendation from Khan and colleagues (2019), this work predominately uses the language of *gender-based violence* when discussing and creating inclusion criteria for the types of violence survivors experienced. When referring to specific policies and supports on campuses, the language will shift to sexual violence, to mirror the language and inclusions used by the campuses.

There remain other tensions surrounding the definition of sexual violence, such as the parameters of campus violence. Sheehy and Gilbert (2017) highlight the ongoing disagreements about definitions that vary from campus to campus, such as whether *campus sexual violence* should include only sexual violence that occurs on campus property or any form of sexual violence that happens between campus community members, whether on-campus or off-campus. They also note that another tension is whether *cyber-sexual harassment* is included in the definition; *cyber-sexual harassment* is not explicitly included in the BC definition (Government of BC, 2016).

Scholars have agreed that a standard definition of sexual violence on campuses is missing from post-secondary policies. Through a systemic review of 383 articles about sexual assault on post-secondary campuses, Harris and colleagues (2020) note that existing literature disagrees on a standard definition of *sexual assault*; some use a broad definition such as "sexual contact, violence, and/or harassment" or utilize a more narrow scope like "unwanted intercourse." Other organizations with expertise in campus sexual violence, like Students For Consent Culture Know Your IX (2021) Sheehy and Gilbert (2017), emphasize the importance of campuses responding to all *sexual violence* between campus community members to ensure that survivors are not left experiencing inequalities on campus from experiences of *sexual violence* that occurred off campus.

The BC Act (2016) also differentiates between a *disclosure* and a *report*. The current version of the Act uses the term *complaint*, instead of *disclosure*, however, the BC Government (2022) has stated they will change this during the next amendment. The amendment to change the term to disclosure is in alignment with recommendations from consultations the BC Government (2022) facilitated with the sector. A *disclosure* occurs when a campus community member shares an experience of sexual violence with a staff member at the institution (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017). A *disclosure* must occur prior to moving forward to a *report*, however, a *disclosure* does not necessarily move forward to become a *report* but each *report* requires a *disclosure*. Once a *disclosure* is made, the survivor has the choice of whether to proceed with a *report*.

Campus Reporting in BC

Reporting and investigation on campuses have a specific role in responding to gender-based violence. BC has been chosen as a site for this research because BC was one of the first

provinces to adopt legislation (Government of BC, 2016). Yet, there is a lack of literature on the topic, despite the legislation coming into effect over eight years ago, in 2024. This section will briefly explore the differences in institutional policies, campus procedures, and the importance of specific sexual violence responses. It is of note that most of this section discusses the national and United States context because of the available literature. The lack of depth illustrated in this section indicates the gap in research in this area, with a dearth of understanding and analysis about the specific provincial context, demonstrating the importance of this research for better understanding campus reporting and support options for sexual violence at post-secondary institutions in BC.

What We Know About Provincial Legislation

The provincial jurisdiction of post-secondary education in Canada means that response procedures and policies regarding campus gender-based and sexual violence vary. Sexual violence policies at post-secondary institutions exist to delineate under what circumstances an institution will take action, why and which actions will be taken, and what behaviours fall under the policy (e.g., whether it includes only sexual assault or broadly applies to all forms of gender-based discrimination), and, where the policy is applicable - on and/or off-campus (Crocker et al., 2020).

In 2016, the Government of BC implemented the *Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act*, which aims to make campuses safer and respond to the needs of survivors (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017). The BC Act requires post-secondary institutions to establish a sexual misconduct policy that is publicly available and addresses sexual misconduct, prevention and response, and sets out procedures for the disclosure and reporting processes that involve students (Government of BC, 2016). Notably, the Act does not require a policy or clear reporting

processes for anyone who is not a student, such as staff, faculty, or community members. The Act requires that post-secondary institutions review their policy every three years, or when directed by the Minister, and that they consult with students and “prescribed persons or prescribed classes of persons” (such as international students, students with disabilities, LGBTQ2S students, faculty, and athletics) when the institution establishes their first policy or reviews their policy (Government of BC, 2016; Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017). In addition, the Act requires that the President of each public institution reports to the board annually on the implementation of the policy (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017). The Act creates a common baseline for campus sexual violence response across the province.

These standards mean the province is more likely to have a cohesive response to campus sexual violence than provinces without standards, such as Saskatchewan or New Brunswick (Kindleman, 2020; Kost, 2020). Even with provincial standards in BC, the standards are unspecific; by only mandating that institutions have a policy that outlines the disclosure and reporting processes and that they review it every three years, there remains a significant variation in policies at each institution (Albert & Perry, 2024).

Despite the significant variation in policy across the province, there remain patterns that most institutions follow. For instance, as mandated by the province, sexual violence policies must be publicly accessible online via the institution’s website. The webpage with information about the policy often includes language directed toward those who have been victimized by sexual violence. This language often contains phrases like “You are not alone” and “There is support available.” Websites usually offer information about where to report, both on and off-campus, as well as information about support services such as counselling or the sexual violence office (see for example, Vancouver Island University, 2023; Simon Fraser University, 2023;

University of Northern British Columbia, 2023). In addition to the provincial requirements, these policies also often include an institutional statement about commitments to preventing and responding to sexual violence, definitions that are specific to the institution and their policy, such as requirements for jurisdiction and behaviour definitions, information about where and how campus community members can report, an outline of the report response process and, sometimes other information about staff/student or student/faculty relationships (informed by policy from Vancouver Island University, 2023; Simon Fraser University, 2023).

Policy documents are typically less than twenty pages, sometimes even fewer than ten, and cover a vast range of information regarding how campuses define, prevent, respond to, and support community members who have been victimized. However, despite the array of material sexual violence policies cover, they do not contain enough information to be considered a complete and transparent account of the institution's procedures. The Students for Consent Culture Action Plan to End Campus Sexual Violence highlights that campuses having policies is an important first step, "the mere existence of such policies...is not sufficient" (Salvino et al., 2017). The Action Plan denotes a scorecard checklist to grade institutional policies against, Canadian campuses averaged a C- score on their policies when the report came out in 2017. The scorecard checklist includes criteria that cover the existence of a sexual violence policy, the composition of decision makers, and the formal and informal reporting process, ultimately outlining what is required to create a trauma-informed and survivor-centred policy. Many years have passed since the scorecard was released, yet many of the elements on the checklist are still not present within BC campuses' sexual violence policies. Elements of the checklist that are not represented in the policies may still be used or centred in practice, however, without publicly listing the institutions' commitments and practices through policy, there is not a mechanism for

students, advocates or the public at large to hold them accountable. Busby and Birenbaum (2020), experts on campus reporting procedures, argue that without clear transparency and accountability surrounding institution's actions towards sexual violence responses, there is a lack of accountability between institutions and students, researchers, governments and the public. The lack of transparency surrounding campuses' sexual violence policies and response procedures is a pervasive issue that will be permitted to stay hidden behind closed doors until this information is available transparently. The lack of information available publicly about the response procedures is one of the gaps this research seeks to fill, by engaging with those in supporter positions.

Campus Support and Resources in BC

While all public post-secondary institutions in BC have the same provincial standards for the contents of their sexual violence policy, each institution responds differently to campus sexual violence based on school size, geography, and allocated resources. From looking at the different-sized institutions, institutions of a similar enrollment size tend to have similar sexual violence resources. Simon Fraser University [SFU] (2023) is one of the largest universities in the province, with 30,380 students, and has a free-standing sexual violence resource office with six dedicated staff members (Simon Fraser University, 2022). At SFU, the Sexual Violence Support & Prevention Office (SVSPO) states they provide,

Referrals to counselling and medical services, safety planning, academic and workplace accommodations, self-care and assistance navigating resources; assistance in making an informed decision about next steps should an individual choose to report to authorities within the university or to the police; up-to-date community resource information; deliver[y] of education, programming, training and awareness activities with campus

partners through an evidence-based approach to prevention and intervention; maintain[ence of] non-identifying annual data on disclosures and reports of sexual violence on campus; participation in the periodic evaluations of [SFU's] Policy GP 44 and its related initiatives; establish[ment of] an advisory panel to act as a resource for the SVSPO (Simon Fraser University, 2023, para. 3:1).

SFU's SVSPO office provides individual support to survivors and offers educational initiatives for the community. Institutions smaller than SFU do not have the same type of breadth in what they offer to individual survivors or the community.

Medium-sized institutions like Vancouver Island University (VIU) (2024), with 13,000 students, do not often have a designated sexual violence office; sexual violence support falls under the portfolio of another office, such as the Office of Student Affairs (Universities Canada, 2023). At VIU, the Office of Student Affairs has no uniquely designated staff for sexual violence. VIU's Student Affairs office provides referrals to the campus counselling centre for emotional support and facilitates reporting. VIU provides survivors with support; information about on and off-campus supports, personalized safety planning, information about confidentiality, information and assistance with reporting options, information and advice about the Sexualized Violence and Misconduct Policy, assistance with academic and other accommodations at VIU, and coordinates education and prevention efforts on campus. VIU offers many services, though their sexual violence responses are included within a larger office, rather than on its own like SFU, a larger institution.

With an enrollment of 3650, the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) is an example of a small post-secondary institution (UNBC, 2023). UNBC has a Response and Support Team for sexual violence and misconduct response. The Team comprises trained

members from the university community who are not from a unified office. The Response and Support Team will help the survivor find support. At UNBC, on-campus supports include student counselling, a student medical clinic and the First Nations Centre. As a smaller school, UNBC has fewer resources and dedicated staff available for sexual violence response than VIU and SFU.

While there is little to no research on student survivors' experiences at institutions of different sizes in BC, Lee and Wong's (2019) research in Quebec shows that schools with under 10,000 students or 10,000-20,000 students, were predictive of fewer resources. Although this finding was not statistically significant, it helps conceptualize the categorical sizes of institutions. The three institutional sizes are not stagnant or precise divisions; however, they highlight similarities that institutions share, seemingly differing in enrollment. By understanding this synopsis of the three different types of institutions and the types of support and resources they provide, I begin to build a more robust understanding of the landscape of sexual violence response in BC.

Critiques of Current Responses

Research shows that campuses often fail to uphold their commitments to campus sexual violence prevention and response (Salvino et al., 2017). Through ethnographic observation and interviews with survivors, people who have caused harm, and administrators at one post-secondary institution in the United States, Bedera (2022) investigated how the choice-making process around sexual violence investigations is shaped through policy. They found that even when the institution committed to campus sexual violence policy, other "unwritten procedures" caused the policy to shift from how it was written to how it was used in practice. Moreover, their findings show that staff followed an unwritten procedure of directing the survivor towards

informal reporting options that would take fewer resources and likely cause less public scrutiny. In most cases, they found the university's policies were more symbolic than substantive. Consequently, survivors had little control over the choices they made, they felt confused, often blaming themselves when the process did not end how they had hoped and were left feeling as if the university did not want to help them.

More broadly, Ridolfi-Starr (2016) provides an overview of criticisms raised in the United States regarding campus investigations and sanctions relating to sexual violence. Both survivors and people who have caused harm have complained about the length of investigations, protocols for submitting evidence, and fairness of sanctions and decision makers. Ridolfi-Starr (2016) uses the concept of a "culture of impunity" that permits campus officials to make mistakes without consequences due to a lack of transparency. Like Bedera (2022), Ridolfi-Starr (2016) provides evidence of how students have criticized their institutions for violating institutional policies. Students shared they were mistreated during investigations due to discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation and/or race (Ridolfi-Starr, 2016). In conclusion, they call for transparency regarding student sanctions to increase and repair the trust institutions have broken.

Lack of transparency in investigation processes is a prevalent theme in the literature. Busby and Birenbaum (2020) argue that without transparency in what transpires during an investigation and transparency about policy construction, institutions cannot be held accountable because they have not made clear what they have committed to. Through a qualitative exploratory study about the construction of sexual violence policy with committee members at a Western Canadian university, Shankar and Tavcer (2021) interviewed institutional staff members who had been appointed to a sexual violence policy committee. They found that administrative

staff from departments such as health services, legal services, the human rights office, and the office of student conduct and security were appointed to the committee by senior administrators from offices such as the Provost Office. Accordingly, they found that most committee members lacked an understanding of sexual violence in comparison to other researchers and activists at the institution. They found that even in cases where faculty members, with expertise in campus sexual violence, asked to be included on committees, they were denied access. As a result, the committee members prioritized institutional risk management over the quality of response to sexual violence. Members of the committee lacked basic knowledge about sexual violence, such as the increased risk of marginalization based on identity factors like race, and support for survivors on campus. Shankar and Tavcer (2021) point out that if subject matter experts from campus were included in these committees, such as faculty and student advocates, the committee actions would centre less on institutional risk management, and more on being survivor-centred. The lack of expertise held by committee members was justified by their “good intentions” (p. 6.) They conclude that a lack of transparency between the institution, its students and committee members normalized confusion within the committee and the policy documents the committee produced. The separation of the administration from researchers and students during policy creation decreases collaboration across campus. When policies are only created by administrators, they lack transparency in how decisions about the policy creation are made and lack the expertise needed to create a meaningful policy. For example, when institutional risk is prioritized above all, campuses make decisions such as adding large budget lines to increase lighting on campus, which reinforces myths about sexual violence, such as it being most likely to be committed by a stranger.

Differentiating Criminal and Institutional Responses to Gender-Based Violence

It's worth questioning why campuses should have a specific response to gender-based violence outside of the formal criminal justice system in the first place. In literature about campus sexual violence, tensions exist about whether campuses should be the responsible body for responding to gender-based violence. While focusing on the role of Title IX and due process, Henrick (2013) argues that institutions should not be responsible for responding to campus sexual violence because the campus reporting process cannot respond to sexual violence with the same fairness as the criminal justice system. However, scholars such as Brenner (2013) argue that survivors often seek justice through their campus system because the criminal justice system has been shown to favour the accused rather than those who have been harmed. Increasingly, researchers and advocates argue that campus-specific responses are important to provide an alternative to the criminal justice system, better support to the survivor and the person who caused harm,⁴ and increase trust and confidence in safety on campus (Salvino et al., 2017; Busby & Birenbaum 2020; Maiuro 2015; Sheehy & Gilbert 2017).

Sheehy and Gilbert (2017) argue that campuses need separate response protocols and policies to provide an alternative to the criminal justice system. They highlight that campus response protocols are important due to their ability to respond rapidly to ensure the survivor's access to education is not disrupted through measures such as academic accommodations. While campus response is an alternative to the criminal justice system, these responses are increasingly

⁴ In line with an abolitionist framework (see chapter 3), this research will use the person-first language of "person who caused harm" when referring to the person who caused harm to the survivor. Other work may use the language of perpetrator or respondent to refer to this role.

modelled on the criminal justice system through formal investigations that mirror criminal proceedings (Brenner, 2013; Campbell et al., 2019).

Current scholarly work on campus sexual violence affirms that it is crucial for students, administrators, and campus culture that sexual violence is adequately addressed. For example, a nationally representative survey across the United States that focused on administrators' perceptions of campus protocols emphasizes that administrators argue reporting is essential so that the campus can support the survivor and person who caused harm (Maiuro, 2015).

Additionally, through data based on administrators, the authors identify that reporting is critical on campus to help survivors access resources, receive referrals they may require, and ensure that those who have caused harm receive appropriate sanctions to ensure campus safety.

Marques and colleagues (2020) come to similar conclusions, mainly focusing on the role and importance of trust within institutional environments. The authors utilize mixed methods to explore 250 women students' perceptions of trust in sexual violence policies and support services on one mid-size campus in Ontario. Their findings illustrate that institutions should be concerned about sexual violence being underreported because it may prevent the implementation of accountability for the person who caused harm, may leave the survivor without knowledge or access to resources and, lastly, may create a climate of distrust and lack of confidence about safety on campus. Furthermore, this research finds that students perceive that their school prioritizes institutional interest over students' interests, which leads the authors to a call for additional research about why this perception exists among the student body.

Justice Frameworks for Gender-Based Violence Response

To understand investigation systems, it is important to consider different frameworks for justice, as the chosen framework will influence the type of response that occurs. Post-secondary

institutions do not explicitly state what framework of justice their response and policy are aligned with. Overall, two types of responses typically exist: traditional and alternative forms of justice (Burns & Sinko, 2021). These have been shown to have differential impacts on survivors and the broader campus culture toward gender-based violence.

Theoretically, responses to gender-based violence, whether these responses are institutional or criminal, are often oriented around providing a form of justice to the survivor (Burns & Sinko, 2021). These authors suggest that post-secondary institutions often engage with traditional forms of justice that focus on punitive consequences for the person who caused harm. This can be seen through the prioritization of "law-and-order agendas" that focus on crime and risk prevention to mitigate gender-based violence rather than systemic change to resolve the oppressive systems that teach and reinforce gender-based violence (Brockbank, 2022). Traditional justice in post-secondary settings may look like expulsion or removal from the physical campus (Scoglio et al., 2021). Importantly, these consequences do little to help the person who caused harm acknowledge the harm they have caused or change their behaviour (Brenner, 2013). This is because the consequences focus on physically stopping contact between the person who caused harm and the survivor class rather than focusing on a person-specific approach that takes the individual's needs into account.

When traditional justice is seen as the sole framework of justice, it is often ineffective as it does not encapsulate the response that many survivors seek due to the diverse range of needs (Scoglio et al., 2021). This is particularly important since traditional justice was sometimes desired by some survivors, and was not universal. Their research found that alternative forms of justice, such as holding the person who caused harm accountable for their actions through an assurance of no further reoffending, education or naming their experience publicly, were equally

important to survivors' healing journeys. Alternative forms of justice are shown to support the complexity of healing better and tackle the systemic roots of sexual violence. However, due to the traditional nature in which post-secondary institutions most often engage with models of justice, less is known about how alternative justice can be used on campus. This research seeks to provide further information about which methods of alternative justice are used on campus, and how they are put into place.

Student Distrust

Research has explicitly investigated the relationship between students and the sexual violence response at their institutions. Marques and colleagues (2020) for example, focused on the role of trust in student perceptions of their institution's sexual violence policies and found that most students would not, or were unsure whether they would access university services, nor did they know enough information about the service to make a decision. Most students revealed they lacked trust and confidence in university services due to a lack of faith in confidentiality, lacked timely access to support services, and lacked trust in security to not abuse their power or have previous negative experiences with available support.

The term *institutional betrayal* has been coined to describe the betrayal and consequences that follow when an individual feels betrayed by their institution. Within the context of sexual violence, institutional betrayal occurs when survivors experience unfair or inadequate treatment from their post-secondary institution or workplace that can create traumatic symptoms (Bedera, 2022; Cipriano et al., 2021). The experience of institutional betrayal can lead to further mental health consequences, such as exacerbated post-traumatic stress symptoms and negative perceptions of safety, that can often be similar in severity to the consequences of the experience of sexual violence (Bedera, 2022; Cipriano et al., 2021). In their research on sexual harassment

outcomes for graduate students in the United States, Cipriano et al. (2021) found that survivors hoped their institution could provide a sufficient response to their victimization, though they experienced severe consequences that hindered their access to education. In addition, student survivors reported that the effects of their experience of sexual harassment rarely felt proportional to the outcome of their report. They found the experience of institutional betrayal compounds the emotional effects of the survivor's victimization. Organizations with the lowest rates of sexual violence enforce their policies, when an institution does not, they demonstrate a symbolic tolerance for violence on campus.

Similar findings about student distrust in their institutions regarding responses to campus sexual violence can also be seen in research at post-secondary institutions in Canada. In 2017, a student and survivor-led group, OurTurn, released a report that graded sexual violence policies across the country, highlighting that in Canada there were no guidelines about what should and should not be included in a sexual violence policy (Xing, 2017). OurTurn states that measures such as an immunity clause should be included in the policy to protect survivors who report to their institution from being punished for any actions against campus regulations that are unearthed during the reporting of sexual violence. In contrast, measures like mandatory face-to-face encounters between the complainant and respondent during the reporting process should not be included in the policy. In 2022, student leaders from 20 post-secondary institutions across Canada joined forces to issue a national action plan against campus sexual violence, which included "a requirement for sexual violence prevention training and education to be mandatory for all students; ensuring academic accommodations and report procedures are readily available for survivors" (Simon, 2022, p. 6-9). These two prominent examples demonstrate the way a high level of distrust across Canada has manifested regarding

institutional response and insights that student advocates have offered to improve the state of campus response.

The emphasis on student distrust in campus sexual violence policy and response protocols is symbolic of the lack of certainty about how campuses should respond to campus sexual violence. In many ways, there remain more questions than answers about how campuses should respond. The calls for change from students should be taken as a serious indication that the current status quo is not working.

Survivor-Centred and Trauma-Informed Approaches

Approaches that focus on centralizing the needs of survivors are referred to as survivor-centred approaches. Survivor-centred approaches prioritize a survivor's rights and needs rather than the institution or person who caused harm; from here on, this set of principles will be referred to as survivor-centred responses or approaches (Crocker et al., 2020). Research on survivor healing from sexual violence shows that survivors seek support from others, the ability to share their story, make sense of their experience, manage memories, remain physically and emotionally safe from the person who caused harm, and experience a process that brings the survivor out of the isolation of experiencing violence (Brenner, 2013; Scoglio et al., 2021). Other research has found that survivors view recognition, dignity, and the ability to share their experiences and be heard as strong components of individual justice (Scoglio et al., 2021). Survivor-centred practices must also be trauma-informed (Crocker et al., 2020). Trauma-informed means understanding the psychological, physiological, social, and financial impacts of experiencing sexual violence and related trauma, with the ultimate goal of minimizing re-traumatization for the survivor (Crocker et al., 2020). For post-secondary institutions, putting survivor-centrism and trauma-informed response into practice means campus sexual violence

policies should not be vague or complex and should be understood by survivors (Bedera, 2020). Institutions must also be ready to provide survivors with both emotional and practice supports, such as non-academic accommodations that relate to housing, employment or emotional supports like counselling, or academic support, such as alterations to course access, recognition of the effects of trauma on learning and engagement in course materials (Crocker et al., 2020). The review of critiques of the post-secondary response process from both activists and scholars reveals how post-secondary processes do not appear to be survivor-centred or trauma-informed.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the relevant context and literature that relates to campus gender-based and sexual violence responses in BC, Canada and the United States more broadly. The rest of this thesis builds on the overview of campus sexual violence legislation and responses in BC, laying the groundwork for understanding the current context. The questions this research seeks to explore are based on an understanding of the systemic issues relating to campus gender-based violence reporting, such as the rates of sexual violence on campus, low reporting rates, and institutional distrust. The following chapter lays out the methodological approach and the method used to conduct this research.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Methodology

Research Paradigm

While undertaking this research, I am guided by critical methodologies, namely feminism, which aims to liberate participants from the erasure of the individual within institutional processes (Smith, 2005). Critical methodology fits within the ideological epistemology of research based on action and social change (Creswell & Miller, 1997). The authors emphasize ideological epistemology often begins with an issue the researcher views as needing to be addressed, "and they encourage change and active redress of problems" (p. 39). This research relies on knowledge being "located within and negotiated among individuals" (p. 38). Through interviews, I have sought knowledge in an inductive and contextualized manner. This perspective centers on personal interpretations of experiences, for this reason, I have written about data through the language participants used and from a personal stance. Equally as important, knowledge is external to the individual because social reality is a product of historical and social events and tensions rather than resting solely on how an individual experiences the world; thus, it also fits within a materialist ontology (Carroll, 2004). The externality of social reality affects each individual in their unique way. Through this thesis, I attempt to capture the tensions between individual experiences, and structural social realities, a balance between the two positions offering insight into structural and personal experiences with reporting.

My research paradigm also leans on the interpretive side of ideological epistemology due to the emphasis on subjective meaning and my focus on co-constructing narratives and data alongside participants. I have placed a large emphasis on participant reflection, choice and collaboration throughout the research. This is particularly important in research centred around

gender-based violence, as the topic can be emotionally difficult to discuss (Campbell et al., 2019). Researching without co-construction and collaboration can be disempowering for participants, having the possibility of re-traumatization. Campbell and colleagues (2019) highlight that including participants in the research process by offering decisions throughout the research process offers them autonomy (e.g. choosing to follow questions or share their narrative, reviewing their transcript), which fits within a trauma-informed approach that should be used when working with issues that may deal with trauma.

Intersectional Feminism

This research is rooted in feminist methodologies, specifically drawing from critical feminism and intersectional feminism. Intersectional feminism is a cornerstone of Black female intellectual and socio-political traditions (Hancock, 2019). Intersectional feminist theory focuses on how oppression and domination are experienced through intersecting, marginalized identities (Cho et al., 2013). Specifically, intersectional feminism was theorized to connect the experiences Black women face regarding gender-based violence, theorizing how different parts of identity work together to create sites of unique oppression (Crenshaw, 1990). I draw on an intersectional analysis to discuss gender-based violence and to connect experiences and social identity to broader power structures and injustices. Mainly, I focus on Cho and colleague's (2013) arguments that situate intersectionality as a crucial analytical tool for uncovering existing power inequalities and dynamics of overlapping identity categories, ultimately, highlighting how gender-based violence is a gendered and racialized issue. Specifically, intersectionality theory posits that social identities (race, class, gender, etc.) do not operate as separate identities, but overlap becoming "reciprocally constructed phenomena" (Collins, 2015, p. 2). This framework leads me to focus on how structural power affects the lives of participants based on the power

they have access to, or lack, through their social identities. This means centralizing the role of access to power through analysis, where I understood the experiences and stories of participants as situated within their social identities and access to power. For survivors, this means accounting for how their identities as survivors along with their gender, race, sexual orientation, experience with trauma, and support from loved ones affected their experiences of victimization and reporting. Accounting for the power they had, or lacked, during the reporting process as a result of their identity categories helps to uncover the way that systems of oppression impacted their experiences; helping to identify which of these structures require change to improve reporting systems on campus. For example, this meant accounting for how social power would give one survivor more empowerment or persistence through bureaucratic challenges over another. The difference in empowerment or persistence through challenges does not only represent the needs of the survivor but includes their social identity, and accordingly, the power they have within the institutional context. This framework is essential to ensure that the analysis is intersectional and reflects the dynamics different individuals experience due to their fluid identities that are entrenched within systems of oppression.

As the use of intersectionality has increased, there have been important critiques highlighting how the framework can be oversimplified, superficial and reduced to check boxes (often as we see in sexual violence policies; Shankar & Tavcer, 2021). There is no consensus across the field as to what counts as intersectionality (Collins, 2015). With my social location as a white researcher, and the data that participants offered did not include much reflection on the role of race, despite having some racial diversity in the sample, there were no Black participants. There are elements of the theory posited by Crenshaw (1990) that are specifically relevant to Black women's experiences, that are not necessarily reflected in this research. However, scholars

like Hancock (2019) posit that, with acknowledgement of the history of Black women's foundational contributions to the theory, it can be used as "a turning point onto a new road." (p. 117). Crenshaw theorized this "approach" as a way of "framing interactions" to answer questions that cannot be accounted for from prior analytical approaches that primarily focus on separate identity variables, rather than the dynamics of multiple identity variables (in Hancock, 2019, p. 117).

Intersectional understandings and theories are imperative when gender-based violence is analyzed and discussed. This research's institutional framework emphasizes this importance because of how an individual's intersectionality, the ways overlapping exclusions based on identity such as based on gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation and so forth, shapes how they engage with and experience institutional processes. For example, pre-existing vulnerabilities can be compounded by economic discrimination, housing barriers and ongoing colonialism (Shankar & Tavcer, 2021). Moreover, gender-based violence as a societal issue is rooted within power imbalances which stem from domination and power, primarily systems of white supremacy and patriarchy, namely, violence that is primarily (but not exclusively) and historically perpetrated by men against women (Brockbank & Greene, 2022). This is especially pertinent in the context of post-secondary institutions, where the institution is built on white supremacy and patriarchy (Brockbank & Greene, 2022; Davis et al., 2022). Theorizations pertaining to gender-based violence must center on analysis and understanding of power and domination to explore how gender-based violence is a manifestation of the systems of power and domination that exist in the social world. In practice, this framework means that I will focus on how power operates within the process of reporting, looking to identify how social identities

influence survivors' experiences through their perceptions and my analysis, and, how supporters and policy account for differing social power in their responses.

Punishment and Responses to Gender-Based Violence

In line with intersectional feminist theory, this research is also rooted in abolitionist theory and the rejection of the police role as primary responders to gender-based violence. This approach centers on the perspective that consequences, solutions, and accountability for those who have caused harm through gender-based violence must be anti-carceral to move toward decreasing the prevalence of gender-based violence (Davis et al., 2022). Anti-carceral views within this research mean that the goals regarding responding to gender-based violence should not revolve around imprisonment, police intervention, or other forms of isolating punishment in response to gender-based violence. Responding to gender-based violence through one set punishment (such as prison) reduces the complexity and deep roots of structures of gender-based violence, prevalent across society, as a problem that can be solved individually (Davis, 2003). Moving towards decreasing gender-based violence requires acknowledging that this violence is a social issue and, thus, cannot be solved through individual structures of punishment such as imprisonment, and other punishments that replicate carceral solutions, like expulsion on campus, and towards shared accountability (Brockbank & Greene, 2022; Davis, 2003). In Davis' (2003) words, punishment "relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society" (p. 16). She emphasizes that carceral punishment reinforces the very systems it claims to oppose, the way that sexual abuse is widely prevalent in prisons as a form of punishment, replicating the systems of violence that carcerality claims to stop.

Anti-carceral theory is grounded in the knowledge that police interventions and punishment are not applied equally and harm those most marginalized. The contemporary idea of

punishment is forged by the prison industrial complex (Davis, 2003). Prisons, ideologically and in institutions, are rooted in racism, male dominance, homophobia, class bias and other structures of domination. There are stereotypes about what type of person might consider committing gender-based violence intentionally, and who is categorized as having caused harm unintentionally (Emerick & Yap, 2024). Social categorizations on those who cause gender-based violence include: being uneducated, having poor impulse control, mental illness, lower class backgrounds and those who cannot find fulfilling relationships on their terms. The authors note that in reality, when white men with powerful job titles are exposed in the media for their violence against women, they are suggested to be friendly, respectful of women, family men, and well-spoken. While historical and current stereotypical narratives about Black men frame Black men as violent perpetrators of sexual assault are used as scapegoats and face prosecution at higher rates to uphold values of white supremacy (Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2007). In fact, American researchers have concluded that Black males are more likely to be charged or prosecuted in sexual assault cases compared to their white counterparts (Colon et al., 2018). Punishment has been centralized around criminalizing people who belong to marginalized, over-policed communities, such as racialized and poor people, rather than those who cause the most harm or break the most laws (Davis, 2003).

These critiques of the carceral justice system and carceral punishments are particularly pertinent because not all survivors see justice as criminal intervention (Burns & Sinko, 2021). The authors documented the trauma and revictimization that can come out of criminal court system interventions. There is a consensus across research that survivors predominately seek to share their story, have their input and perspective centred, have questions answered, receive validation, see the person who caused harm feel remorse for causing harm, and receive support

that supports their ongoing healing; the majority of these needs are unaddressed through penal justice systems (Burns & Sinko, 2021; Koss et al., 2014). In brief, carceral ideologies cause harm to those who are most marginalized and are left experiencing disproportionate rates of prosecution, while causing additional harm to survivors through re-traumatization and in opposition to their desires for other outcomes.

Exploring this approach may seem unnecessary for research focused on educational institutions rather than the criminal justice system. However, with the understanding that campus responses to gender-based violence often mirror criminal proceedings and ideologies, this positioning shapes how I contextualize institutional procedures and individuals' experiences, thus making it essential to the analytical framework (Brenner, 2013). With this orientation, I pay close attention to alternative forms of justice that are used on campuses (formally and informally),

Institutional Ethnography and Use of Texts

This research is not an institutional ethnography, although I draw on principles of Dorothy Smith's (2005) theorized methodology of inquiry — institutional ethnography — to investigate everyday actualities located in institutional processes. Her epistemology and approach shape my document analysis to better understand how institutional realities and the texts that accompany formal reporting procedures shape the practices and procedures involved in the daily lives of those involved with campus gender-based violence. In utilizing principles from this framework, I engage in mapping social relations to explore how relations are coordinated and organized by institutional processes. An essential element I will draw upon is Smith's (2005) emphasis on the importance of texts as institutional coordinators within the ruling relations of everyday settings. As such, this informs the use of institutional texts, such as policies, data

reports, and other institutional and procedural documents, because they exist as a major part of the ruling relations within campus responses to gender-based violence.

I prepared for the interviews by familiarizing myself with the documents about sexual violence response that belong to the participant's institution. I ensured that I was familiar with the texts to engage in dialogue with the participants about their experiences with the texts. Additionally, I asked participants about documents they have interacted with in the interview to fill in any gaps of documents I may have missed. For survivors, this included asking about which documents were introduced to them throughout the reporting process. For supporters, this included asking about which policies they view as most relevant in the reporting process.

Smith (2005) illustrates the important role that texts play within research, acting as key coordinators for settings of the everyday world and ruling relations. She draws on Prior's (2003) use of the term, "documents in action" which speaks to how documents are connected to individual actions, how they differ between contexts and their role in constituting phenomena. Pence (2001) utilized institutional ethnography to explore how victims of domestic violence experience safety within a legal system, which is strongly mediated by texts. Throughout the author emphasizes the importance that institutional ethnography has in utilizing institutional accounts from participants to make visible phenomena that are not observable within other contexts, such as courtrooms. Throughout, Pence (2001) demonstrates how it is important to understand the whole way that institutional processes work together, rather than merely identifying their components. Smith (2005) highlights that institutional discourse can be seen as not what prescribes actions within institutional contexts, but how individual actions within institutional contexts become institutionally accountable. By collecting data from survivors, supporters and policy, I paint a picture of the response process in a manner that transcends the

separate identification of individual components. This picture provides insight into the campus ecosystem, in terms of how campuses respond to gender-based violence and offers insight into the current cultural contexts gender-based violence is situated. Offering insight into cultural contexts is done to unveil the systems of power and domination that exist both on campus generally and are upheld within campus response systems.

Methods

This research explores the institutional process of gender-based violence reports within post-secondary institutions in BC through interviews with survivor participants who have experience with the reporting system, with supporters from post-secondary institutions and through the textual analysis of relevant institutional documents. More specifically, I explore how the response process impacts survivors and supporters, and how campus policies guide the reporting process. To do so, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with 6 survivors of gender-based violence who have experienced or attempted to make a report regarding a personal experience of gender-based violence to their post-secondary institution, interviews with 5 support workers from post-secondary institutions, and analyzed the sexual violence policy at each institution. The recruitment criteria included participants from any post-secondary across BC to allow for diversity in institution type, geography, and institutional policy. I engaged in an analysis of each participant's institution's sexual violence policy. A qualitative approach was chosen to focus on the participants' unique understandings, experiences, and individual meaning-making processes (Shankar & Tavcer, 2021). This approach also prioritized the participants' being able to speak for themselves and center their understandings and experiences as central in the data (McHugh, 2020).

Sampling and Recruitment

Recruitment strategies differed for the two sample groups. For the survivor participants, I circulated the Call for Participants (see Appendix A) advertisement via email to student groups, student unions and sexual violence offices across all of the post-secondary institutions across the province covered by the harmonized ethics process (14 total). I emailed student groups that had a relation to the subject matter, such as groups about gender equity and social justice. Some of the groups and unions emailed the Call for Participants to their membership, while others printed out a copy of the poster and hung it up physically in their space. None of the recruitment strategies for this participant group targeted specific individuals. Overall, I did not receive many replies in comparison to the number of emails I sent out, perhaps because they were cold emails to groups and unions that I did not have a prior relationship with. From talking with participants about how they found the Call, I think some groups and unions that did not directly respond to my email still circulated the advertisement. Despite the general lack of response, I succeeded in recruiting just over my goal number of participants. I also posted the Call for Participants on Reddit, though, to my knowledge, I did not successfully recruit anyone from there.

After I interviewed two survivor participants (half of the sample goal), I began recruiting supporters from post-secondary institutions. To recruit supporters, I found the staff members who met the criteria through a Google search and their institutional websites; using the search term “[institution name] sexual violence reporting” and navigating to the “staff” tab on the website, or using the reporting email, if there were not staff profiles. All of them had publicly available email addresses online. The supporters were not required to be from the same institutions as the survivor participants, and if they happened to be from the same institutions as the survivor

participants, this information was not disclosed to participants or in the findings or discussion to maintain confidentiality.

This sampling strategy follows non-probability sampling commonly used for qualitative research, as the goal is not to obtain generalizable results but to gather specific, descriptive and in-depth information about my sample (Hoepfl, 1997). Through non-probability sampling, I relied on convenience sampling by recruiting participants through virtual advertisements (Hoepfl, 1997). My sample included six survivors from three institutions and five supporters from four institutions.

Experts on qualitative interviewing, Baker and Edwards (2012) emphasize that the number of qualitative interviews that should be conducted for a research project differs depending on the topic, time allotted for data collection, and access to other resources. They note that twelve interviews are generally sufficient for in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Informed by this, I interviewed 6 survivor participants and 5 supporter participants.

Prior to the interviews with both participant groups, I read through their institution's sexual violence policy to familiarize myself with the procedures. During the interviews, I inquired about other relevant documents or policies. Participants from either group did not point to any additional policies they interacted with, and my investigation of policies has only included sexual violence-specific policies, which all institutions have – as illustrated in the Literature Review in Chapter 2. I had expected to analyze multiple policy documents per institution. However, BC Legislation requires each institution to have one stand-alone sexual violence policy, which meant there was only one policy to analyze at each institution (Government of BC, 2016). Supporters echoed this, stating that they only relied on the sexual violence policy to

inform the process of reporting. The policies that I drew on corresponded to the following categories of text: Sexual Violence Policy, Sexual Violence Complaints Policy, Student's Rights Policy, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and Sexual Assault Prevention Policy. I found the relevant policy through Google Searching "Institution Name" and "Sexual Violence Policy." As a result of provincial legislation, each institution is required to have its policy available on their website.

In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, I have assigned random pseudonyms and do not name the institutions to which they belong(ed) – instead, I refer to general characteristics of the university, such as size and resources. I do not use direct quotes or pieces of data that may identify the participant or their institution. For the survivor participants, this also ensures that the research production does not include any pieces of information identifying their experience in any public productions/sharing of this knowledge. The confidential and identifying information about all participants is only known by me and my supervisor at the University of Victoria.

Research Site

This research focuses on post-secondary institutions in BC as a site for the research. There is a particular dearth about the context in BC, with what exists in the field focusing predominantly on Ontario and Quebec. In combination with the fact that BC was one of the first provinces to adopt provincial legislation, the provincial context offers an important site of study. By focusing this research on BC specifically, this work begins to fill in the gaps on nationwide understandings of reporting processes and will provide specific context, insights, and recommendations for BC.

Participant Selection Criteria and Process

Survivor Participants

Criteria for survivor participants included: any degree level (certificate, undergraduate or graduate); must have attempted or filed a report about an experience of gender-based violence at a post-secondary institution in BC from 2016 to present; they did not have to be a current student; and had to be a minimum of 19 years of age (to ensure the criteria of minimum risk is met). The year 2016 is chosen as the cut-off date as 2016 is when the province of BC passed legislation requiring post-secondary institutions to create specific legislation for campus sexual violence. The existence of legislation created specific responses to sexual violence, for the first time at many institutions (Dhillon & Hunter, 2016). The introduction of legislation means that survivors who reported before 2016 would have had different policy and legislation requirements, likely shifting the experience of reporting. By focusing on the time frame after provincial legislation adoption, this research offers insights into the role of provincial policy, inquiring into how campuses respond to gender-based violence in light of the provincial mandate.

There were specific identity requirements, although I attempted to reach participants from a broad range of identities and experiences to capture the range of experience that those filing a report experience, including racialized students, LGBTQ+ students, international students, and men who have experienced gender-based violence. This goal was achieved, and my sample included participants with a range of gender identities and sexual orientations, racialized people, and international students. Notably, the one group that was not represented was cisgender men, which may reflect that cis-men are less likely to report gender-based violence than survivors of other genders (Burczycka, 2020).

In the findings, the diversity in participant characteristics is only noted where it is important to the analysis, as providing more details about each participant's characteristics may decrease confidentiality. The diversity in the sample is important because research has shown that students of all identities experience gender-based violence on campus, and students with more marginalized identities experience heightened risks of gender-based violence (Burczycka, 2020). Including participants from a range of identities will help capture the difference in experiences. I have chosen to include those who have filed a report, as well as those who have attempted to file a report because this research aims to understand the institutional reporting process, which includes scenarios where a report was attempted but was not successfully made, or where an individual later changed their mind.

When a potential participant contacted me, I responded to the email to ask for more information to ensure they met the study criteria. If they did, I asked for availability to be interviewed, and if they would prefer to meet in person or on Zoom. I scheduled interviews based on the participant's availability, with the intent to stop after booking five interviews. After I had conducted five interviews, I received an additional email from a potential participant. At this point, I had a sense of patterns in the survivor stories, yet I had not yet reached saturation due to the diversity of each survivor's story. As a result, and after consultation with my supervisor, I decided to move forward with an additional interview.

Campus Support Workers

The use of expert interviews in social research has been widely discussed and used in qualitative research since the early 1990s (Döringer, 2021). In expert interviews, experts are defined as people who hold specific knowledge and privileged access in a decision-making process. In essence, experts are sought during the research process because their knowledge

shapes the field of research. This method is used to provide further insight into the institutional nature of this research by including the decision makers as participants alongside the survivor participants. To do so, I conducted five interviews with institutional sexual violence supporters to understand the institutional and procedural elements of the sexual violence reporting process. The role of this group of participants mirrors the point of the expert interview. However, because this research is survivor-centred, primarily viewing survivors as the experts in their needs, the terminology of the expert interview is not appropriate. Accordingly, I conceptualize these interviews as interviews with sexual violence supporter workers rather than expert interviews. The sexual violence supporters I interviewed are staff members at institutions in BC who are responsible for responding to and addressing gender-based violence reports. These participants held titles such as "Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator" or "Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities."

Three of the five supporters matched these criteria directly. One of the supporters had responded to my email about survivor recruitment, and we began the interview where I had assumed they were a survivor participant. Early in the interview, I realized that they had misunderstood the recruitment information and were a student peer supporter rather than a survivor. I shifted the interview then to the supporter questions. Because this participant was not a paid staff member, I gave them the honoraria that survivors were given. Another of the supporters was a student union support staff member who provided support to students with reporting on campus. During recruitment, I had been recommended to reach out to this person, and given their unique role as support staff outside of the institution, I decided to connect with them. Upon connecting, they were interested in being a research participant and I conducted an interview.

To utilize iterative data collection that unravelled with the project, I did not attempt to conduct interviews with the supporters until I had completed two interviews with survivor participants. Having about half of my interviews done allowed me to utilize the themes and questions that have come up with the survivor participants to inform the types of questions and data I sought to gather from the supporter participants. This method of interviewing the supporters after some of the interviews with survivor participants allowed the supporters to be able to help with “crystallization points” by offering practical and insider knowledge about themes that may have come up with the survivor participants (Bogner et al., 2009).

To mitigate concerns about confidentiality, I have taken several steps to ensure the supporters interviewed are kept confidential. This includes using pseudonyms, referring to a participant’s general institutional characteristics areas rather than naming their institution and avoiding using direct quotes or pieces of data that may identify the participant or institution.

Consent and Ethics

This research follows the protocols set out by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board to ensure that the research meets the standards of a master's thesis, and the ethical standards required. I received ethics approval from the Harmonized Provincial Ethics Board, which was required for this study because of the engagement with post-secondary institutions outside of the University of Victoria. Harmonized Ethics was granted from the University of Victoria, BC Institute of Technology, Camosun College, Capilano University, Douglas College, Emily Carr University, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Langara College, Royal Roads University, Simon Fraser University, Thompson Rivers University, University of British Columbia, University of British Columbia – Okanagan, University of Northern BC, University of Fraser Valley, Vancouver Community College and Vancouver Island University.

Though I did not collect data from all of these institutions, the ethics harmonization agreement in BC is required when data collection is conducted at other partner institutions in the province.

All survivors and supporters interviewed signed an informed consent form (see appendixes B and C) that detailed: the purpose of the research, their rights as participants, potential risks and benefits of participating in the research, my contact information, my supervisor's contact information, contact information for the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria, the ability for them to leave the interview at any time, a description of the contexts in which their data may be used, information about how I will maintain their confidentiality, and how to withdraw permission as a participant. In addition, on the consent form, I included information stating that the details shared in the interviews will be changed slightly or omitted to maintain confidentiality for all participants. The consent forms included information about gender-based violence support services in the participant's community. When I met each participant for their interview, we went over this information verbally to make sure they understood and consented to what was in the form, and I asked them if they had any questions. At this time, I opened up space for the participant to let me know if there were any additional confidentiality measures, they would like me to take and that they could let me know if there are elements of the interviews that they may share that they do not want directly quoted in the research. The participants were informed they could contact me in the future if there were additional confidentiality measures or parts of their interview they would like omitted.

At the end of the interviews, I asked participants if they wanted to receive a copy of their transcript to review after the interview. Participants were informed that they did not have to review their transcript or participate in continued engagement. This option was offered because continued engagement offers two central benefits that align with the research design. First, as

briefly highlighted earlier, including participants in the research analysis process fits within a trauma-informed approach by ensuring that participants feel they have autonomy in the research and creating trust with participants (Campbell et al., 2019). For instance, it allows participants to revise their data to confirm they are comfortable with what they shared in the interview being used in the research. Second, allowing participants to review transcripts and themes is a strategy of member checking, a practice where findings are taken back to participants to determine if the participants view the findings as true or accurate (Tracy, 2010). Member checks enhance the credibility of qualitative research and help determine if participants find the research analysis comprehensible and meaningful. Because feminist research is oriented towards creating social change, it is of particular importance for this research that the participants find the research comprehensible and meaningful. In practice, only one of the 11 participants asked for their transcript for review, and they did not provide any revisions or changes to their transcript. However, participants seemed to be appreciative of this as an option. Many participants noted that they would be happy to review their transcript if it would help the research but did not feel the need to engage in review otherwise.

Survivor participants received a \$20 honorarium for participating in the research. An honorarium was given as a monetary symbol of respect and appreciation for the time survivor participants took to engage in the research and in appreciation for the knowledge they shared through their interviews. The honorarium was distributed to participants after they completed an interview. No participant withdrew permission, though if they had, they would have been given the honorarium. The honoraria were distributed via e-transfer or cash, depending on the participant's preference. Supporter participants did not receive an honorarium as they are

employed by an institution; other than the exception of the student peer support volunteer, who received the same honorarium as the survivors (\$20).

Trauma-Informed Research

Due to the nature of this research, the research design must account for consent and potential impacts on participants in more specific ways than general ethics protocols require. As Campbell et al. (2019) outline, a trauma-informed research perspective is imperative when researching issues related to gender-based violence. They note that trauma-informed research perspectives go beyond the institutional review boards' regulations and general requirements of the ethics and consent processes "to develop research procedures that fully support" (Campbell et al., 2019, p. 4765) the participants' choice, control, and empowerment.

Trauma-informed research practice helps promote participants' physical and psychological safety or recovery and further reduces the potential for harm from re-traumatization that can occur from speaking about traumatic experiences (Campbell et al., 2019). The authors outline various trauma-informed principles adapted for research that deals with sexual violence, including: recognition of the impact of violence and victimization – which includes verbally recognizing the impacts of victimization and providing affirmations to the survivor when needed; identifying recovery from trauma as a primary goal – support for this principle includes debriefing after interviews and offering information and referrals to support services; striving to maximize the participant's choices, which includes providing choices, options and a sense of control to participants throughout the interview and entire research process.

An essential aspect of interviewing participants regarding sensitive topics is to ensure that participants feel safe, comfortable, and heard in the interview process. Bhavnani and colleagues

(2020) emphasize that critical research aims to share the stories of those who have been historically silenced, which entails centring participants' lived experiences and respecting the stories, silences, and meanings that they choose to share in the research. I engaged with this practice through active listening to show there is no right or wrong answer and working to genuinely and empathetically understand the participants' feelings (Campbell et al., 2019). Active listening can include understanding body language and tone of voice, along with verbal and non-verbal signs of interest and attention such as eye contact, head nods, and verbal acknowledgements.

Due to the sensitive nature of interviews that discuss gender-based violence, it is important to highlight that I have received formal training on the topic of responding to gender-based violence disclosures and response in mental health crisis situations; in addition to working in a field that revolves around gender-based violence for six years.

Data Collection

This research utilized semi-structured qualitative interviews for data collection that were guided by two separate interview guides (see appendices D and E) one for each participant group. Semi-structured interviews fall between structured interviews, which follow similar protocols to standardized questionnaires, and unstructured interviews, which lack preset structure and are left wide open to the participant (Brinkmann, 2020). While semi-structured interviews exist in between the two other interview formats, allowing participants to share information about their experiences openly, thereby increasing the potential of knowledge production through dialogue between participant and researcher. The author notes, that in contrast to unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews help to ensure that the conversation does not stray far from the research objectives and interview guide. To center participant's control, I began the

interview by asking them if they would prefer to be guided through questions (written in the interview guide) or if they would like to tell me about their experience or work (depending on the participant), and I could ask follow-up questions based on the topics covered in the interview guide. The responses were split quite evenly across these two options, which showed that this was an important inclusion in the interview protocols.

Before each interview, I reviewed the participant's institutional sexual violence policy so that I could draw on it throughout the interview. It was important to have the context of the policy to help me follow the procedures with ease and reduce the number of clarifying questions I had to ask about the process. Engaging with the policy beforehand also allowed me to ask more meaningful follow-up questions. I used the texts as an additional piece of data, alongside the interviews, to serve as a document demonstrating what the institution shared publicly about its process. In this sense, I used the policy documents to provide a baseline understanding of the institution's process, where interviews reinforced which parts of the policy were followed, and which were not.

The interviews for survivor participants took between 39-80 minutes. The interviews for the supporter participants took between 35-75 minutes. The difference in interview timing was dependent on how much the participant wanted to share. For survivors who went through the whole reporting process or supporters who had held their role for a long time, the interviews tended to be longer.

I have taken a constructivist approach to the interviewing process. This means that the dialectical nature of the interview is of utmost importance and that, as the interviewer, I understand that the participants are not merely deposits through which to reveal answers to the questions but that they are real people who have narrative complexity and may have

multivocality or contextual shifts throughout the process (Brinkmann, 2020). This stance is crucial within a trauma-informed research framework, as one of the primary goals of this approach is to acknowledge and recognize the impacts that structural violence can have or has had on the participants, which entails treating the participants as people who may not be able to answer each question immediately, confidently or completely (Campbell et al., 2019). To facilitate this, I attempted to reassure participants that it was okay if they did not remember every detail of an experience or process and that this was normal. For survivor participants, I also assured them that responding to the questions with anger, cynicism, or a lack of confidence was normal and understandable.

Setting

The interviews took place in person or through a web-conferencing platform (Zoom). When a participant chose to have the interview in person, I asked where they would like to have the interview to center their choice setting. For interviews that took place in person, I arranged a private space in consultation with the participant. For interviews that took place on Zoom, I called from a private office at the University of Victoria with no one else present, a private study room from a public library or the library at the University of Victoria, or from my home in a room no one else is present in. For the participants to be most comfortable in the interview, I recommended that they join the interview call from a private space with headphones.

Analysis

I recorded the interviews to facilitate transcription, coding, and data analysis. I recorded the in-person interviews directly on my personal and password protected cellphone, with cloud services turned off, following ethics guidelines. For the virtual interviews, I saved the recording of the Zoom interview to the University of Victoria's cloud server and utilized auto-transcription.

My access to the University's cloud is password protected with dual authentication enabled, and only I have access. The University of Victoria's Cloud servers comply with the encryption requirements required by the University's Human Research Ethics Board. This process ensures that the data and recordings of the participants will be kept safely and securely.

The data was coded inductively and iteratively, using thematic analysis to allow themes to emerge from the data and generated through collaboration between myself and the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Carter & Little, 2007). The interviews with participants and textual analysis will follow a thematic analysis procedure. The coding followed the thematic coding outline as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006); first, I began with a familiarization with data, including transcribing the data and familiarizing myself with the transcripts by reading and making initial notes; I followed these analysis steps closely throughout the data analysis. Once I collected, transcribed and coded the data, I began the analysis. Due to its critical orientation, this process focused on interpreting coded data through theories of power, oppression and liberation while considering the limitations of theoretical perspectives applied (Tracy, 2010). Due to my orientation to inductive reduction, the themes are strongly linked to the data rather than linking the data directly to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, the data is still linked to answering the research question, which has allowed the research question to remain the same as planned during the research design.

Chapter 4: Sexual Violence Support Worker's Findings

This chapter explicates the response system from the supporter's point of view – staff members on campus with the role of responding to disclosures, and providing support to survivors. Here, I provide details about what supporters do in their roles on campus. One of the responsibilities of a supporter is providing outreach and education to all the students on campus, intending to raise awareness and educate students about sexual violence and campus resources. The other main responsibility is providing direct support to student survivors on campus. These two central responsibilities and the aligned tasks will be discussed in this chapter.

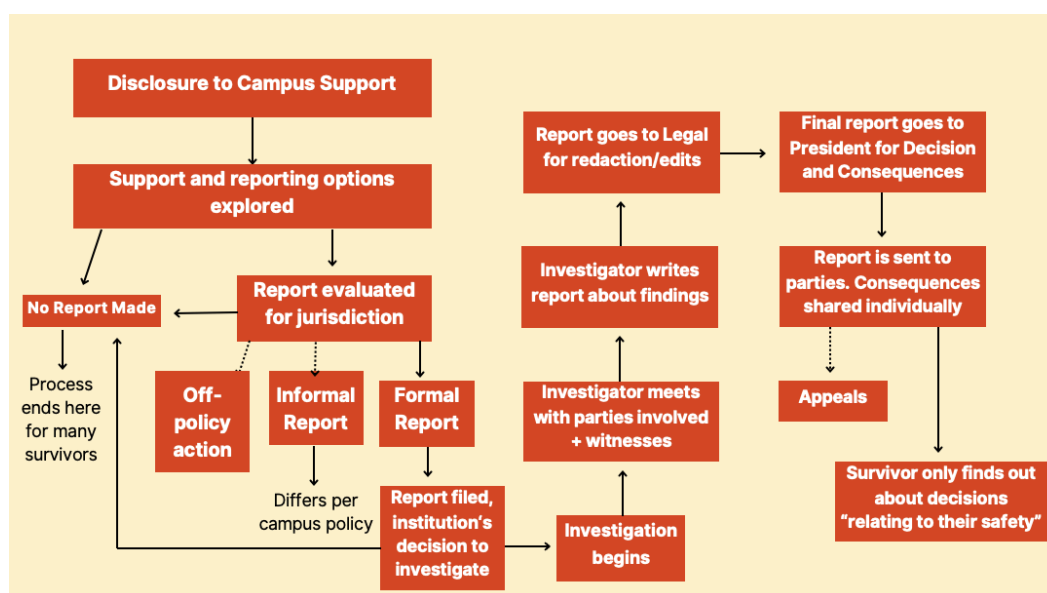
To begin, I first provide a brief overview of the support procedures that different campuses use to respond to gender-based violence. Next, I discuss the support and education activities that supporters engage in to raise awareness about resources for gender-based violence on campus and discuss what types of support are provided. This includes alternate support routes through the student union and peer support venues. Then, I outline and discuss the support options for people who have caused harm. This is followed by a discussion of the types of reporting, investigation procedures, and how they are guided by policy. Lastly, I highlight some of the barriers that supporters experience when trying to provide support. When discussing supporters, most of the time I use the supporter's specific pseudonym. However, at other times, I refer to supporters generally, in aggregate, without including their pseudonyms for confidentiality reasons.

Structure of Sexual Violence Support

In the Literature Review Chapter, I broadly overviewed how sexual violence support in BC is structured, legislated, and reviewed. Despite there being a formal structure, legislation, and review process in place meant to guide campuses, my findings reveal discrepancies and

differences in how supports are offered across BC campuses. Yet, the findings also demonstrate broad structure to campus procedures that remain consistent across the province. While not all campus policies contain the same amount of detail, there is a similar chain of events seen across campuses that supporters appear to follow a disclosure of sexual violence, outlined below in Figure 4.1. The solid arrows denote the expected motions the report goes through, while the dotted lines indicate potential options available on some campuses. The arrows with dotted lines indicate an event that may occur if the survivor or person who caused harm (in the case of appeals) chooses it. The arrows with solid lines indicate the next step in the process. It should be noted, however, that not all survivors experience the reporting pathway as explained in Figure 4.1; for instance, many survivors do not move past the disclosure stage. Further explanation will be fleshed out in Chapter 5, where I discuss survivor experiences.

Figure 4.1. Reporting Process



Notably, each campus has designated staff responsible for responding to sexual violence, whether it is their only role or part of a more extensive portfolio. Typically, the office or person who receives disclosures (in this research, the “supporter”) also provides emotional support,

resources including academic support, and overall guidance throughout the reporting process to the survivor. The supporters interviewed for this research each had existing qualifications or experience providing emotional support to people who had experienced sexual violence. However, this is not regulated through legislation or necessarily consistent across the province – meaning it is up to the institution’s discretion what qualifications their supporters have. After someone discloses, supporters introduce the different reporting options to the survivor, which include both formal and informal pathways for reporting (although not all B.C. institutions offer both types of reporting). Institutions are required by provincial legislation to have formal reporting pathways on campus. However, they are not required to offer informal reporting. Institutions offer informal reporting based on their discretion, and it varies across the province. There is no formal oversight regarding which options supporters explain to survivors, and a large emphasis is placed on the supporter guiding the survivor based on their judgement. This means that it is a supporter’s choice in terms of which options are presented to the survivor when it comes to supporting and reporting options. Moreover, the reporting and support options the survivor chooses are guided by how the options are explained by the supporter.

Formal reporting pathways often mimic the criminal justice system, and these reports involve an investigation that seeks to find objective facts about a case. Then, the decision maker decides whether the case is founded or unfounded based on the findings of the investigation. The decision maker varies across institutions but typically the decision maker is a President, Vice-President or other high-ranking leadership official. Most often, the goal of a formal report is to create consequences for the person who caused harm. Informal reporting pathways differ from campus to campus, and supporter to supporter, centring on accountability and restorative justice principles. An informal report often combines the institution’s formal reporting process with

principles of restorative education. The role of “off-policy action” comprises actions the supporter may take or provide to the survivor based on their interpretations of the situation, which are not a part of the policy guidelines. “Off-policy action” will be further discussed later in this chapter. If a survivor chooses to pursue a formal report, an investigation will be initiated. An investigation may also be required for informal reports on some campuses. Once the survivor makes a decision about which reporting path to take, they are informed about the parts of campus policy deemed relevant, by the supporter, to their safety. An appeal can be filed by the survivor or person who caused harm after this point; otherwise, the case is considered closed. These procedures are not the same across campuses, though they remain consistent in sharing the same principles and structure of the reporting procedure.

Table 4.1. Supporter Characteristics

Pseudonym	Participant Number	Gender	Role	Team-Based Approach	Sexual Violence Policy	Time in Role
Sophia	1	Woman	Volunteer Peer Supporter	Yes, volunteer and staff team	Yes	Short-term
Zoe	2	Woman	Supporter	Yes, large team	Yes	Long-term
Emily	3	Woman	Supporter	Yes, small team	Yes	Long-term, part time
Chelsea	4	Woman	Supporter	Yes, large team	Yes	Long-term
Kathy	5	Woman	Student Union Supporter	No	Yes	New

The supporter participants held a variety of roles on campus and personal characteristics that impacted their experiences on campus. I highlight this before moving on to contextualize where these experiences come from and as a reminder of the vast range in how support is

provided on campus. Table 4.1 identifies these characteristics and other information about the supporter participants. While greater details were provided in the interviews, to maintain confidentiality, these are the main characteristics that will be discussed. The aim of describing characteristic data is to build an understanding of how different institutional resourcing, commitments, and structures shape the experiences of the supporters and campus response process (Lee & Wong, 2019). All the supporters identified as cisgender women.

The role of the supporter indicates different capacities, training, and duties. Sophia's role as a volunteer student support worker on her campus is an example of a supporter role with less commitment, training, and structure. She attends shifts once a week for a few hours at a time and has held this role for about two years. Though the role does not relate to her schoolwork, Sophia volunteers in this role because she feels it is essential and inspires her. In comparison, Zoe, Emily and Chelsea both have paid roles that they have held for years and were extensively trained and educated in anti-sexual violence initiatives before taking these roles. Kathy, on the other hand, is newer to her paid role and works under the student union, rather than the institution like the other paid supporters. The variation in their roles shaped the type of support they offered, and their experiences of supporting survivors. This is important because, as I will show below, it impacts the comfort supporters feel in their role, which in turn shapes the actions and risks they take. The fact that the supporters each belonged to campuses with sexual violence policies shows that each campus has created systems and structures for responding to sexual violence; they acknowledge it as an issue on their campuses by investing in campus resources. The workplace environments also varied across locations and demonstrated differences in resourcing. Some supporters worked by themselves, while others worked as a part of a larger

team. It was more common for the supporters to work in team environments. The sizes of the teams varied from two people to more than ten.

Support and Educational Activities

Campus Outreach and Education Initiatives

Supporters reflected that one of their most important roles on campus was getting information about sexual violence and support in front of students and survivors. Supporters discussed a range of strategies they relied on for outreach around topics of sexual violence. Primary strategies included having posters up around campus in spaces like bathroom mirrors and stalls. Posters contain educational content like information about the range of behaviours that constitute sexual violence, accessible information about sexual consent, information about positions of power and sexual violence regarding relationships with professors and teaching assistants, and general information that sexual violence supports exist on campus. Often, posters revolve around a specific campaign run by the sexual violence office and include language like “You Are Not Alone,” “Safe Sex is Sexy,” “We Believe You,” and “If you are in a relationship with a faculty member, it is a prohibited relationship. But it is not your fault” and “[Institution name] has a sexual violence policy that protects survivors of sexual violence.” Many supporters emphasized the importance of using plain, everyday language to make outreach materials accessible. Supporters utilize a variety of strategies that centralize public outreach to the campus community in an attempt to create awareness about sexual violence.

Supporters reflected that their outreach strategies are informed by the information they receive through the office’s direct support work. All the supporters that I interviewed note that data on campus sexual violence prevalence are collected from the disclosures their offices received. The data are used to track patterns and find ways to address common patterns on

campus. Chelsea, a supporter whose role includes both response and education, notes certain tensions here though saying: “When you separate offices...like a [separate] support office and investigation office, there can be a real disconnect between the prevention and response work for an institution as a whole.” Here, Chelsea explains that an office that holds the dual role of support and outreach helps centre outreach reflecting the sexual violence trends on campus. For example, Chelsea’s office created alcohol and consent outreach materials like posters to be hung around campus because most disclosures pertained to incidents relating to alcohol. Another supporter notes that her office “Created some alcohol and consent content, and we created a campaign [with the content] because 99% of 1,000 student incidents involved alcohol.”

Outreach also includes direct and in-person connections. This includes activities like hosting information booths during residence move-in, workshops and educational sessions for students in residence, and education during student onboarding. Chelsea notes, “We have a lot of messaging about the office and what we do through...onboarding and orientation. There’s lots of specific education done through residence.” Supporters discussed the role of workshops for staff and faculty as well. Staff and faculty often receive disclosures and provide referrals. For instance, Emily shares,

[Academic Advisors] were super keen on the education cause they’re like, “We’ll be sitting with a student, and they have sort of a dip in their in their transcript,” so when they ask about it... they will often just get like sort of a casual disclosure at that point.

Here, Emily reveals how the role of supporters is not only to support students directly but also to teach other staff and faculty on campus how to support students.

The supporters spoke about the importance of creating widespread awareness of information about sexual violence and available resources to encourage self-referrals, and referrals from friends, staff members or faculty. Zoe reflected that when students come to her, they often say, “Oh, I saw your sign in the bathroom,” or “Wow, I didn’t realize until reading your sign I realized that it was actually sexual violence, and that’s why it felt so bad.” Emily also noted that with each educational activity or campaign, there is often an increase in students accessing services. Overall, supporters emphasized the importance of their education and outreach work as key to building awareness about sexual violence as a problem and about the availability of support on campus to make students aware of resources in case they or a friend experience sexual violence. Having discussed how supporters make survivors aware of available resources, the next section will discuss what these supports entail.

Campus Supports for Survivors

One of the main goals of sexual violence offices and supporters relates to connecting survivors with resources. For example, Emily told me:

The bulk of students are looking for some sort of either emotional support or connection to specialized services and also a lot [are looking for] academic accommodations and [supports to help] mitigate the impacts on their academic life. Not a ton of people looking to report. To be honest, like. I think that's a pretty small chunk of the people that we would have supported to report. Of course there are some, but it’s quite small. I would say it was more so around connecting with resources and those academic accommodations that is a pretty significant piece.

Other supporters echoed the sentiment that their main role pertains more closely to providing survivors connections to supports and resources, rather than around reporting.

The types of support available range across situations and survivor's needs. However, the support discussed by supporters typically falls into three categories: emotional or counselling support, safety planning, and academic support. Emotional or counselling support can happen within the sexual violence office, where the survivor receives direct counselling support from staff in the office. Emotional support can entail a referral to on-campus counselling services or external counsellors in the community. Safety planning can include a variety of responses, with a focus on ensuring the survivor is safe on campus. For example, this can look like engaging with residence staff to move the survivor's residence. Based on the interviews with supporters, academic accommodations are the most prevalent form of support given to survivors. Academic accommodations focus on providing alternative options for the survivor to complete their academic requirements. These accommodations include late withdrawal from a course, rescheduling or deferring tests and exams, extensions on specific assignments or an extended timeline to complete course materials. There is also a piece of safety planning that overlaps with academic accommodations; this would include accommodations like having a survivor write their exams in the professor's office to avoid the person who caused harm or requesting that the professor not put the survivor and person who caused harm in the same group for discussions and group projects.

The support available to survivors is almost all directly related to the campus. From the supporters' interviews, they do not seem to be able to offer much support to survivors that do not relate to their life on campus, or resources available to them on campus. The supports available also center around adjustments and shifts to the survivor's life. Zoe expressed that this harms survivors,

It's often on the survivor to drop out of classes, and it's never really an option where the [person who caused harm] to like help with safety planning... there's nothing that enables us to do stuff that changes the [person who caused harm's] life around, even if there's a report, really.

Campus supports are not allowed to intervene in the person who caused harm's campus life unless, or until, there is an investigation that has found them responsible for causing harm. Here, Zoe highlights that even when there is a report, the supporter's ability to ask the person who caused harm to be responsible for changing their life is still limited.

Procedures to Receive Support. There are a variety of support options available to survivors, and here I detail the procedures and steps the survivor and supporter take during the support-seeking process. Once a survivor reaches out to the supporter or their affiliated office, the supporter meets with them (often in person but this can be done virtually or by phone) to discuss available options. This conversation between the supporter and survivor includes discussing what would be most helpful to the survivor; the conversation and follow-up actions differ from case to case. Survivors can report the incident, but a decision relating to the course of action does not need to be made at the first meeting. At this point, the supporter will walk the survivor through the different reporting options available on their campus (reporting options shown in Figure 4.1).

The option to formally report the incident is provided, but often a decision is not made about whether to report from the first meeting. Zoe noted that survivors frequently first seek support based on safety concerns,

People are mostly looking for counselling and support usually. Also they're really worried for their safety on campus, or the person that harmed them like knows where they lived, or they keep seeing around, or they're sharing a classroom.

The supporters emphasized the importance of using these first meetings to get to know the survivor and determine what the survivor is looking for and how they could best support the survivor.

Supporters view their role as being kind, approachable, and informative to survivors. When I asked what this looked like, Chelsea said, “When they come in, we try to be really personal and friendly and low barrier. And just, say who we are, what we do, and then we let them make a choice.” Emily sees her role as “helping [the survivor] to have all the information, to make a decision that works best for their life and then supporting them through whatever that decision is.” Zoe noted that part of her role is to help survivors see how their case fits within the policy requirements of the incident relating to campus:

You have to find some reason for it to have some sort of connection [to the campus]. And usually, when people do it on their own, they won't make that connection. We know what gets passed to jurisdiction, so we help sort of lead them through leading questions to help them get them there.

In this way, the supporters view their roles as the facilitator or guide of the available reporting and support options, informing survivors about what is possible for their specific case. Emily describes the structure of the first meeting as,

The [supporter] sitting down and asking what the survivor feels is necessary for us to hear and sort of trying to get at...what kind of support would be most helpful for them. It's really different for each survivor depending on what they need, what sort of supports

they want, how they want to do it, whether they want a follow up, even how they want to reach out to their instructors like whether they want the office to do it... It was a lot of [explaining] because the institutions are so bureaucratic, and there's so many different processes for things. A lot of folks [survivors] didn't even really know what their options were... Lots of helping people realize that where options, like “you don't have to like fully fail this course, we could actually apply for a backdated withdrawal, we could apply for to defer it for six weeks.”

Similarly, Chelsea describes the first meeting as heavily guided by the survivor,

They can either make a disclosure and then we can figure out what they need or [they can tell us] what kind of support they want. And we'll walk them through all those pieces, or sometimes we just sit. We always offer that they don't actually have to share anything with us at all, including their name, they can just ask questions. And [the survivor's questions are usually] around supports, resolution options, things like that.

The first step of the reporting process is to provide the survivor with information about the options that are available to them. At this stage, the conversation depends on what the survivor is seeking and focuses on explaining the different options.

Supporters emphasized that they do their best to follow the survivor's lead. Zoe shared that sometimes survivors seek unconventional support, “We just try to figure out what healing looks like for them, and we try to explore that.” One survivor that Zoe worked with did not want traditional support from the office but wanted to take a series of fitness classes in the community, but did not have the monetary resources to sign up on her own. Zoe's office reached out to the fitness organization, and they agreed to cover the costs for this student's classes. In this case, Zoe explained to me: “We do things like that that may not look like the policy. But we try to figure

out support services that would work for people.” This type of story exemplifies how support resources are tailored to each survivor.

Supporters emphasized that part of their role is to help survivors learn to identify what they need as well. Zoe noted that the survivors she works with often do not identify that they require academic accommodations by themselves. They usually come with concerns about their safety or seeking emotional support,

We're the ones that are like, “You need this” or saying, “I think it’s time to reduce your course load to 3,” or “Maybe you need some extensions,” and the student’s like “No, it's fine. I'll get through it.” We’re often the ones recommending it, people aren't reaching out because they need that.

From the supporters’ perspectives, there are tensions of discomfort from the survivor’s end in learning how to identify and ask for what they need. Zoe offered a reflection about how survivors can learn to ask for what they need through forming an ongoing relationship,

We have a student that's been working with us for 3 years...and we're continuing to work with her. Now, she's like, “I need this extension.” When we can work with people, they're like, “okay, I'm deserving, and I feel good about taking what’s available to me when I need it.”

There was a consensus across the interviews that survivors often did not have the skills to identify and ask for the support they required. Emily emphasized that she has seen an increase in students requiring academic accommodations towards the end of the semester, saying “A lot of folks are like, ‘I can do this. I just gotta get through the semester.’ and then it comes to the end, or just after this semester, and they're like, ‘everything fell apart’.” Zoe hypothesized this disconnection is rooted within neoliberal ideologies that centre individualization, leading

survivors to think, “I don't want to be that person that asked for it. Will it make me look bad? Or, like, why am I deserving of that when other people are probably going through similar things?” Through these quotes, supporters see themselves as integral not only to making survivors aware of their support options but also to helping them process accepting support.

The variable ways that supporters describe supporting survivors shows that the support from campus sexual violence offices is not standardized and is guided by the survivor. However, the support remains centred around referrals to counselling, safety planning on campus, and providing academic accommodations to the survivor. These types of support require shifts to the survivor's life and do not require accountability from the person who caused harm. There are also not many resources available outside of campus resources. If a student survivor is referred to off-campus counselling, they are responsible for paying for that separate resource out of pocket or through insurance. There are other types of support available on many campuses that are provided through peer-support models or student unions.

Peer and Student Union Support Alternatives

As I will discuss further in Chapter 5, the survivor participants spoke about the role of peer and student union support on campus. For many survivors, these were the first resources that they engaged with. Based on the survivor participants' experiences, it appears that students tend to be more aware that student union supports exist than the formal support office. Peer and student union support alternatives are an important part of survivors' experiences of seeking support on campus. Supporters also indicated that they often receive referrals from the peer or student union support alternatives on their campus.

Role of Sexual Violence Specific and General Supports

In contrast to the formal institutional supports, student union and peer support resources are often not specific to sexual violence and more broadly focus on student support with wellness, which sexual violence is seen as adjacent to. Across my interviews with supporters, there are different views on whether sexual violence support should be specific or generalized. Chelsea, an institutional supporter, highlighted that sexual violence must be responded to as a unique issue to capture its widespread, systemic nature and its difference from other student conduct issues. In contrast, other supporters highlighted the importance of offering less specific support, to make support more accessible. Student union supporter Kathy works for a student union support office to provide resources to students facing a wide variety of issues. The student union support office can provide emotional support, referrals to off-campus resources, and aid with bureaucracy around institutional processes. Kathy deals with a range of student issues that range from extra-curriculars to disclosures of sexual violence. She echoed the importance of specific sexual violence resources but also emphasized the importance of offering broader resources as a low-barrier first point of access. She noted,

I think not every person who's been through that experience wants to go to a sexual violence office either and there's still some stigma there [for the survivor internally and socially] ...I suspect that [student union support can] feel like a more neutral support team that maybe is a less scary option because you might connect with us for any number of reasons. And it sort of gets around the fear of reaching out for a very specialized kind of support. And [gets around] the knowledge of having to identify 'I'm having a really hard time in my class, and I need support' versus 'I'm having a really hard time because I'm traumatized' is kind of a different identification.

Kathy views her support office as “more neutral” than specific sexual violence support because the office offers support for *all* student issues on campus. Kathy also identified that students may experience internal stigma or stigma from their peers, which may discourage them from seeking sexual violence support. She has seen students come forward for support who can identify that they are not doing well but do not share an experience of sexual violence until they have talked with her. Kathy thinks this happens because students often disclose to her after visiting her office a few times, focusing the first visits on topical issues relating to school, like frustrations with group projects. Other times, students may want to seek support without identifying themselves consciously as a survivor – which visiting a sexual violence support office may require. For Kathy, having an office for support with a variety of student issues gives students a lower-barrier access point to seeking support for sexual violence.

Student Union and Peer Support Procedures

Like the institutional supporters, student unions and peer support offices also follow a set of procedures. The procedures tend to be less bureaucratic and complex than those at the institutional offices. Typically, when Kathy receives a disclosure of sexual violence if she has consent from the student, she does a soft transition of the student over to the specific sexual violence support on campus. However, if the student prefers, she can continue supporting them without connecting them to the sexual violence office. Here, a soft transition refers to referring the student to the other office, with a transfer of their information via email, so that they do not need to retell their story. When Kathy does continue to support a student, she plays a similar role to institutional sexual violence support. She can support the student through academic accommodations, emotional support, advocacy and support throughout the investigation process. If a case goes to investigation, Kathy’s role is summarized here,

Being present wherever the student is interacting with the policy, the procedure or the institution. Making sure that I'm there in the capacity as witness so that I am watching for procedural fairness, appropriate interaction between the institution and the student... .. [I take] lots and lots of notes [during meetings with the investigations committee] so the student doesn't have to worry about that and doesn't have to worry about not remembering things. And then always doing a debrief after with the student to check in see how they're doing help them arrange aftercare if they need it. Talking about, 'how did that go? What are next steps? What sort of a timeline am I looking at for next steps,' sort of helping them manage how to anticipate the process will unfold at each point.

As a part of her advocacy support, Kathy has advocated for students when something happens that is not appropriate; she states, "If the process is not unfolding in an appropriate way [sometimes it's] because the policy or procedure is inappropriate, or because [the policy is] not being followed." When I asked when that would happen, Kathy said,

Typically, whatever's going on sort of pauses, and the decision makers will excuse themselves for a minute or two and have a conversation and then come up with a solution and say, 'Okay, we understand you're concerned about X. We would like to propose that we go forward with Y.' I have a caucus [with the student] and have a check in and make sure that [the resolution] feels okay. And then we move on from there. So, it could be just a little thing in the moment, or it could be a much larger conversation of 'you know this investigation is not appropriate and is not safe for my students, and we will need to meet to talk about these concerns and come up with an alternate process.' And the students and I will just go. And of course, I would never do that without the students' consent, but at

the same time, sometimes the student just wants to be done, and they're willing to sort of be trampled a bit in the process.

Through playing an advocacy role, Kathy describes how she provides support to students going through an investigation by taking notes and witnessing the process.

The other part of Kathy's advocacy focuses on ensuring students are treated fairly and holding that standard: "The students I work with... [are often in situations] the policy can't predict, and then it becomes finding a way out." For example, during investigations, students can be so desperate for the investigation to end that they are willing to do or share anything, and part of Kathy's role is to ensure their rights are maintained even when the student is desperate to have the investigation end. For students just seeking support resources, Kathy has seen a gap in policy not being broad enough to provide support for students dealing with unprocessed trauma from childhood, like sexual abuse. In cases like these, Kathy will use the policy in a vague or nuanced way to advocate for the students to receive the accommodations they need. For Kathy, witnessing investigations feels like it increases accountability across the institution in how interactions with students are handled because there is a separate party watching and bringing attention to unfair processes.

Sophia, a student peer supporter, explained she also provides general student wellness support in her peer support role. Students come to peer support with a range of issues, ranging from school stress to sexual violence disclosures. Like Kathy, Sophia works closely with the institutional support office. When a student comes to peer support with a disclosure, Sophia described that her role is to guide the student towards institutional support, "I mainly work as like that first point of contact for students and [say]; 'Hey, I feel like these resources available on campus would meet your need. Do you wanna explore that?'" If a student consents to shifting to

a more specific resource, the peer support worker will walk with the student to the specific support, and the relationship with peer support ends there.

The forms of support that both Kathy and Sophia provide most often refer and redirect students to formal institutional supports. In this way, student union and peer support options offer a different point of entry to sexual violence support rather than providing specific support themselves. Kathy, in her role as a paid worker for the student union, can provide more extensive support than Sophia can in her role as a volunteer peer supporter. In summary, this section has reviewed the different pathways for seeking support on campus. Alternative resources for providing support often exist on campuses through peer support or student unions, though the mandate and resources within these supports mean that they have diminished capabilities to support survivors.

Reporting Procedures

As discussed in the preceding section, to begin the reporting process, the supporter explains the options available to the survivor and answers any questions. All the supporters emphasized that they focus on what the supporter thinks the survivor needs. There is no consistent language or script that supporters follow. However, to avoid influencing the survivor's decisions, the supporters attempt to provide the options neutrally. Chelsea considers what the survivor is seeking through a list of questions she often asks,

How do you want to feel at the end of this process? What does the outcome look like?
What are your ultimate hopes and dreams? And we really anchor what we do in that. And then we say, okay, well, what I'm hearing from you is... I never tell someone, "No, you can't do that." I will decline a report if it's not in our jurisdiction. But I don't make arbitrary decisions about the value of the process.

Zoe described relying on similar cues from the survivor; “We kind of [watch] their signs when they're like, ‘Oh, that is something I want to do.’ Then we go through [the reporting option they are interested in] more, we explain what it looks.” From the supporter’s descriptions, no one path, phrase, or line of thought is used with each survivor when providing them with reporting options. Across the board, supporters rely on a conversational approach and engage the survivor’s decision-making to inform them how they will proceed.

Informal Reporting Pathway

Informal reporting pathways are one of the reporting options that a survivor can choose at some postsecondary institutions. Institutions in BC are not required to have informal reporting pathways like they are required to have formal reporting pathways. There is significant variation in terms of whether campuses have informal reporting processes and what these processes look like. Across campuses, informal reporting pathways centre principles of restorative justice (discussed more below) and remove formal decision-making from the procedure, substituting it with voluntary agreements from both the survivor and the person who caused harm. Procedures encompassing these principles vary from campus to campus. Chelsea, Emily, and Zoe are all on campuses with some form of informal reporting. Notably, the supporters' knowledge about informal reporting pathways is much more robust than the policy language around informal reporting options.

Survivors are informed of informal reporting options when the supporter explains their options. Chelsea’s campus has an informal reporting process that survivors choose frequently. The survivors’ desires shape the outcomes of this pathway,

We need to understand, like what they, what that looks like for them. So, it can be anything anybody wants. It could be a healing circle if that’s what they requested...it is

most often educational conversations or sort of facilitating conversations...it's designed to be informal. It's not designed to be overly bureaucratic because it's designed to be restorative.

The flexibility of this reporting option makes it more appealing to many survivors, who are allowed to focus on their wants and needs instead of following a strict process like formal reporting. Zoe works at a campus with an informal reporting process, though it is not a frequently chosen reporting option. To access the informal reporting option, a survivor has to begin the formal reporting process; when filling out the report, they indicate they want to go through an informal process. Survivors that Zoe works with are often more hesitant to choose the informal process because they must go through the formal process to reach the informal process, regardless of their preference for informality.

Informal processes are much less thoroughly described in policy documents than their formal counterparts because of their more flexible approach. From what supporters shared, survivors' knowledge and understanding of this process greatly depend on what the supporters share verbally with them. There are fewer expectations, resources or general knowledge about informal reporting. For example, Emily's campus policy does not define what an informal reporting process would look like. When I asked about this process, she said had never seen one put into practice,

When we were sort of asking about it [informal reporting option] I think even our like legal department was kind of like "I don't know what it could look like." And you're kind of like, okay, so what then? Like, what are the options for people? Because of course, nobody's gonna choose it if the institution doesn't even know what the possibilities are for

it to look like. Nobody's gonna go that route. It's like more predictable if you can see in the policy like this how an investigation will run.

Many informal reporting option processes lack clarity; even as a supporter, Emily does not know what they could look like. As a result, Emily said this option is rarely if ever, chosen on her campus. When looking at the campus's front-facing sexual violence policy, there is no mention of the informal reporting option that Emily referred to.

In contrast, Chelsea's campus has a quite robust process, though most of it is not illustrated in the campus policy. Chelsea's office has the informal reporting process written into policy to highlight what this process is and where it is limited. For example, the informal process can be limited by requiring the consent of the person who caused harm. If the person who caused harm does not agree to participate, or content with the outcome the survivor seeks, the case cannot move forward. Zoe also expressed that requiring consent from both parties is a barrier on her campus, "the respondents often like holy fuck... These are really big allegations that I am now aware of. Do I want to own up to it [through the informal reporting process]? I don't think so." Requiring voluntary consent from the person who caused harm requires them to be willing to be involved with a process that may be uncomfortable or emotionally difficult because it requires acknowledging that they have caused harm to another person.

On Chelsea's campus, the next step for an informal report is bringing in the person who caused harm and obtaining their consent to move forward. The person who caused harm is invited to the office to learn about the process, their rights, and their options and if they consent to moving forward. The consent of the person who caused harm is documented in writing. The informal reporting pathway often encompasses education between the parties. For the person who caused harm, these conversations allow them to share their story. Then, the supporter will

talk about the impact on the survivor and unpack other educational pieces like consent, misogyny, or male entitlement. Chelsea notes, “Some of those folks are really engaged and curious and have lots of questions. And sometimes they're not.” After the meeting with the person who caused harm, or another measure is implemented, such as a letter of apology, the office reports back to the survivor to share that they met and what the outcome was. At that point, the survivor can decide if they want to continue with another reporting option or additional informal measures (such as further education or conversations) or consider the case closed, with the option to reconnect if needed.

When both parties agree to proceed with the informal process on Zoe’s campus, the institution’s investigation office is responsible for facilitating the interactions. However, the office is not specifically trained or experienced in restorative justice or related practices like mediation. On Zoe’s campus, mediation and restorative justice are the predominant options for informal reporting. After the informal process (e.g., restorative justice process), the survivor can choose if they are satisfied with the outcome. If the survivor is not satisfied with the informal process, for example, if the person who caused harm is not taking accountability, they can go through a formal reporting process. If the case switches to a formal report, the survivor and person who caused harm are required to entirely restart the reporting process, with none of the information collected in the previous reporting process able to follow them.

Off-Policy Actions

Throughout the interviews, supporters shared examples of actions they take on campus that are not represented by the policy, making them what I call *off-policy actions* -- any actions the supporter takes to support survivors at their discretion and initiative, that are not represented formally within their campus policy. I distinguish these actions from actions based on formal

policy because they demonstrate how supporters engage with policy in practice. Off-policy actions might include things like: informally engaging in education for someone who has caused harm; finding new ways to offer survivors non-traditional support resources; or, creating new response pathways that otherwise did not exist on campus.

Zoe notes that because of the barriers to informal reporting, her office relies on off-policy actions like no-contact agreements to respond informally to a case, categorized as a part of safety planning. No-contact orders are an important tool that supporters can use to stop violent behaviour and educate the person who caused harm about the violence that occurred. A no-contact agreement may be implemented if a survivor is being stalked and wants the behaviour to stop without engaging with the person who caused harm or the investigation process. When the no-contact order is used, a letter is sent to the person who caused harm to tell them not to contact the survivor. The person who caused harm is asked to voluntarily not contact the survivor. Zoe sees this as an essential measure of prevention; in about 95% of cases, the no-contact order stops all communication between the parties. When the no-contact order does not prevent communication, the supporter would suggest to the survivor that a formal report may be an appropriate next step. Zoe notes, however, that there has been pushback from upper administrators in response to comments like “these no contacts like they really feel like it's like a punishment.” Zoe attempts to push back on these assumptions when she tells me,

I try to present it like it actually is preventative from more violence. It actually keeps those students [who have caused harm] from being reported on... If the stalking is going to continue it to a point we're [survivor and supporter] going to report it. I kind of present it like, it's actually preventative from further harm for both parties.

Zoe sees contact measures as a form of violence prevention and a method of safety planning. In essence, contact measures prevent future violence against the survivor and prevent the person who caused harm from receiving more punitive measures from the institution.

On Chelsea's campus, these no-contact agreements are also part of the informal reporting process and can be implemented once the informal process has commenced. Chelsea says,

We do a lot of those [no contact agreements]. Sometimes they want the person to be made aware of what they did wrong. So, for example, the sex started out consensually, but certain aspects were nonconsensual, and they really want that person to never do that again.

Chelsea and Zoe's use of no-contact orders belongs to two different reporting categories: one campus uses no-contact orders outside of the reporting measures as a method of safety planning, while the other uses it as a part of education in their informal reporting options, demonstrating how similar measures can be used differently in practice based on how they are categorized by policy.

As an alternative to the informal process, Zoe often engages with people who have caused harm individually outside of the reporting processes. She gave an example of a student who violently harassed other students while intoxicated. The harassed students were not interested in reporting the incident, but they wanted the person who caused harm to receive support for his harmful actions. Zoe had a meeting with the person who caused harm. She and a staff member from an adjacent office explained the harm he had caused, talked about the impact of his actions, and referred the person who caused harm to a counsellor he sees weekly. Zoe emphasized that this approach is often very impactful for the person who caused harm and lowers the barrier for survivors, allowing them to have a form of accountability without

participating in a formal or informal process. When I asked Zoe how, or if, this type of response fits into the policy, she described it as “an alternative that is adjacent to the policy.”

Emily shares a similar approach that she has engaged with when there have been problems across a group. A group of women came to the sexual violence support when there were cultural problems within their program cohort and said, “We really care about our program and our cohort, and there’s some garbage stuff going on that we would like to address.” Emily’s office asked if the group wanted to pursue a formal report, and the group “was immediately like no” because of the close-knit group in the program. In this case, Emily worked with the entire cohort to do education and prevention work. This process also included checking in with the women who brought the issue forward to ensure they felt that the education addressed the problems. This annual education component has continued with the program even after this cohort moved on. Interestingly, both Emily and Zoe noted that this approach did not necessarily fall within the policy, but they each felt the approach was meaningful. Emily reflected that when this type of response is not reflected in policy, it is less accessible for students. This section has highlighted the types of responses that exist outside of the reporting options detailed in policy. The supporters emphasized these options bring important additions to the response system, often filling in for gaps left by the other reporting options.

Formal Reporting Pathway

The formal reporting pathway is often what is traditionally associated with campus reporting. Formal reporting is centralized around the investigation of an incident of sexual violence, a finding, and discipline for the person who caused harm. Zoe notes that very few survivors end up reporting through this pathway, partly because of barriers to reporting and partly because of the specific requirements of what fits within a formal report. For example, to

engage in a formal report: the incident must have taken place on campus, all parties involved must be students, faculty or staff, and the survivor eventually requires evidence of the incident during the investigation. On Zoe's campus, about 8-10% of survivors who come forward engage in a formal report, and on Emily's campus, a "pretty small chunk" of those who come forward end up filing a formal report.

On Zoe's campus, filing a formal report is a decision made after the survivor has talked with the supporter and determined it is a path they want to pursue. To file a formal report, the person who caused harm and the survivor must be members of the campus community (e.g., faculty, students, staff), and there must be a real and substantial connection to the campus. Here, Zoe's campus is unique, as other campuses require the incident to have occurred on campus property to be reported under the campus policy. Though making the connection to campus is sometimes difficult for survivors to explain on their own, guiding them through seeing the connection is an integral part of the supporter's role here. Zoe gave an example of what making the connection to campus looks like,

I usually give people examples like maybe you met on Tinder, and you saw in their profile they were a [same institution] student, that gave you extra trust that you wouldn't have gone home with them if you didn't know they were a [same institution] student. And they're like, "yeah, exactly."

If the formal report moves forward on Zoe's campus, the supporter walks the survivor through the online reporting form. The form has two questions: "Tell us about the sexual misconduct" and "Tell us the context in which it relates to [the campus]." Another part of the supporter's role at this stage is to ensure that the survivor does not pour their heart out or give a very detailed report through the online form,

A problem with our reporting processes is that the report goes directly to the respondent... We are worried [at the sexual violence office] of how the [person who caused harm] might get that information, and how [the person who caused harm] could use it against [the survivor], or how just knowing more vulnerable information can feel just a bit more exposed. But they're so desperate for [the institution] to take it seriously and investigate that they'll just give them any information.

The filled-out form can also go directly to the police if a police report has been made or will be made in the future. If the report goes directly to the police, it can be accessed by the police, the person who caused harm and their legal representation if the case goes to court. Zoe often advises the survivor not to give unnecessary details like previous experiences of victimization because they may later regret sharing sensitive information. Zoe shared another aspect,

If [the report includes] a very detailed account, when and they [the police] receive that report, it's almost like the police do not investigate anymore, because they're like Crown won't move forward with it, because the [person who caused harm] already is given the full details of the event so they have time to get all their stuff in order for months before they're even questioned by police. So, it really can impact and be really detrimental for [survivors].

By working on the report with the survivor, Zoe can help ensure that the report is written in a way that will only include the details necessary for reporting rather than writing a personal narrative or story. After the supporter submits the survivor's report, it goes to the decision maker, who decides whether the report falls within the scope and eligibility requirements of the policy. On some campuses, the decision maker is the supporter; on others, it is the investigations office. If the decision maker approves the report to move forward, the report will then go to

investigation. If the report does not meet the eligibility requirements, for example, if the incident takes place off campus, then the survivor would be informed and could still receive support from the office, like counselling or academic accommodations.

Institutional Reporting

Some campuses also have an institutional reporting option, where the sexual violence support office can file a report on behalf of the university instead of requiring the survivor to submit it (Zoe & Chelsea). This type of report is utilized when a pattern of harm has been identified across multiple survivors who have come forward seeking support, but no survivor wants to make a report. Chelsea emphasized that her office tries not to rely on this reporting option often because it decreases the control of the survivors, but it can be a helpful option when the person who caused harm is harming the university community. On Zoe's campus, the institutional report can be anonymous, where the survivors do not have to give their names or engage with the process, which can offer them more choices. However, in Zoe's experience, when the report is submitted anonymously, there is never a finding,

It's not super effective if they don't give their names, though...So we say that we've seen that pattern, unless you participate and give your name likely there won't be a finding.

But at least you know, there's this option that I can report.

According to Zoe, one of the strengths of institutional reporting is that it allows a group of survivors to come forward. In one case, Zoe had two survivors come forward to file an institutional report. The first survivor did not want their name attached to the report and reported anonymously. The second attached their name to the report, and they only reported because the first survivor had already come forward. The second survivor's name, attached to the report, led to a finding. However, the second survivor would not have reported if it had not been for the first

anonymous survivor. The institutional reporting option can give more opportunity for empowerment across the survivors who are reporting in a way that is not possible with other reporting options.

Investigations

For confidentiality purposes, this section has synthesized findings for discussion.⁵ During the investigation processes, the survivor and the person who caused harm are permitted to have a support person and personal legal counsel (at their own cost) present with them at all meetings if the investigator is informed in advance. Campuses have a range of processes for appointing an investigator. Some larger campuses in BC have an Investigations Office that conducts all investigations, including those surrounding sexual violence, and other campuses hire third-party investigators from firms outside of their institution. A supporter who hires third-party investigators shared,

[The investigator] generally has certification in trauma-informed practice, they've taken professional development in that area. And then we also take them through our own expectations and trauma-informed training...to make sure that they're building voice, choice and control [in the investigation] for both parties. So if [either party] needs to stop the interview, they can. They're not pressed to answer questions they don't want to. There's no aggressive tone there. It's meant to be very conversational. They're meant to have a lot of choice, and how they answer when they answer when they answer, like, how many times they meet, if they wanna stop...

⁵ Identifying which supporter is associated with each reporting procedure could disclose their identity because investigation procedures are readily available through campus policies.

Whether the investigator is internal or external to the campus, there is a general commitment from institutions, and the supporters that the investigator is trained in trauma-informed practices, is survivor-centred, and has adequate skills with discussions and evidence gathering related to sexual violence.

Once the investigator has been assigned from the institutional office or chosen from a third-party firm, they meet with the survivor⁶, witnesses, and the person who caused harm (respondent). Sometimes, there is back and forth at this stage, where the investigator may ask clarifying questions to the survivor based on the evidence collected from others, such as, “Given this text, I’m wondering if you can share a little bit more about it?” Once the investigator has deemed their evidence collection as sufficient, they will write a report about the evidence and make a finding. The finished report then goes to decision makers who decide what needs to be redacted from the report, such as personal information not allowed to be included under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)* (BC Laws, 2024). Then, the report is sent via email to the parties involved. On another campus, after the initial report is finished, the survivor and respondent get to change, edit, and adapt the investigator’s findings. Then, the report goes back to the investigator for finalization. After this point, the survivor has no more opportunities to share input, offer reactions or revisions. Once the investigator’s report is filed on all the campuses, the institutional decision maker decides the sanctions. For some campuses, the decision maker is the legal team, while for others, the Vice President is responsible for the respondents (i.e., VP Students for students, VP HR for staff). In many cases, the university's president makes the decision on discipline for the respondent if there is a finding.

⁶ The language of survivor will be continued to be used here. Though at this point in the reporting process, policy and institutional language shifts to using the language of “complainant” for the survivor.

The supporters noted that decision makers often make decisions about findings based on precedence, rather than informed by subject expertise. A “finding” is a term used in institutional policy that refers to “findings of fact” of the case, which are used to determine and show that the policy has been violated.

The sexual violence policies set out timelines for the investigation process to happen within, typically lasting a maximum of 60-90 days. However, in practice, the timelines are not often followed. If a two-month maximum timeline is written into policy, supporters note that it usually takes four months. Supporters see their roles as important in informing survivors of the reality of the investigation timelines. Yet, there is hesitation to amending the policy to reflect accurate investigation times because that may lead to the investigations taking even longer, with less pressure to finish them within two months. One of the reasons for delays can be that respondents are entitled to having professional legal counsel for the investigations; these professionals often work on different timelines than campuses and may be away for weeks at a time due to vacations outside of the campus schedule or courtroom schedules.

The survivor is removed from the investigation process and decision-making, except when called to provide information and testimony. Only some supporters discussed how their campus considers how to engage with the survivor once news of their report comes in. On one campus, the only communication that takes place with the survivor after the investigation is communicating how future news about the case will be shared. The supporter will ask the survivor how they want to receive news of their report and if there are specific timelines they wish to follow, for example, waiting until their midterms are over before hearing news of the findings. Once they have found a good time to share the news with the survivor, they go through the entire report. The reports can often be 50 pages long, including a table of contents, so going

over it in person with the supporter is an important practice to help the survivor navigate the report and its meaning.

Overall, the supporters resonated with the notion that, from their view, the final disciplinary measures for the respondent are generally relatively minimal. One supporter said, In 6 years there's only been one person that's been expelled, it's usually suspensions or a letter of probation... No matter how much we say, the discipline can be shit even if there's a finding they [respondent] can still be back [on campus]. And it can be really frustrating.

Many survivors come to the reporting process hoping the person who caused harm will receive severe punishment such as expulsion. Supporters noted they have to prepare survivors for the high chance the consequences will be less severe. Like survivors, supporters often feel frustrated with the less severe consequences. Part of the issue with the decisions that are made are a result of basing decisions on precedent and previous cases,

But when we started it was really bad precedent-setting. So it's like, how do we do better? Sexual assault can be so complicated in one in one instant versus another. And so they kind of make this plan like ok you get a letter for stalking, for sexual assault [the person who caused harm] takes a semester to 8 months off. You know they have all these, ways they outline it. But they don't really understand the complexity of sexual assault and how it impacts people in the context of it happening.

Another supporter's comments were in line with this sentiment, emphasizing that the decision-making process is not just one person, even if that is what the policy says,

It's basically never only one person. Sometimes it is. But even with the President, where it's like [the policy says] the President makes a decision it's really the President in

consultation with [the legal team], who has their world view and their way of functioning, who's advising the President about what makes sense.

In hearing the supporters' frustrations about the discipline decision-making, I prompted supporters by asking if they are ever consulted on the decision-making process as the institution's sexual violence experts. One of the supporters said it is helpful for the office to have relationships with those in power so that the office can be consulted during the decision-making process, even though it is primarily informal consultation,

It's really helpful to know the people in those positions with decision-making power, how they function, and what their response is gonna be. I think part of it is helpful in that sometimes hopefully you can chat with them and you're like, "Here's like this other side of it that you may not have considered" or "Here's how that might impact a survivor and you wouldn't know that because you've never been a survivor and you're removed from that"... sometimes we can like try and scooch some things in but I would say they rarely seek out the expertise from our office, which is quite unfortunate.

Supporters perceived unfairness and felt frustrated with administrators' disproportionate power for decision-making. The disproportionate power that decision makers hold does not align with expertise in responding to sexual violence, and the decision makers are removed from day-to-day interactions with survivors. As a result of the decision maker's perceived lack of subject expertise, the supporters reflected that the decisions often seem to reflect the decision maker's background, personal experiences or biases. Decision makers tend to make decisions that are aligned with the institution's reputation or their own experiences. One supporter shared frustration that the outcomes of sexual violence investigations and disciplinary actions,

It's a bunch of men who make decisions about this. I think people don't want to impact their future. They think "Oh they made a mistake." I think, to be honest some of them probably have examples of themselves in their own lives, and they see themselves in the respondent... we've helped people transfer to different universities to help them move away from the person that caused harm when they just like they can't exist in the same space... But it's just really frustrating, because it's like they report, and they still have to leave. And there was a finding. And they still have to leave? Like to me that is quite infuriating.

In many cases, the supporters share the same frustrations as the survivors, even while they are in a position where they have to uphold the same system, which is frustrating. In the above quote, the supporter highlights the tensions between her role as a part of the institution and the injustices she sees being perpetuated by the institution. Ultimately, the disconnection between supporters and decision makers leads to decisions incongruent with survivor's needs. Here, we see the way that the levels of power and decision-making within an institution come into play.

When survivors find and receive the support they seek, the support is rooted within the structural power systems that overarch educational institutions and society at large. The implications of these are seen in how the support systems often require the survivor to make changes or negotiations within their own life. In contrast, the person who caused harm is not required to engage with accountability. When discussing creating distance between the survivor and the person who caused harm,

It's often us negotiating with instructors for safety planning rather than having a meeting with the respondent and saying what are you willing to give up like? None of that happens... [We wish we could ask] "Is there any sort of things that you would voluntarily

be able to change in your schedule to like, accommodate, reduce interaction with that person?” And give them a chance to say, like, “Hey, I could actually switch into another class, or I could, you know, withdraw from this class, I need to withdraw, anyway, from one I'm too stressed like I'll withdraw.” Maybe my fantasy that never would happen, that the person would be like, “I will not change,” but then that's fine at least we could ask, and there was an opportunity for them to engage in some sort of accountability.

This quote shows how even within institutions that have policies that state they are taking a survivor-centred or trauma-informed approach, there are elements of their response that reinforce the notion that the survivor must shift or change their life in response to their victimization, decentring accountability from the person who caused harm. Earlier in this section, alternative, under-the-table responses were explored, where supporters took it upon themselves to create pathways and scenarios for the person who caused harm to take some accountability through education. Supporters have the flexibility to take on this education work “under the table” if it is outside of the response scope because it falls within their education and prevention mandate. Under current policies, supporters cannot approach the person who caused harm and ask if they can show accountability by voluntarily accommodating the survivor.

Current reporting pathways do not centre accountability in a way that supporters feel is necessary for the person who caused harm to take accountability and learn from their actions. In response to centring education instead of investigations, another supporter said,

Other avenues of repairing harm have been largely missing from our policies and our policy options where it's not really formally articulated anywhere. But in my experience of watching some people go through an individual or even a group-based process through the policy compared to doing it in more of like this relational rebuilding...the outcomes

for both sides in that have been so much more impactful on the doing. The education relational work versus like this process, where it's like as hard as we try, it's still replicating a system that we know is not useful or safe.

In this quote and throughout the interviews with supporters, they all emphasized the benefits of less formal reporting options for survivors and people who caused harm. It seems that the role of education and relational building response options are beneficial for many if not most, cases of sexual violence. Yet, there remain gaps institutionally and within many policies that do not allow or recognize the informal and educational responses that are taking place.

Institutional Barriers to Providing Support

Access to Services

I asked student peer supporter Sophia what barriers she sees affecting students when they are trying to seek support on campus. A barrier she often sees is that support services on campus are only open during business hours, which is when students have classes and other commitments. Having support hours only available during the day can create barriers for students who cannot seek support in the daytime or who do not want to miss class or work to seek support. The support options on campus function through by-appointment only, which can pose a barrier. Sophia emphasized the importance of making walk-in support available to decrease barriers. The student peer support she volunteers for helps to fill this gap.

Campus Resource Allocation

Sexual violence policy documents emphasize that any path a survivor takes is the right one and the textual discourse emphasizes the neutrality of the different options. In implementing formal reporting options compared to generally supporting survivors, Emily notes that the interim measures they can use are much more significant and helpful for individuals who go

through the formal reporting process than individuals who do not formally report. While this logic is sound when looking at the policy and implications of formal reporting, other supporters like Zoe talked about how she provides caution to survivors looking to formally report, “I’m not usually like [you should] report. I’m like ‘some people find it helpful most people don’t, and they feel like it doesn’t get them what they’re looking for,’ I really try to prepare people.” This gap between requiring support options and interim measures, yet reporting processes being emotionally difficult, can be reflected by a lack of resources available to survivors when non-formal reporting options are chosen. One way Zoe highlighted this on her campus was the disconnect between her office and campus counselling services. There is an institutional gap between the two offices; they do not work closely together. Often, the counselling office has long wait times for services; to not discontinue support for survivors, Zoe’s office frequently ends up providing overarching long-term counselling services to survivors when the mandate of the office is to provide sexual violence support rather than general counselling specifically. Those employed by the office are also not in roles that are supposed to provide long-term counselling, though “most of our team has social workers or counselling backgrounds that they can draw on.”

In acknowledgement of this gap, Zoe’s office has requested a specific counsellor for the sexual office to have from the institution. When additional staff have been allocated for counselling, eventually, they have ended up in the counselling department rather than the sexual violence office. Staffing and resource allocation remain a continuous problem for the supporters. Emily expressed similar challenges,

You can't do good or impactful education and prevention work when you're being drawn away to do survivor support work, and you can't do good survivor support work when your brain is halfway like “Oh, I need to finish that presentation for this class” ... I think

if there is actually a desire to improve processes and overall response, I think the offices need to be better resourced.

Having the prevention, education, and response work under one office is helpful for supporters to ensure that their education and prevention are influenced by what is happening on campus and to incorporate education into responses. However, the variety of roles requires more resources on most campuses. Without having enough resources to work in these areas, increased stress is added to the supporter, and results for the campus as a whole are decreased.

Findings from the survivor interviews will be discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter, it is notable that survivors reflected in their interviews that they could tell the supporters providing support were under-resourced and burnt out. Alex shared that they had reflected on how they may have been contributing to stress and overwork in their supporter's life,

I was like, I really want support. But do I want this person to be going above and beyond? And doing too much and like working over hours and like replying to things at times when they shouldn't be and everything.

Like supporters, survivors acknowledged and noticed the overwork and burnout among the staff in support roles on their campus. Alex's reflection here also demonstrates how overworked support staff is a double burden, affecting survivors and supporters. The reflection depicts some guilt on Alex's end, tied together with the knowledge that they required the support they were being offered. Additional resources would alleviate stress, overwork and burnout for supporters and likely lead to better support for survivors.

Barriers in Provincial Legislation

Privacy legislation in BC (FIPPA) dictates that survivors are not allowed to find out about the results of an investigation regarding the disciplinary consequences for the respondent, which

is considered (BC Laws, 2024). This provincial limitation came up in every interview with the institutional supporters as a measure that was harmful to survivors. With current provincial legislation, “nobody [survivor and supporters] knowing what's going on, often causes more harm than the originating incident, and so confidentiality is super important and valuable, it is also a cause of a great deal of confusion and harm caused” (Chelsea). To report and follow through an investigation, survivors commit their time and energy and overcome many barriers discussed thus far. Given this investment, the supporters have seen further harm caused when a survivor is not allowed to know the entire outcome of the case. This is due, in part, to the lack of details surrounding whether the person who caused harm will be back on campus, limiting their ability to follow safety plans. One central discussion in the interviews was the awareness of the power of interpretation of policy. All of the supporters interviewed discussed how it was challenging for survivors not to find out the outcome of their cases and what the disciplinary action consisted of, exemplified by Emily’s statement,

The survivors are left wondering, am I going to run into this person in the library? Have they left campus? This is a small program is this gonna like ripple through? So they sort of end up hearing about it by whispers and not policy. The language was that survivors will know, basically anything that impacts their safety. But then, of course, safety is not defined. And so, for the folks who were interpreting the policy, and with the power to decide what information gets shared, and how and when?

Emily highlights that this is centred on who interprets and creates the policy. When those with less understanding of sexual violence and different types of violence at upper administration levels get to decide on how information is shared, the interpretation is strictly about physical

safety. However, including consideration of the emotional and psychological impacts of knowing the impact would be necessary for the survivor's well-being.

Conclusion

In summary, drawing on interviews with different types of supporters, this chapter highlights how the reporting process works. On the whole, the reporting and support processes are complex in that there are multiple pathways and options available to survivors. The supporters highlighted how the range of options is meant to give survivors autonomy and options about the reporting process. Supporters solidified their attempts to give survivors autonomy through the creation of "off-policy actions," a form of reporting action that is not formally available at the institution but implemented through individual supporters' efforts. In essence, these actions are meant to meet the survivor's needs when there is not an official pathway offering the support required. In addition to providing a summary of the vast reporting procedures, supporters highlighted how barriers like how final decisions regarding the formal reporting process rest in the hands of upper administration, provincial legislation, and a general lack of resources hinders their abilities to support survivors as best they can. The next chapter overviews the findings from the survivor interviews to provide survivor experiences about the reporting process.

Chapter 5: Survivor Findings

This chapter shares findings from the interviews with survivor participants. First, I begin by presenting the participant's characteristics. Then, each survivor's story is explored in depth. After, I highlight how survivors discussed their motivations for reporting, located institutional support, experienced the reporting process, and accessed resources.

Table 5.1. provides summary characteristics of survivor participants for ease of reference throughout the chapter. There is variation in the gender identities of survivors, with four of the six identifying with gender-diverse gender identities, and the other two identifying as cis-women. As noted in the Methods Chapter, this research does not seek to be generalizable or reflective of the entire population of survivors because of its qualitative approach and small sample size. Instead, it offers in-depth insight into survivors' experiences to better understand how these processes unravel, and the survivor's experience of the process. Of the six survivor participants, none of them identified as cisgender men, which aligns with the statistics that show that women and gender-diverse and queer students experience higher rates of sexual violence on campus (Buczycska, 2020). The "institution support" column indicates the form of sexual violence support available at the participant's institution. Alex, Violet and Madison attend institutions where sexual violence is part of a larger office with specialized and designated staff responsible for sexual violence response. In comparison, Madison attended an institution where there was a specific, stand-alone sexual violence office. Noah and Stephanie attend institutions where there is no specific sexual violence support, instead it is located within general student support.

Brief details about each survivor's case are also noted in Table 5.1. The type of violence that each participant experienced is noted in the table, and survivors reported a range of violence, from intimate partner violence and sexual assault to sexual harassment.

Table 5.1: Survivor Characteristics

Name	Gender	Type of Institution Support	Type of Violence	Relation to Campus	Reporting Option	Case Status
Alex	Non-binary Femme	Stand Alone Sexual Violence Office	Intimate Partner Violence	Two Students	Informal Report	Ongoing
Violet	Non-binary Femme	Stand Alone Sexual Violence Office	Transphobia	On campus and online spaces	Attempted	N/A
Noah	Trans Man	General Student Support	Sexual Violence	On campus	Attempted	N/A
Stephanie	Trans Woman	General Student Support	Transphobia and Harassment	On campus, in class	Attempted	N/A
Emma	Woman	Stand Alone Sexual Violence Office	Sexual Assault	On campus	Attempted	N/A
Madison	Woman	Stand Alone Sexual Violence Office	Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Assault	Two Students	Formal Report	Person who caused harm found guilty and disciplined

The information about what type of gender-based violence they experienced becomes pertinent later when considering variations in response to different types of violence. The relation of the incident to campus is also noted for each participant. For cases of sexual violence to be considered related to campus, they must have a connection to the campus community. Institution policy varies on what is connected to campus. I have included this to illustrate how each case is connected to campus, regardless of the institution's policy. Also noted in Table 5.1 is the reporting option the survivor chose, if they were able to choose one. Most survivors did not go through a reporting process and only attempted to report. One went through a formal reporting process, and another went through an informal reporting process, demonstrating that barriers remain for student survivors when trying to report on their campus. Lastly, the table notes the state of the case at the time of the interview. For instance, Alex's case was still ongoing, which

means the experiences they shared differ from someone like Madison, who went through an investigation and has had the case officially closed. For confidentiality purposes, I will not include the racial or ethnic identification of the survivors for two reasons. First, race-based reflections were not offered by the participants in the interviews, and second, this information is not included for confidentiality reasons. However, it is important to know that the survivor participant group had some racial and ethnic diversity with participants identifying as: Jewish, white, Spanish, and Filipino, some participants identified with more than one of these groups.

Survivor Stories

Because of the trauma-informed nature of this research, I did not ask survivors during interviews to explain what their experience of gender-based violence was or to recount the details of their experience(s). During many interviews, these details came up unprompted and at the discretion of the survivor. Making space for these experiences to be disclosed during interviews remains a central tenant of the trauma-informed framework. I will not be recounting these details in the production of this work, even when they are presented in the data. The purpose of this thesis is not to discuss individual experiences of campus gender-based violence but to build an understanding of the institutional procedures, which do not require detailed narratives to be presented as data. In addition, keeping with a trauma-informed framework, I will be detailing what type of violence each survivor experienced, where it was experienced, and how it relates to the campus context. These three parts are most relevant to understanding how their experiences connect to campus and how the campus procedures affected them. Here, I share a short synopsis of their experiences in a humanizing way that emphasizes the entirety of their experience and its interconnections to multiple facets of their lives.

Alex

Alex is a non-binary femme university student employed in a few different areas on campus. One of Alex's areas of employment used to be in student government. Alex experienced intimate partner violence with a colleague at their student government workplace. About a month after ending their relationship, Alex did not feel safe being around the person who caused harm. Alex's first disclosure was within student government because their first concern was safety in their workplace. Their first disclosure was to their direct supervisor in the student government. Upon hearing the disclosure, the supervisor suggested Alex resign. They did not refer Alex to any additional support. Alex then disclosed to another supervisor who was in the position to start the resolution process within student government, but nothing happened. Alex recounts: "I told them, okay, well, I'm just like not gonna come into work because it feels unsafe, and no one really seems to be taking my side here." A few months passed, and then the person who caused harm began harassing Alex prompting another employee who knew about the situation tell Alex: "Damn, that sucks... you could resign if you want." Disclosing twice without receiving any support or referrals left Alex feeling scared and alone. Alex remarked,

This experience was very triggering, and not informed by trauma-informed practices when trying to deal with these people and trying to disclose and like not being heard back for like two weeks when I'm saying, "I feel really scared, and I don't know what's happening. I've never navigated this."

Eventually, Alex's story and experiences spread within student government, and they were ultimately referred to the specific support office on campus. After being referred to the specific support office, Alex felt relieved: "Generally, the experience was very positive. Through the process, they've been like the only ones that were trauma-informed and like could provide resources and know how to like to talk to me." The office offered Alex priority to access

counselling on campus, access to grants to support private therapy, a list of recommended therapists in the area, and academic accommodations. Alex expressed relief and gratitude about their experience with the support office once they were referred. Alex felt like their needs were accounted for when they were walked through the options available. Alex's reaction was: "Wow, this is like so wonderful. Someone who's educated and experienced and cares is being nice to me...[it felt like a] breath of fresh air after dealing with the [student government]."

After disclosing, Alex received information about available resources and reporting options from the support office. Alex explained that they did not want to engage with the criminal justice system, but instead wanted to facilitate shared use of student government spaces. With this information, the office told Alex that the alternative reporting process may be a good fit. Alex also identified that they had lost all the formal evidence at this point and that engaging in a formal report would likely harm them. The alternative process has fewer procedures than a formal process the office mediates communication between the two parties based on principles of consent. The office has attempted to engage with the person who caused harm three times, but they have not agreed to participate. The office kept Alex in the loop by sending them email updates to let them know if the person who caused harm responded. At the time of our interview, there was no resolution for the case because the person who caused harm had not participated in the process. Through engagement with the student government, key members agreed to receive voluntary training. The alternative reporting process sought to engage with Alex and the primary person who caused harm, as well as others who caused harm along the way. Alex reflected,

It hasn't felt that great in terms of not getting a resolution, obviously...It felt really good in terms of how they were talking to me and dealing with it...I would say I always felt very relieved whenever I would meet with them.

Here, Alex expresses that although the office was not able to offer them exactly what they wanted, they felt supported and relieved by the support provided. Overall, Alex's experience with the support office provided them with enough support to continue with their academics but did not provide a resolution with the person who caused harm.

Violet

Violet is a trans femme university student. There are two separate experiences that Violet reported. The first incident occurred during COVID-19 when campuses were physically shut down and courses were moved online. Group chats and discussion boards for each class were quite popular at the time, and Violet was a part of them. Through these discussion boards, Violet "made some friends" during a time when she was not able to do that on campus. On the discussion boards, Violet recalled that her

Friends got kind of harassed by someone...It was all people who presented...more feminine...At a certain point, we connected it was the same guy. And I kept hearing the stories of one random guy being really weird on [the discussion board].

Eventually, Violet was also subjected to online harassment from the same person. Violet expressed that she felt called to ensure this incident did not go undocumented or let the person who caused harm to continue their studies without accountability. Violet collected information from about 15 other students and compiled screenshots and other pieces of evidence.

Violet did not know where to report this behaviour, so she reached out to a friend in a student government leadership position and asked what she should do. The friend helped Violet compile the evidence and told her to go talk to the institutional support office. This report happened during COVID-19 when the institutional activities were entirely online. Violet emailed the office and then set up a meeting via Zoom. Violet recalls,

I don't even remember if I showed them all the screenshots I compiled. I just told them the story, and they were like...“Yeah, no, looks like he's definitely harassing them.

Unfortunately, because it's online, that's not within our jurisdiction.”

The office quickly told Violet that the office did not have jurisdiction over the incident because it occurred online, even though it related to their course. However, the online incident had a direct connection to the institution because it took place in an online discussion group for a course during COVID-19, when almost all of the institution's activities were taking place online. While Violet shared this with me, I wondered what type of incident could have been reported at all during in-person institutional closures if institutions were not responding to reports where the incident took place online. Once the meeting ended, Violet never heard from the office again, and she was not offered any support or interim measures to support herself or the others who had experienced harassment, and she did not seek further support for this incident. The lack of response Violet received from the support office made her feel cynical about the office and frustrated that they did not create accountability for the person who caused harm.

The next school year, Violet was experiencing a different incident of online harassment, and through her campus network, she noticed that several other trans people were experiencing lots of violence on campus. She worked together with the other trans people who were being harmed and the queer advocacy group on campus to collect their stories. Violet had not yet reported the new incident of online harassment because of her previous experience with the office. She also heard from others she was working with that they too had not received sufficient support from the institutional support office when attempting to report transphobia. Eventually, the advocacy group decided to bring these stories to the institution, in hopes of finding a response that would make campus safer for gender-diverse students. Meetings were assembled

between the advocacy group and the institution's administration, including the sexual violence support office, to talk about their experiences of transphobia on campus. Meeting attendees included a diverse group of stakeholders on campus with expertise on gender-based violence and transphobia, including professors, student union peer support groups, the student support office and the sexual violence office.

Prior to the meeting, the advocacy group students had prepared policy recommendations for trans students on campus, like increased education about gender-based violence. One of the items on the students' agenda was to talk about creating more gender-neutral washrooms on campus. Violet said that each meeting got sidetracked into a discussion exclusively about washrooms on campus and the infrastructure requirements to create more washrooms or un-gender designate the washrooms. Though the advocates acknowledged the importance of inclusive bathrooms, Violet and the other students grew frustrated that these meetings continued to be sidetracked from talking about other policy recommendations, education, and cultural change. Violet reflected that the staff from the campus support office present in the meetings were among their most diverse staff, and "they had very nice words [to say to us]." The support staff said things like, "We hear you. We're really sorry you're experiencing this. We will try to fix this." But with the focus on washrooms, Violet felt like the meetings were constantly sidetracked; Violet was left feeling like, "We're not setting up your incoming students for success. [The institution is] setting them up to be traumatized and harmed." I have chosen this quote to finish Violet's story because it encapsulates the betrayal of, and lack of trust in, the institution that Violet was left with.

Stephanie

Stephanie is a trans woman and a mature university student. She first started experiencing violent verbal harassment, that included active threats, in the classroom of one of her required courses. This harassment from one student continued until it shifted the learning environment of the classroom, leading to more classmates discriminating against Stephanie. Stephanie's program involved a lot of group work and assignments, and the harassment impacted her ability to engage in the work, "Everybody got into pairs, and there was one person left, and she refused to work with me...I'm completely not being included... And the teacher's not doing anything about it." For Stephanie, the harassment created an unsafe learning environment, and also created an environment where Stephanie could no longer engage in her education. The threats developed to the point where the primary person who caused harm was threatening her safety outside of the classroom. Stephanie knew that this was inappropriate, especially in a learning environment.

Stephanie disclosed the first time to her professor, who had already observed the harassing behaviour in the classroom. The professor said they would respond to the incident and would make sure Stephanie was included in coursework moving forward. However, Stephanie reflected, "But that just never happened." A month later, nothing had changed, and another classmate made two separate and violent comments, one that was antisemitic and transphobic and another that threatened the lives of trans people. After the professor did not intervene, Stephanie went to the student support office on her campus, which is designated to respond to sexual violence but is not a sexual violence-specific resource office. Stephanie was worried that the office would not believe her, or they would brush her off, so she looked up the policy for inclusion that the students are given every semester and brought it with her to the office. When she arrived at the office and attempted to file a report, they told her they could not file a report based on the inclusion policy. Stephanie shared, "[When] I [tried to] file a complaint [report],

they go “Oh, well, we're sorry that [policy] is just a guideline.” Stephanie was confused by this because, from her understanding, the inclusion policy was a rule rather than a guideline.

When I looked at the policy and tried to understand what happened, it seemed that Stephanie tried to report her experience under a policy that did not have any reporting procedures. When the office said, “This is only a guideline,” I understood that they meant the policy did not have any measures in it to respond to specific incidents but to set guidelines or behavioural standards on campus. The fact that Stephanie did not understand this is understandable, given the unclear use and implementation of the word, “policy.” The support office could have redirected Stephanie to the sexual violence policy, which is required by provincial legislation to have reporting procedures. Because Stephanie was experiencing transphobic harassment, this harassment falls under the definition of sexual violence as provided in the provincial legislation.

The office did not offer Stephanie any support to process what had happened, or any bureaucratic support to understand the campus policies. The behaviour in the classroom got worse, with the harassment becoming more intense and more public. For the third time, Stephanie went to seek support. She went back to the institutional support office and said, “This is what happened; I still don't feel like it was dealt with. What can be done?” The office said they would talk to the person and give him a warning. But the behaviour continued and continued to intensify. Stephanie re-approached the support office to tell them their warning did not help the situation, and the harassment continued. In response, the office sent Stephanie to peer support for queer students on campus. Stephanie perceived that the peer support was oriented around providing emotional and peer support rather than safety planning or intervention. Being directed to a resource that could not provide Stephanie with the support she needed increased her

frustration with the whole situation. After sharing her experience five different times on campus, Stephanie wrote a letter to the administration and eventually decided to bring the case outside of the institution to an external review board to find support. At the time of the interview, there was no response from the letter. Stephanie shared that she began the process of bringing the case outside of the institution to receive justice.

In talking with Stephanie about these experiences, she described feeling like the institution's response centred around telling Stephanie she should have known this would happen because of her gender in a masculine-dominated program. At the time of the interview, Stephanie had disclosed six times without receiving the support she had asked for and shared that she would continue to an organization exterior to the institution that deals with harassment complaints. Stephanie did not receive any emotional or tangible support from her campus, which left her at risk of revictimization, frustrated and betrayed by her institution.

Noah

Noah is a trans man and a university student who is engaged in advocacy on his campus and experienced sexual violence on campus. In his advocacy role, Noah had already been a part of reporting incidents on behalf of other people, so was familiar with reporting processes. When Noah experienced sexual violence on campus property, he felt compelled to report his experience because he had already reported on behalf of many others. Unlike the other survivors, Noah did not enter the reporting process with optimism because of his previous experiences supporting reports on behalf of others. Noah shared he had an idea of how it would go and that it would not be helpful or supportive: "I knew what I was getting myself into by reporting things. I don't think unless there was a huge staff change in the department that accepts complaints [reports] that I could feel supported." Noah's first disclosure was facilitated by an instructor who reached out to the support office on Noah's behalf, with Noah cc'd on the email. Noah also reached out to

the one person in the office he had not yet spoken to, with the hopes it would be different than the previous times Noah had been involved with reporting. After emailing, Noah had a meeting on Zoom set up with the office. He shared,

The first couple [of meetings] were very hostile. I'm not really sure how else to explain it. But both times it was just me on a Zoom call with the other person started immediately by asking, not most respectful questions about things that happened, and I felt like I wasn't really given a chance to explain my perspective or anything like that. It was kind of like the general energy was just like, "Why would you even come talk to us about this? What do you think we're supposed to do?" I think somebody actually said that to me one time, "What do you expect us to do?"

Noah was met with hostility from the support office from the beginning of trying to report his experience. However, from his institutional knowledge, Noah had expected hostility, so in some ways, he was prepared for this outcome. Noah also knew that the support staff can be, "outright aggressive towards people and will try and like start fights with them. I've heard it's very bad. He didn't try and fight with me." After this meeting, there was no follow-up or additional support offered. Noah then met with a second support person. Nothing came out of the meeting, and when the office followed up with Noah, he left this interaction feeling like they were saying, "Thanks for talking to us. We can't do anything. Please don't contact us again." Noah then sought a third meeting with a different support person. Noah reflected,

The third time it wasn't an aggressive person, but she was just very, very confused. I think she got very caught up on...me being a trans person, and she didn't understand what transgender was. She thought I meant that I was saying I was autistic. So, she kept talking

about how I was autistic and how her doctor was autistic, which, like that, became a cool interview [laughs].

When I asked Noah more about the transition of the conversation from sexual violence to autism, he told me: “I don’t know where she got that from. It genuinely came out of nowhere.” For Noah, his advocacy work that relates to gender-based violence allows him to identify that this is a poor response and not take it personally in a way that someone with less subject knowledge may not be able to. Some of the cynicism and coping mechanisms that Noah has for this process are shown in this quote as well. Making a joke of the situation shows how Noah processed this experience and integrated it into his life by categorizing it as something weird, funny, and slightly transphobic, in effect, making it psychologically lighter.

Noah followed up after this meeting to ask about security cameras and evidence gathering. Through that, Noah learnt that there are only a handful of security cameras that are only pointed at entrances and exits, which were not relevant to Noah’s case. Noah asked if he could meet with security to advocate for improved security on campus and had a meeting with them. Noah attended the meeting alone without anyone from the support office offered. The meeting was with the head of security, who asked Noah victim-blaming questions. Noah recalled,

[He] basically asked the classic like “What were you doing to make this happen to you or like? Were you asking for this?” I think it was actually like, ‘What were you wearing, and how were you behaving?’

After the conversation with security and the third support person, Noah was told they would figure things out and get back to him in a few weeks. Noah followed up several times over three months and did not get any response or updates. Then someone else reached out to the office to

ask about the status of Noah's case, and they immediately responded to Noah, only to say, "Thank you for speaking your truth." After that, Noah thought about contacting them again but decided not to: "I kind of just knew nothing would come out of it if I was to push further, and I kind of just gave up like I didn't want to have another talk about it." Despite Noah's generally light attitude about the experience of attempting to report, it is clear that he feels the exhaustion and fear of attempting to report. Noah recalled,

I'd say it's been quite bad, I think, going back to like the helplessness thing again is it felt like that cause I had a number of incidents at my school, so even now, it kind of feels like I'm kind of powerless if something happens like, I don't really feel like based on other experiences I've had that I'm able to defend myself in any way, particularly if I'm like physically attacked, or if someone is like trying to overpower me, or something. Based on my experiences in my school, I feel like I would be the one who would end up blamed for whatever happens and knowing that stuff is likely to keep happening, and I can't really do anything about it or report it, and nothing will be resolved. I feel like I'm just waiting for something bad to happen, if that makes sense.

The lack of response or support to Noah's experience of violence on campus has led to him feeling hopeless and afraid about his safety on campus. This quote speaks to the detrimental impacts on students when a campus leaves students unsupported to navigate victimization on their own.

Emma

Emma is a woman who experienced two instances of sexual violence during her undergraduate degree. At the time of the first incident of sexual assault, Emma had just moved to Canada as an 18-year-old international student and did not know a lot about sexual violence, consent, or the support available. She had been harmed on campus after the late shift of her on-

campus job by her manager at the time. It took Emma a few months to realize that she had been sexually assaulted and that she had not just experienced something “weird.” When chatting with some friends about weird experiences, Emma told the story of her assault,

I remember just explaining that to everyone, and nobody was laughing. And so that was one of the points where I was like, wait, why is this not funny to everyone? It's hilarious to me. That's one of the situations where it was like suddenly kind of like hit me... [I] kind of like started to be like, okay, this happened. This is an issue.

Once she realized what had happened, her reaction quickly turned into: “Oh, God! I have to do something about this,” and she decided to report her experience. Emma felt increased responsibility to report because it had been her manager who had caused harm. She first went to the peer support centre run by the student union,

I went there a couple of times... It was an awful process. There's no other way to describe it. I felt incredibly unsupported. I felt like people weren't listening to me at all...It was very much a dead end... They would send me incredibly general resources like the crisis line and things like that. And it's like, “Thank you for the crisis line. But I got that like ages ago. It's this is not what I need. This is not addressing what I need right now.” It was incredibly frustrating.

Emma describes feeling frustrated and betrayed after trying to seek support from the peer support centre. The centre did not point her toward the institution’s office. Emma said these offerings felt careless and made her feel like they were trying to dismiss her. I asked Emma if there was specific support she was seeking, and she responded, that rather than being handed resource lists or offered comfort supports like tea and a warm blanket, she wished that someone had sat down

with her to clearly explain the different options and what each option would require and support her through taking steps to report.

Emma eventually decided to report to the police. She went to the on-campus police detachment, which was the RCMP. In describing her experience with the RCMP, Emma stated, [They] started to ask victim-blaming questions, like “Oh, what was the context like? Were you drunk? Were you drinking when it happened?” That very much just really shut me off. I was like, “Oh, gosh, this is the third time that I'm trying to talk about this with someone and the fact that, like, the first thing you ask is like, what was the context, whether I had drunk like whether I was intoxicated...which I wasn't away. I was just very frustrated.

After attempting to seek support through two different options, Emma described she felt,

They were just kind of like, little by little, just taking any piece of dignity that I still felt like I had. They were just kind of like taking it from me so very much.... And so I just I was like, I just basically gave up. And after that I just really gave up trying to report it again.

She started out with the motivation to report and prevent an incident like this from happening to someone else, but this energy was quickly spent answering victim-blaming questions and resharing her story multiple times. After this experience, Emma sent a frustrated email to the peer support office expressing her disappointment in not receiving support, and they put her in contact with a staff member from the institution directly. When I asked about which office this was or the details of the conversation, Emma said she did not remember the details, sharing that “Nothing came out of it.”

Disclosing multiple times and continuously receiving unsupportive responses continued to 'eat away' at Emma. Yet despite Emma's persistence to find other avenues to report, she did not receive any support from the institution. None of these reporting pathways were linked either, meaning that Emma had to seek them out and show up (or write to them) on her own. Each reporting option she attempted could have supported her in finding another pathway rather than leaving her on her own. Emma wishes they had offered her some direction and direct support in navigating her options. As a young international student, she did not have a sense of what the options or possibilities were for support. Emma recalled: "No one was like 'Okay, yes, let's do this, let's see how we can do this.' It was always like, 'Well, that sucks'." Rather than being read the list of generic resources, Emma wishes someone had said: "Okay, do you want to report it to the RCMP? Let's go together."

The second time Emma experienced sexual assault, she felt ill and was not sure if she had been given substances non-consensually. The night of that incident, she had been driven home by the local police, but they did not leave her with any information about what had happened, why they had driven her home or what she should do the next day. Emma decided to go to urgent care because she felt ill and was not sure where else to go. Given her previous experiences with campus support and RCMP, she wanted to avoid those services again. Urgent care told her it was too crowded that day and suggested, "Maybe it's better for you to just go home and think about something else," without giving Emma any additional resources or helping her determine if she had consumed a substance. Based on her experience with reporting in the past, she went home and did not seek any further support after that incident. Ultimately, though Emma sought support from multiple campus venues, she did not receive any support from her campus relating to her victimization.

Madison

Madison is a woman university student, she was victimized by another student in her cohort. Madison learned that others had been subjected to similar violence from the same person who caused her harm and decided she wanted to report it because of the violent and serial nature of the assault she had experienced. The person who caused her harm also had future goals to work with people in vulnerable situations, which Madison found concerning. Madison first sought support from the student peer support office on her campus. The peer support on campus only offered peer support sessions with her or a counsellor referral. Madison described her response,

I actually already pay a lot of money for therapists, and it's not helping a lot. What I need is someone to help me stop this man from breaking the law... clearly mental health care, in this case, is not what is needed.

Madison expressed frustration with the support office only offering emotional support. Madison already had access to professional emotional support and wanted the violence to be prevented from happening again to others. She wished that the peer support office offered a program where there was someone to advocate for her given that she found it particularly difficult to advocate for herself while suffering from a concussion and PTSD that occurred because of the violence she was trying to report.

Next, Madison decided to disclose to the local police. She went through a full police investigation that ended up with the Crown declining to pursue the case further. Madison recalled the case was not accepted because, “[The person who caused harm has] been most pretty much leaving you alone since [you reported]. Because he’s leaving you alone like they're not gonna grant it because he's already doing it.” The police were also transparent with Madison that sexual assault cases were often dropped by the Crown. She said, “They [the police officers] turned off

the camera [recording the meeting]. They were like; 'it's old white people, men who are probably also racist or rapists enforcing this law [at the Crown].' Like they literally said that to me."

Madison was surprised by the transparency about the effects of power systems, and it gave her more confidence in the police. There had been other survivors who were victimized by the same person and who had been to the police. Madison shared the other survivor reported they were met with victim blaming. She was grateful to not have experienced this, reflecting that police reports can be "hit or miss." After hearing that the case would not move forward with the Crown, Madison asked the police for a restraining order. At this point, the person who had caused harm was leaving Madison alone, so the police referred her to the campus support office on the grounds that they were not able to grant a restraining order if the harassment or violence was not ongoing.

As a result, Madison met with the sexual violence office on her campus. She first met with them virtually, and after going through her third experience of disclosing, she was told that they could only provide a therapist referral because the physical violence and sexual assaults had occurred off-campus property. Madison felt like she was being encouraged to cope with the situation rather than intervene or prevent it from happening again, "As the conversations went on, I was like, 'What are you gonna do?' She's like, 'Well, nothing,'" Madison felt frustrated, uncared for, and brushed off. Madison asked if the stories from other people who had been harmed by the same person would help her case; everything had to be considered on a one-case basis, so Madison's testimony could not include others who were victimized. Madison said she was warned by the office, who said, "Don't pressure anyone to testify for you cause it could re-traumatize them." Madison went on to say, "That's actually correct. But I don't believe she was saying it because she actually cared about them. I think she didn't want to deal with it." The

effects of the violence disturbed Madison's academic life, especially because she shared classes with the person who caused harm. The office maintained that because the physical violence took place off-campus, they were not able to provide anything more than emotional support or referrals. Madison felt like the only support she was being offered was various coping mechanisms. The sexual violence office told Madison, "We can't do anything. We could refer you to a therapist." "So I said I already have one...It was very much focused on [telling me that I] should just cope." Madison was not offered any additional support or academic accommodations from the sexual violence support office. Based on the BC legislation guidelines (2016), the office should have offered her academic accommodations and safety planning support. The BC legislation requires campuses to be clear about whether their policy covers violence off campus, though, because Madison's academic life was being affected, she should have met a threshold to receive some academic accommodations.

Madison confided in a professor in her department that she was taking a class with. The professor "talked to all his colleagues" about the harm that was being caused in the department. Madison told me that he advocated for her, especially because she had not received support from the support office. At the time, the person who caused harm was at the top of the waitlist for the class Madison was in with the same professor. The professor moved the person who caused harm to the bottom of the list so that Madison would not have to be in a class with him. Madison also received support from other faculty members of her department, who shared the same frustrations as she did with the support office. Despite Madison's frustrations with the office's response, support from her professors felt meaningful. The response from faculty in her department also helped decrease barriers to Madison's education by ensuring she did not have to see the person who caused harm in class.

Madison continued trying to get the support office to allow her to move forward with a report. In reflection on her conversations with the office, Madison said,

I know my experience is valid. “Why don't you tell me that it's valid enough to prevent it from happening again?” ... [The office] was trying to lead me to [their] conclusion, which was like, “Go to therapy. Figure out how to cope. Good luck.”

Madison was unsatisfied with this response because she felt responsible for ensuring that the person who caused harm did not continue to cause harm to other people. At this point, Madison was not sure if the office would let her move forward with an investigation, but she had been told informally by the office that the office did not want the person who caused harm to graduate and that they were trying to prevent his graduation. They did not provide Madison with information about how or why they did not want him to graduate, and she was not given information on what parts of the policy this decision was based on. Madison decided to share her experience publicly in an attempt to shed light on the institution's poor response with the hope it would encourage the office to move forward with her report. A few hours before the story was made public, Madison received an email stating that the office was moving forward with an investigation.

The formal reporting process took about one year from the first time Madison met with the sexual violence support office to the outcome of the report being determined. Madison stated that once the reporting process started, “It was really slow, a lot of not hearing anything but that I didn't mind because I understand I'm not hearing anything because things are happening.” There were likely forms and other questions that occurred during this time that Madison does not specifically recall, but she remembers reading through everything thoroughly before providing a signature because of her growing distrust in the support office.

The first step of the reporting process is collecting the survivor's story; because Madison had already engaged with the office, they moved forward to the next step, the appointment of a third-party investigator. The investigator was appointed and met with Madison for an interview. Madison was relieved that the investigator was a third party because, by that time in the process, she had a complicated and tenuous relationship with the support office and was grateful for the distance from the office. The investigator was trauma-informed, which made Madison feel comfortable, "She was great... very talented, and very kind... It definitely didn't seem like [the investigator] was trying to steer me in some kind of direction [like the sexual violence office did]." The investigator also interviewed the person who caused harm, and the witnesses involved in the case. One of the witnesses called in had also been harmed by the respondent, though Madison had been told the institution was not allowed to consider more than one case at a time. However, the investigator was able to draw on this person as a witness at this point. The investigator was able to build a clear picture of the person who caused harm's patterns of behaviour; these lined up with Madison's and other witness accounts. Then the investigator collected the evidence, mostly in the form of screenshots, from Madison and the other witnesses. At this point, Madison had deleted the conversations, images, and other pieces of evidence from her phone to protect her mental health: "Anytime I talked about it, I would get really obsessive and start rereading them [the conversations]. I deleted them." Madison was able to get screenshots from other friends, and the witnesses were able to produce evidence, too. The collection of evidence concluded the investigation process.

After the investigation, the decision-making process began. Both the complainant and respondent were sent the preliminary document that included full transcripts, and they had the opportunity to edit or make corrections. Through this report, Madison learned that the respondent

had walked out of the interview with the investigator and stopped responding to all correspondence from the university. Madison expressed appreciation the investigator had edited parts of the transcript to maintain her confidentiality. The final decisions about the case were decided; per policy guidelines, Madison was not allowed to hear the full decision results. But she was allowed to be informed about matters that related to her safety. She was told, “You’re never gonna see him on campus again.” Madison’s case concluded with a finding of guilt for the person who caused harm, and he was removed from campus as a result.

Though Madison was relieved after hearing the finding, she still felt frustrated about how her case had been handled by the sexual violence office. After the investigation concluded, Madison was sent a feedback form about her experience for the support office, “I read it very thoroughly, and I gave very thoughtful responses. I held back a little bit because I thought [the supporter] would be reading it.” After investing time and energy into providing constructive responses to the survey, with the hopes the office could improve and make this easier for future survivors, Madison learned that the central authority figure who supported her through this case did not read her feedback and was only given the takeaways from the administrative support staff. In the end, Madison felt relieved by the result of her case, but even with this outcome, she left the reporting process feeling exhausted and betrayed by the support office.

This section has highlighted the narrative stories of the survivor participants; turning now to a thematic discussion of the data, I begin by discussing survivors' motivations for reporting.

Motivations for Reporting

The first action that shapes the story of survivors within the reporting process is deciding to report, seeking campus support, and reporting itself. Each survivor had their own unique context and reason for deciding to report their experience. Overall, survivors demonstrated that

they had multiple, complex, and varied desires that brought them to reporting. Though, survivors often had multiple co-occurring motivations that they held at once. These motivations can be categorized as predominately academic or personal reasons, which will be illustrated in this section.

Academic Motivations

The majority of survivors I spoke with sought resources via reporting because of the negative consequences they experienced after being subjected to gender-based violence. Importantly, one of the particularities of campus gender-based violence is the unique way that it can impact the ecosystem of campus, which can be where a survivor lives, studies, and works. Survivors recounted experiences of victimization in a variety of domains of campus life. For example, Alex recounted,

I [reported] in my workplace because I didn't feel safe or comfortable being around them...And then, like the toll it's taken on my school and work life. I had to leave the student government, and I've had to get accommodations at my other workplaces on campus and tons of school accommodations. I withdrew from classes last semester. I've deferred multiple exams and midterms this year. And I'm on a reduced course load because of it.

Emma's experience also shows how her experience of victimization impacted her mental health and, consequently, her academic life,

I started to have these panic attacks, and it would just come from, like, literally, nowhere. So I would be in class, and I would need to leave because of that. And then after that, I would just be drained and not be able to do anything all day. It was just like very disruptive. So, at some point, my GPA just dropped.

Alex and Emma's quotes show their experience of victimization extends from their personal lives to experiences on campus, including academics, extracurriculars, and paid work. Emma wanted to report her experience because her manager at her on-campus workplace had harmed her,

It was a hierarchical thing because he was the [position of authority]. I was like, how many employees [have you harmed]? We were all women. He only hired women. We were all in our first year...like there were all these patterns."

As shown here, the mental health consequences of gender-based violence can impact academics and campus work experiences, highlighting why survivors require support from their campuses.

Madison experienced similar effects on her studies, which were heightened because the person who caused harm shared classes with her. Like Alex and Emma, the impacts and consequences of victimization led Madison to withdraw from courses and take a reduced course load. Indeed, classrooms were places where harassment often occurred. For example, Stephanie experiences transphobic harassment in the classroom. She told me,

When I started school, immediately, I had guys that were harassing me in the classroom... I had one issue with one of the students where he was actually harassing me like hourly... I can't keep going to school, having this guy attack me every hour, insulting me as much as he can.

For Stephanie, the violent verbal harassment included active threats and impacted the learning environment of the classroom. As recounted above, Stephanie's program involved a lot of group work and assignments, and the harassment impacted her ability to engage in group work and learn at the same level as she did prior to the harassment. Moreover, the threats developed to a point where she felt her safety was threatened outside of the classroom. Stephanie knew that this

was inappropriate, especially in a learning environment where her professors had not stepped in to intervene after she disclosed to the professor, who also witnessed the harassment.

In this section, I show how reporting was tied to academic motivations. Survivors' studies, school experiences, campus life, and overall well-being were impacted by the harassment they experienced. Together, these experiences lead them to report, in hopes of finding support. Across each survivor, there was a clear desire to remain safe on campus and reduce impacts on their academic lives.

Personal Motivations

In addition to academic motivations, many survivors reported based on personal motivation and a sense of responsibility. Madison was motivated to report based on her values, "I really couldn't live with the idea of living in a world where someone could do something that awful to me and just get away with it?" Because Madison shared a program with the person who harmed her, she also reported because she worried about what would happen if he held a position of power in the future. Similarly, Emma reported out of fear that the person who harmed her would re-offend, stating, "I reported [it], mostly [because] I was terrified that if it had happened to me, it had happened to other people because we all worked there and had to go through that [place where the assault happened.]" Moreover, Emma told me, "I was very lost at the time. I just needed some direction." For Emma, reporting was motivated by a responsibility she felt to protect other people and herself in the need for direction.

Like Madison, Noah felt a responsibility to report because he had previously brought reports forward on behalf of other students. On campus, Noah holds an advocacy role and is known as the person to pass concerns along to. He shared,

I'm usually the person that people will come forward to and report this stuff, not super formally, but it'll get passed on to me, and then I report it to others so I felt almost like responsible to report it [my experience] [because I've reported other people's experiences.]

Because of his advocacy role, Noah knew that the sexual violence support office kept a record of how many incidents occurred on campus. He recounted, "It felt important to have that be accurate, considering stuff is really underreported." Noah's previous experience through his advocacy work with the institution prepared him for the experience of reporting and predicted the lack of support he would receive. When I asked Noah why he would report knowing that, he reflected that felt that it was important to report to document because campus sexual and gender-based violence often goes unreported.

Others that I interviewed also had experience helping other students report gender-based violence. Violet, for example, reported one experience when she realized her friends had been harassed by the same person in an online chat for their class. With their approval to do so, Violet gathered the stories and screenshots together to report everyone's experiences herself, "We just had this moment like, wait, this was the same guy. And I was just like fuck it. Why not [report it]?" Like Noah, Violet wanted to report the experience because she felt it was important to document instances of people causing harm in campus spaces. The second time Violet reported, she brought it forward because of a "General consensus with trans people that it's not good [on campus]." Violet's experiences demonstrate how she chose to engage with reporting, in part because of the impacts on her life, but also to shed light on the desire to report to protect others, share about the hostile culture on campus and not let experiences of gender-based violence remain undocumented. Across the survivors' experiences, many viewed themselves as

responsible for reporting in hopes of preventing further violence from occurring to other potential victims.

Finding Institutional Support: Survivors' Experiences of Seeking Support

To fully understand how the institutional support process impacts survivors, it is important to contextualize the experiences of seeking and finding support. Notably, the survivors in my research faced long and indirect paths when attempting to report. Policy documents across campuses often refer to disclosures in a singular tense, as though it is a one-off experience. However, survivors' experiences reveal that this policy choice is not a singular event and instead, that they had to disclose multiple times on campus. For many, multiple disclosures were necessary for survivors to find the support they were looking for. For others, like Violet and Noah, they never received the support they were seeking from the institution. For them, the experience of disclosing was their only interaction with the campus support system.

Notably, the disclosures shared in this section only include those that were made at their higher-education institution in an attempt to receive support; this section does not account for the disclosures to friends, family, and partners. Including disclosures made outside of campus-based support is out of the scope of this research. However, it is important to understand that each survivor has disclosed more than they recounted in their interview when accounting for disclosures that did not relate to support-seeking.

Most survivors reported being unaware of the support resources on campus before they were victimized and disclosed their experience of receiving support. For example, Alex needed to tell their story multiple times to multiple people at the student union over several months until they found the institutional support office. The experience of disclosing, asking for help, and not receiving any tangible support from colleagues and supervisors left Alex feeling unsupported and

alone. Disclosing multiple times to people who responded with victim-blaming was disempowering. Alex described their first disclosure at their on-campus workplace by saying, “I disclosed to my direct supervisor [they were] kind of just like, ‘Oh, okay, why don’t you consider resigning?’ And [didn’t] refer me to extra support.” After disclosing and seeking support from other co-workers, other work supervisors, friends, and colleagues, Alex eventually received a referral to the sexual violence support office from their coworkers. During this process of disclosing and seeking support, Alex lamented and expressed frustration that the student government did not have a succinct process for referrals to the sexual violence support office. The frustration Alex felt reflects the consequences of a convoluted reporting process that is spread out across different offices. Had Alex received a referral after their first disclosure, they would not have had to go through disclosing multiple times.

Like Alex, other survivors also sought support first from the student government or student government-related resources, each with a varied experience. From survivor’s accounts, students appear to be more aware of the support available from the student government than from the institution. For example, when Violet was seeking support, she reached out to a friend who was a part of the student government. The friend referred Violet to the campus support office right away. It was the opposite for Emma when she first went to the student union support office -- she did not feel supported by the support offered by the student union support office. The lack of consistency in the ways that student governments refer or fail to refer students to campus support indicates a need for more training to provide appropriate responses to disclosures. In her second attempt to find support, Emma tried to report to off-campus police where she was met with skepticism about her experience. Emma left the police station feeling unsupported. As a third attempt, Emma sent an email to the campus support office, but never

received a response. Emma recounted, “I reached out to them, and [when] they never got back to me. [At first] I was like, ‘Oh, I’ll go in person.’ And then I was like, honestly, I’m not going to try again. I basically just gave up.” Emma’s experience illustrates that survivors do not have unlimited capacity to continue reporting. Emma had disclosed three times without receiving the support she was seeking. Although Alex, Emma, and Violet all experienced very different circumstances of gender-based violence, each felt disempowered, alone, and isolated when seeking support – even if support was received.

Other survivors, like Madison, first sought support off-campus because she did not know support existed on campus. The off-campus police conducted an investigation that was declined by the Crown when put forward to the next step. As a result, the police referred Madison back to her campus to seek support and processes there. Once Madison was referred to the campus sexual violence office by the off-campus police, she was able to receive support like academic accommodations that specifically responded to her needs to continue with her education. Madison received the referral to the campus she needed but had to navigate multiple steps and other reporting processes to get there – many of which were time-consuming and emotionally exhausting.

The survivors who were aware of support and were involved in advocacy or activism on campus seemed to have a more straightforward path to finding support – perhaps because of their familiarity with the processes, options, and procedures. For example, when Noah looked into support for sexual violence on campus for other students, he turned to Google. Later, when Noah required support himself, he was already aware of the resources. Noah acknowledged that undertaking personal research via the internet like on Google is an uncommon tactic to find support on campus. From his perspective and experiencing others, this is not common and most

other students would not be drawn to look it up on their own. My interviews with other survivors reflect this observation by Noah who turned to friends or professors rather than the internet to find resources and support.

In sum, the survivors each described a complex and unclear path they had to take when they first disclosed and attempted to seek support. This indicates that there is not necessarily a linear path to disclosing and getting support. Because of this, students may not receive the support they hope to find, may experience “dead ends” in their efforts, and may choose to stop seeking support because of fatigue and exhaustion in doing so. In the next section, I discuss the experiences survivors had with the reporting once they found support.

Survivor’s Experiences of Reporting

The section above highlights the diversity of survivors’ reporting experiences – some successful, some not. Noah, Violet, Emma, and Stephanie were not able to report their experiences in the way they desired. While Alex and Madison were able to file reports in the ways they desired, the process of reporting was not what they desired or expected. This section focuses on how survivors made decisions about their reporting when deciding if, and how, they wanted to report; the survivors’ desires for alternative forms of justice within reporting; non-traditional experiences of reporting; the normalization of confusion throughout reporting; and issues relating to memory and reporting.

Decision-Making Processes and Guidance Survivors Received

Before commencing this research, I anticipated including a discussion in this section about how supporters helped survivors make decisions. Although, as this section will demonstrate, the survivors I spoke with were agentic and engaged in decision-making on their

own, either making decisions without the support of supporters, like Emma, or in spite of the advice supporters were trying to give, like Madison.

Survivors begin their reporting journeys with their own needs, history, and varying levels of awareness of options available to them. When Madison began the reporting process, she had a clear idea of what she wanted. In her words, telling me several times throughout the interview, her goal was to: “Prevent it [from happening again]” to herself and to others. She was committed to following through with this goal by whatever means necessary, whether it was through institutional or through the off-campus police reporting process. Madison was already equipped with mental health support outside of the institution and had a clear desire that she communicated to the sexual violence office when she began to attempt reporting. Madison also acknowledged she was supported by her “friends and mom” throughout the process. The community support she received from loved ones and therapeutic support may be indicative of how she entered the reporting process with a decision made and a goal in mind. Madison did not require emotional or decision-making support from the sexual violence office about which reporting options to choose. When receiving decision-making support from the sexual violence office, Madison felt like they were trying to dissuade her or trying to convince her that reporting was not the right option in her case. During these conversations, the office provided Madison with statistics about the problems with reporting, told her the case did not meet policy requirements, and encouraged her to continue in therapy to build coping skills rather than rely on reporting. Through these conversations with the sexual violence office, Madison said, “I was getting more and more frustrated [as the meetings went on]” as they tried to dissuade her from reporting formally.

When Emma reported, she did not know about the different reporting options and generally did not know what she wanted out of reporting; she just knew she needed support. At the time, she was also in a vulnerable position, “I had been in Canada for, like 2 months...My English wasn't good,” and when she tried to seek support, the student union support office would give her general resources like the crisis line and the suicide line, generic resources that she “Can look up on Google.” Like Madison, Emma felt the approach was very individualistic and narrowly focused on teaching her how to cope with what had happened through generic resources. Looking back on the experience, Emma wishes one of the offices she disclosed to had offered a form of tangible support like, “We're gonna do this to get you this [resource],” or “You can report to either of these [organizations]... Let's go and do it. When is a good time for you?” Here, Emma shows that what she needed at the time of disclosure was action-oriented support where the options were explained to her, but that also included an offer of action. For example, at the time of disclosure, she did not know the difference between local police and the RCMP because she was new to Canada. Having someone explain that to her and take her to the right office to report would have been much more helpful to Emma than telling her reporting to the police was an option. As the supporters illustrated in the previous chapter, part of the role of campus support is to help survivors through the decision-making process. Here, Madison and Emma offer two experiences of how it felt to lack decision-making support.

While Madison was clear in her decision-making despite the institutional support she received, others needed support and information to help them make informed decisions. For example, Alex's experience receiving decision-making support made them feel both supported and informed of their options. Alex remembers that the conversation around decision-making support started with being asked, “What do you see yourself needing? And if [you don't know],

do you have any worries? I can recommend things.” Based on Alex’s response, they recall the supporter saying that “a voluntary resolution process could be the answer.” Alex found it helpful to have the supporter listen to their needs from a reporting process and offer examples of what types of support they could provide based on Alex’s expressed needs.

Hearing from these survivors, it is clear that a single, universal, or standardized approach to supporting survivors through decision-making does not work. For example, international students may need extra information that cannot be taken for granted. Some students are equipped with information that informs their reporting goals, while others need help laying out their needs and the options that might be best for them given those needs. A survivor’s orientation towards decision-making is organized and coordinated by their previous experiences, awareness of resources and ability to mobilize access to resources in combination with their current needs.

Desiring Non-Punitive Forms of Justice.

Non-punitive justice is a form of justice that de-centre the role of punishment while responding to harm that has been caused (Davis, 2003). This contrasts with punitive justice, which centers on the importance of punishment as a consequence for the harm that was caused. Non-punitive forms of justice are not often included in discussions of responding to gender-based violence on campuses, yet, some survivors emphasized the importance of non-punitive reporting options for them. As explored above (see pages 28-29), there are various forms of justice that campuses rely on and engage with. Most often, formal reporting is parallel to punitive and traditional justice systems, where wrongdoing is seen as being dealt with by the application of specific consequences for the person who caused harm. This form of punitive and traditional justice is most commonly thought of regarding reporting gender-based violence and is

the main reference point that is portrayed in the media. Yet, some of the survivors I spoke with expressed that they valued and sought non-traditional forms of justice to respond to their experience of gender-based violence. These orientations framed how survivors made decisions in the reporting process. For example, Alex and Stephanie both shared how their desires regarding reporting were not necessarily to punish the person who caused harm, but to i) stop the harmful behaviour from reoccurring, and ii) to continue their lives in the campus community without experiencing harm. Alex knew when they entered the reporting process that they did not want to engage with the police or the formal reporting system, explaining, “I have a lot of like family history with restraining orders and police systems, and it just felt like it would cost so much for me [to report that way].” Alex also emphasized that punitive systems require the survivor to give up a lot when “It might not even be successful and resolve anything how I want it to [be resolved].” Alex chose the informal reporting pathway because it centred their needs and allowed them to have autonomy over the decisions made about the reporting process, rather than putting that power in a campus investigator’s or the police’s hand. Engaging with the informal process also allowed Alex to not engage with formal justice systems or the police, which may have been harmful to them.

Stephanie shared similar desires with the reporting process, although at the time of the interview she had not engaged in a reporting process. When the support office on Stephanie’s campus asked her how she wanted to address the harassment, she said, “Like it's not about punishing people. I'd really like to see the inclusion policy kind of take effect because it's affecting my professional career.” Stephanie continues that she had thought about going to the police but decided to “Spare [the person who caused harm] the punishment...I understand people like [the person who caused harm], I know how he’s been raised...I don’t entirely fault him for

being the way he is.” Stephanie expressed great desire and hope that the person who caused harm could change and learn to be less harmful. Stephanie’s desire to disclose, and what she hoped for from a reporting process, was to hold the person who caused harm accountable for receiving education to prevent further harm from happening.

Stephanie and Alex’s desires for non-punitive justice reporting options demonstrate the importance of providing survivors with multiple pathways and options for reporting, regardless of outcome. These experiences also emphasize the importance of campus reporting; without campus reporting, both Alex and Stephanie would only have the option of reporting to the police, which did not align with their needs.

Experiences of Non-Traditional Reporting

Policy for reporting sexual violence on campus assumes the reporting about one person who caused harm by one person who has been harmed. This approach is guided by the assumption that each person who has been harmed and wants to seek a reporting option should report the incident on their own terms. It is an attempt to centre the survivor’s autonomy and ensure that reports are not the result of peer pressure. In contrast to institutional perspectives, Violet and Madison’s stories show how student survivors may find group reporting reassuring, empowering, and supportive.

Madison was drawn to report because she knew other people had been harmed by the person who harmed her. She knew that they had not reported because they were scared of this person. This increased Madison’s motivation to be persistent with her efforts to report. Madison was the person who came forward, in some ways, for the group of people who had all been harmed by the same person. With an understanding of barriers to reporting, Madison asked the support office if the other people who had been harmed could be considered. She was told that it

was not within policy to account for other's experiences. It did not make sense to Madison why the office would only focus on her case when there were other people who had been harmed. Here, Madison shows how cases where multiple people are victimized do not align with the way policy has been created.

Similarly, Violet wanted to report on behalf of a group. In the first instance where the harassment was online, Violet realized that one specific person had been harassing her and her friends. Violet wanted to know if other people in the course chat had been similarly harassed, "I'm just like, there's no way you started [harassing] these three people." When Violet came forward with the group of advocates regarding transphobia on campus, she did not want to report the experience formally because of her previous experiences reporting. Coming forward with a group of others provided community support and was seen as a way of resisting the harm that had been caused by the reporting process at the institution. The lack of support Violet received from the support office shows that group reports are often dismissed because they are not represented in policy.

Like group reporting, campus policies often seem to be written with the presumption that a person is harmed or victimized one time by one person, they report it, and then the case is closed. The experiences of survivors show that often, one person has to report an incident multiple times to receive support, like Stephanie, or experience more than one incident of violence throughout their education, like Emma. For some, like Stephanie, reporting multiple times occurs because of institutional responses that do not prevent the violence from continuing. For others like Violet and Madison, multiple reporting experiences correlate to being victimized more than once by different people. These two survivors shared how reporting for the second time was more difficult than the first or made them avoid reporting altogether because of their

previous experiences. Survivors' experiences here show victimization does not always follow the way that policy documents assume these experiences occur, nor how reporting takes place.

Through the discussion of non-traditional reporting, the confusion that survivors have over the reporting process is clear, and the next section will detail the role of confusion during the reporting process.

Navigating the Ambiguity

Throughout my conversations with survivors, there was a general sense of confusion and frustration with a purported lack of transparency about the office's decisions that survivors experienced while reporting. Survivors expressed various ways that the process lacked transparency, especially regarding how decisions were made by gatekeepers, leaving them to navigate the ambiguity on their own.

Some survivors named their experience of confusion explicitly, while others did not. The confusion Violet, Stephanie, Noah and Emma felt was not necessarily named explicitly but was evident in the way they talked about how it felt to go through this process. When discussing what the student support office did with Noah's disclosure information, Noah shared, "I really don't know like what they did with the information or anything like that. I mean, I didn't ask. But I felt like it shouldn't be on me to ask." This quote reflects the general experience of the survivors finding the process of reporting confusing and lacking transparency.

The survivors each explained the confusion in their own way. Stephanie's confusion was apparent from how she listed the various steps she had to take to contact different institutional supporters when trying to find support,

I was like, I'm gonna approach these guys [the support office] a second time because the windows kind of shortening on when you can do these kinds of things [reporting]. And

I'm like, "Listen, you know this happened. You guys dealt with it this way. I don't agree with how you dealt with it." They [the support office] sent me to [student peer support], who gave me a bunch of wishy, washy stuff and said they were gonna help and be this...[and said] we'll get back to you about opening up that case file again. They didn't get back to me at all. And then I wrote back to them, "I'm like, listen, you obviously had no intention of doing that cause you didn't get back to me."

Stephanie's frustration is also apparent here. The frustration is heightened with her being shifted around to different people with no explanation. This was a common theme; participants in my study were most frustrated by the lack of clarity while reporting. The survivors described the impacts of experiencing gender-based violence, and their quotes show that the experiences of disempowerment and isolation from these acts were exacerbated by the confusion created by the reporting process.

This confusion manifested in other more subvert ways, such as through confusion about the policy. As highlighted in the Literature Review, there is a difference between a disclosure and a report. Each report begins with a disclosure, where a survivor shares their experience with a staff or faculty member on campus. Not every disclosure turns into a report. Disclosures move forward to a report if two conditions are met: the survivor wants the disclosure to become a report, and the institutional supporter agrees to move the disclosure through to the reporting stage.

Only Alex and Madison were able to get their disclosures through to reports. Alex did not express any difficulty with moving their disclosure to an informal report. Madison had a very different experience where she felt "manipulated" and "unhappy." As detailed in Madison's story, she had to spend months attempting to convince the campus violence office to move

forward with her report. Madison's disclosure did not turn into a report until she went public with her story. Here, Madison's difficulty with bringing her disclosure to a report demonstrates how sexual violence supporters can act as gatekeepers in that they represent the authority figure that is required to approve the shift from disclosure to a report. For Madison, the lack of transparency created frustration and confusion, because she did not understand why how decisions about her case were being made.

The role of gatekeepers creating a lack of transparency is reflected in the other survivors' stories as well. Violet, Stephanie, Noah and Emma all made contact with institutional supporters who were designated as responders to violence on their campuses. All four of these survivors wanted to report as they each saw their case as an issue relating to gender-based violence on campus but were not able to move forward with a report. Violet was told that she did not understand the campus policy and that her case did not fit the parameters, which was why her case did not proceed to become a report. Stephanie, Noah and Emma were not given an explanation to indicate why their cases did not move forward to a report. Violet, Stephanie, Noah and Emma were left without support and without understanding why they were not eligible to receive campus resources or reporting procedures. When I asked Noah if he was ever told his disclosure would not become a report, he said, "It never seemed like moving forward was an option with any of them. But no, they never explained anything but like what a report is versus disclosure, or what would happen with the information report was made, or anything like that." Leaving the survivors without this understanding meant that they felt alone, unsupported, confused and were left alone to navigate these feelings. The role of memory in reporting also impacted the experience of confusion and ambiguity, which will be detailed in the next section.

Reporting and Memory

Throughout the interviews, the topic of memory came up frequently, especially in terms of the role of memory in the reporting process and in the interview. In preparation for this research, I had expected many of the interviews to contain specific information about the reporting process, with references to documents that the survivors were shown and anecdotes of whether they understood the documents. The interviews highlighted an important finding for the study of campus sexual violence reporting and investigations. Most of the survivors had gone through the reporting system more than a year ago. Each survivor I interviewed answered “I don’t remember” or “I can’t remember” to at least one question during the interview. Often, survivor’s narratives included anecdotes like, “And it was basically on the fact that [pause] I don’t remember what it was exactly...” (Emma). This importantly highlights the way survivors’ memories are affected by the trauma they experienced, both from victimization and from reporting. Madison referenced that although she will never forget the violence she experienced, she has been trying to leave behind memories of reporting as a part of her healing process,

I have an exact memory of exactly what happened to me... And then, as I’m trying to put this [reporting] behind me and be like this, isn’t this isn’t the main part of my life anymore. I don’t need to keep hanging onto it...It’s been like working to forget this.

Survivors not remembering specific details from their reporting experience is demonstrative of the trauma that they experienced rather than of the details not being important enough to remember. From the survivor’s perspective, it also makes sense that a survivor would not remember all of the small pieces of paperwork they read or the offices that they talked with. What is most memorable for the survivors is how the process made them feel and what the outcomes of the process were, rather than the specific paperwork or procedures that they went

through during the process. I include this discussion on memory for two reasons. First, it contextualizes the lack of detail in some parts of the data. Second, it provides important insight into the parts of the process, policies, and individual meaning-making that are important areas of focus for this current study and for future research.

Supports and Resources: Emotional, Financial, Spatial, and Academic

As highlighted in the previous chapter on supporters' experiences, support for survivors is adjacent to campus reporting processes. Campus supports generally seek to address emotional, financial, spatial, or academic consequences that result from experiencing gender-based violence. This section considers the survivors' experiences with on-campus and off-campus support resources.

On-Campus Supports

As previously discussed, part of the role of the sexual violence office is to provide support to survivors on campus; I have categorized these supports as "On-Campus Supports." In the previous chapter, supporters emphasized one of the most common supports their offices provide is academic accommodations. This was mirrored in survivors' stories, where the most common resource offered to them was academic accommodation. Being offered academic support helped Alex realize they wanted to reduce their course load by withdrawing from a few courses. Alex felt that if they had to ask for academic concessions themselves, it would have felt personal and like a denial of their experience if an accommodation was denied. Alex shares,

I didn't want to talk to my teachers about what was happening...It was so nice to be able to ask them to do all of that. If there were any no's, I wouldn't have to be dealing with it or feeling like it was because of me. They were just sending out emails and writing me support letters for all, like the academic concession forms.

Having support to receive academic accommodations meant that Alex did not have to deal with the additional emotional burden of worrying that their professors would deny their academic accommodation request. The support also alleviated paperwork and other tedious tasks for Alex, like writing the academic concession forms. All Alex had to do during this process was provide their signature. Alex noted that these supports helped reduce the impact of their victimization on their academics.

Emma also received academic accommodations because her mental health was interfering with her ability to keep up with coursework, which caused her GPA to drop and put her scholarship at risk. When Emma shared her academic struggles with her therapist, the therapist wrote a letter about Emma's experiences, asking for accommodation to maintain the scholarship funds despite a lower GPA. Emma did not have a great experience with her institution when she was initially reporting and disclosing, but Emma shared that this process of receiving academic support was, "actually, really painless." Explaining more about how she remembers this support and process, she told me,

[My] therapist wrote the letter. And then I submitted that letter to the, I don't know an office. I don't remember what office, but so I submitted that to the office. And I was like, I'm just asking for an accommodation. It was only about one semester. So, I submitted all of that. And then they were like, okay, we will re-evaluate next semester.

Until this request, Emma's experience with her institution made her feel alone and frustrated. She explained to me, "It did make me feel that they cared." However, this academic accommodation made a difference and made Emma feel supported by the institution, at least academically.

Madison also received academic accommodations. However, she received them through her on-campus counselling support and from her professors directly instead of through the sexual

violence office. The process with her counsellor was simple and streamlined. For example, she asked her counsellor if she could drop the classes, she no longer had the capacity to participate in. Her counsellor responded, “I’m gonna fill out this form. I just need to use a couple of sentences here, and I’ll put that in for you.” These accommodations supported Madison by enabling her to continue in her program and to return to courses regularly the next year, which also added a year of study to her program timeline. Madison’s academic concessions included requesting concessions for extensions or dropping her classes the year that the violence and reporting took place. While she was relieved and happy she did receive accommodation, she was also confused as to why she was not offered academic support through the sexual violence office. Had Madison not already been accessing counselling on campus, she may not have received this support.

Despite the offer of academic accommodation, which many survivors found helpful, they were also often disappointed in the lack of other resources offered to them. Madison’s frustrations over only being offered a therapist referral highlight that policies and support systems are not equipped to account for individual needs, defaulting to therapeutic support. Even Alex, who was grateful for the support they received, said, “It’s super meaningful that there’s this accommodation and support...but at the end of the day, you’re not being kept safe from this person.” Here, Alex acknowledges that, although they found the academic support helpful and meaningful, they still feel and acknowledge the gap that these survivor-centred accommodations cannot fill.

Noah, Stephanie, and Violet were not offered any campus support. When I asked Stephanie if she had been offered any support, she said, “They just said that like they would hold him accountable if anything happened further...it happened again the next day, and he wasn’t

held accountable.” Violet also was not offered any support and when I asked how that made her feel, she exclaimed, “I was pissed. I was like, what the fuck is this? I was like, seems like they were just protecting university liability.” Violet’s reflection here is an example of how students can feel alienated from the institution as a whole when they feel that their needs and requests for support are brushed off.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has explored the findings from interviews with survivors, first focusing on narratively depicting each survivor’s story to set the scene. Then, the chapter moved to discuss the reasons why survivors decided to report: many hoped to receive academic or emotional support. Others reported because they did not know what to do and needed guidance to determine what their next steps might be. On the whole, finding institutional support took more than one attempt, often multiple, which left the survivor having to reshare their story several times, which increased the experience of isolation and stigmatizing responses. Survivors had varied experiences with the process of reporting. Most of the survivors were met with hostility and were not able to move forward with a report. Those who moved forward with reports had varying experiences with the support they received while reporting. Throughout this chapter, survivors echoed feelings of isolation and frustration throughout their reporting experience, with some survivors not receiving any support from their campus. This chapter highlighted the importance of providing support to survivors who demonstrated they felt supported when they received resources from their institution, often regardless of what the specific resource was. Salient themes from this chapter, such as betrayal, access to resources, and survivor-supporter interactions, will be highlighted in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

Gender-based violence is a prevailing issue on campuses that impacts almost all students in a variety of different ways. Of the 71% of students who experience sexual violence on campus, only 10% of them report to their campus (Burczycka, 2020). This research explores what happens during the campus sexual violence response process, focusing on how the process impacts survivors and supporters, as well as how campus policies guide the reporting process. The findings indicate that survivors have felt alone, isolated and frustrated throughout their experiences of reporting, with the majority of survivors feeling as if they were turned away from seeking support or seeking to report. The findings also indicated that supporters are trying to do their best to support survivors and prevent violence on their campuses. The following discussion chapter contextualizes the findings from the research alongside the existing literature. The chapter focuses on two themes, institutional betrayal and the performance of policy.

Institutional Betrayal

I will begin with a discussion about institutional betrayal by highlighting the purpose and goals of reporting sexual violence, starting by highlighting the nature of institutional harm. The literature review and findings have emphasized the increase in resources and efforts to support students in the last two decades. In the face of these resources, there are risks of institutional betrayal when students' needs are not met. For survivors, institutional betrayal occurs as a result of environments where violence occurs and is not addressed (Lorenz et al., 2022); Marques et al., 2020). Risk factors for institutional betrayal include difficulty in reporting, the dismissal of disclosures, and victim blaming by staff in positions of power (Marques et al., 2020; Lorenz et al., 2022). Across the survivor stories from this research, at least one of the risk factors appeared in each story, though often included multiple.

Survivor Experiences

Scholars Linder and Myers (2018) posit that institutional betrayal occurs both when an institution perpetuates trauma and remains ignorant of the instances of trauma experienced by members of the community. This betrayal was seen across the survivors in this research, where each survivor expressed that their needs were not being completely met by the reporting process at their institution. This is evident with survivors like Alex experiencing frustration because of the limits of the campus procedures and justice systems. Institutional betrayal theory also highlights that trust can be broken as a result of non-response from the institution (Marques, 2020). Experiences of survivors like Stephanie, Noah, Violet and Emma echo this finding in their frustration with being denied support altogether. Madison's frustration stemmed from not understanding why the campus office would not move forward with her report. In comparison to most survivors' experiences, it seems that Alex experienced less institutional betrayal. Alex's experience was impacted by the high level of transparency and communication they received from the office about the institutional limits of the support they could provide; as such, Alex understood what could be provided and what could not, which diminished the potential for betrayal. On the other hand, the remaining survivors did not receive the same transparency and communication, which led to increased feelings of betrayal. The survivors' stories emphasized how important small details were to them: Emma recalled that her email going unanswered stopped her from seeking help, while Stephanie's meeting taking place in an eerie room negatively impacted her comfort in the situation.

Previous research has called to attention that, through implementing reporting on campus, campuses assume the role of responsibility and the creation of trust between students (Marques et al., 2020). Institutional betrayal theory advances the idea that abuse perpetrated within close relationships causes more harm than abuse perpetuated from an unknown source (Linder &

Myers, 2018). When survivors reach out to their campus support office, this relationship of seeking help from an institution suggests a relationship of trust between the student and the institution. Thus, betrayal from a student's campus has a higher possibility of causing harm than betrayal would from an institution the student did not have a relationship with. Campuses create trust and dependency with their students by providing education, housing, employment, and through requiring financial contributions from students. Campuses replicate a close relationship of dependency because students require engagement with their campus throughout their education. The research findings highlight that, before reporting, students considered their institutions as being a trustworthy authority for maintaining safety on campus and reporting experiences of gender-based violence. Yet, survivor experiences showed how that trust was quickly broken when they entered the reporting process.

In their theorizations of institutional betrayal theory, Linder and Myers (2018) highlight that institutional figures can unknowingly commit institutional betrayal, because of the overt and covert forms betrayal can take. Overt institutional betrayal includes forms of betrayal that are committed knowingly, as a result of biases or stereotypes. For example, this can look like a survivor being turned away from the reporting process without support, or when an institutional figure engages in victim blaming. Overt betrayal does not necessarily mean that the institutional figure intended to cause harm, however, the form of betrayal is visible and explicit. Covert institutional betrayal can occur simply due to the fact that sexual violence on campus happens in the first place (Lorenz et al., 2022). Institutions present an external narrative to the public and its students that sexual violence is prohibited on campus. This narrative most often includes a statement made in their sexual violence policy and educational materials present on campus, such as posters reminding students about consent. Including a statement in sexual violence

policies is common across BC institutions, yet it is not a requirement within the legislated BC policy guidelines (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017). Including statements in policy that prohibit violence on campus while students experience violence regularly on campus creates a disconnection for students, especially for those who are victimized while on campus. The survivors interviewed did not expect to be victimized by sexual violence. When they were, there was a disconnect between their experience on campus and a previous assumption that campus was a safe place to be, as institutions convey (Lorenz et al., 2022).

Covert institutional betrayal was also experienced as survivors went through the reporting process, especially concerning the disconnection between supporter and survivor experiences. As a whole, the survivors expressed two main points of tension within the reporting process, reflecting both covert and overt experiences of institutional betrayal. The first point of disconnection was between the support that supporters attempted to provide and the support that survivors felt they received. Survivors who received support talked about how the way the support office engaged with them felt as if it was often supporter-centred rather than survivor-centred. Both supporters' interviews and policy documents reflect that supporters are supposed to approach survivors in a trauma-informed manner (Government of BC, 2016; Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017). The supporters emphasized they try to meet survivors where they are at, use plain language, and are survivor-centred. Yet, survivors reflected this approach was focused on survivors generally, but not on their unique individual needs, creating a sense of disconnection. Here, the disconnection is representative of covert betrayal where, despite often positive intentions, the structures of an institution result in creating harm. The disconnection from the individual survivor was the case for survivors like Madison who entered the reporting process with a very clear idea of what she wanted to achieve from it. This disconnection

remained true in student union support spaces. Emma was offered hot tea and a warm blanket when she came in requesting information about reporting. Survivors who were told they were believed and that their experience was valid felt frustrated when they did not receive appropriate or individual-specific support. The support office offered words of affirmation yet did not provide tangible survivor support. Madison and Emma's experiences of affirmation without action were detrimental to their relationships with support services and to the institution demonstrating covert betrayal resulting from the institution's attempt, but ultimately failing to support the survivors in the ways they needed.

The literature on reporting sexual violence explains why many survivors do not engage in reporting. Feelings of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and an assumption that the experience was not "serious" enough to report are commonly highlighted as factors that prevent survivors from reporting (Harris et al., 2020). Barriers such as a lack of time, knowledge about available resources, and negative feelings towards using campus services have been reported as barriers to accessing support services on campus (Holland & Cortina, 2017). However, based on the survivor experiences from this research, it appears that the largest barriers for them to report consist of distrust towards the institution and generalized understanding that the responses are imperfect, rather than a survivor's individual or interpersonal barriers such as the internalization of shame or guilt. This demonstrates the importance of conceptualizing the systemic and institutional barriers that affect reporting, in addition to the individual barriers. Much of the existing research on campus responses and survivor-centred responses centres on the importance of validating survivors' experiences and showing them they are believed. However, each of the survivors I interviewed expressed that they did not seek support because they needed external validation. The survivors sought support because they knew their experience was valid, and that

gender-based violence is not okay. Here, survivors from this research contrast existing literature, showing that survivors desired specific support rather than general affirmation from their campus.

This divergence from the literature on what survivors need may be a result of focusing on survivors who already decided to report, rather than survivors who did not report. The survivors described that the validation of their experience came from support external to the support office, such as from themselves, friends, family, or other mental health support. This validation provided survivors with the courage to bring their report forward, meaning they did not require validation once they encountered the support office, but were seeking specific, concrete resources. Yet, the shift away from needing validation may also reflect a new generational shift toward increased use of mental health support. Most of the survivor participants mentioned their external mental health support, whether through counselling or a psychiatrist, in the interview. Some of these survivors had these supports in place before their victimization. This created a scenario where, when survivors approached the sexual violence support offices, they were not seeking emotional validation or referrals to therapy but were seeking very specific actions that only that office could support them through. The lack of need for validation contrasts with previous research that predominately highlights the importance of validation at the first encounter to set the survivor up for success and healing (Holland & Cortina, 2017).

This shift in survivor needs may also be representative of a larger cultural shift. The survivors had all been victimized in the past few years, after the #MeToo movement that was popularized in 2017 (Jaffe, 2018). Prior to the #MeToo movement, gender-based and sexual violence was less frequently discussed and when it was discussed, often resulted in victim-blaming. Survivors seeking to report may have required more validation, as a part of their

emotional healing. However, since 2017, I postulate that perhaps survivors require less affirmation and have acquired a stronger sense of what they need, in line with increased awareness and knowledge about gender-based violence, especially among those who choose to report their experiences. When survivors enter a process sure of what they need, and are told they will be supported, but do not receive the support they requested, they are left experiencing symptoms of institutional betrayal. This observation suggests campus support offices should focus more on offering resources to survivors that they request than on providing validation.

Another point of tension occurred when the survivor did not receive any support leading to experiences of overt institutional betrayal. This happened for survivors like Stephanie, Noah and Violet. This type of institutional betrayal was less insidious than covert betrayal. Overt betrayal is clearer to identify as a breach of trust, where the campus fails to meet the expectations, the institution had set. In the instances of overt betrayal, survivors reacted in line with *betrayal blindness*, the ignoring or minimization of experiences with betrayal maintained for the individual's survival (Linder & Myers, 2018). The use of betrayal blindness is especially salient when considering the survivor's inability to detach from their institution (Lorenz et al., 2022). Students use betrayal blindness as a strategy to cope with the betrayal while having to continue their relationship with the campus. This strategy was clear in the ways that Noah and Violet talked about their continued relationship with their institution in a manner that required their experience of betrayal to be minimized despite strong experiences of betrayal.

Students' experience of institutional betrayal can lead to further mental health consequences, such as exacerbated post-traumatic stress symptoms and negative perceptions of safety, similar in severity to the consequences of the experience of sexual violence (Bedera 2022; Cipriano et al. 2021). The research results from my work suggest that institutional betrayal is a

real risk to student survivors. The experiences of institutional betrayal left students feeling more alone, frustrated, and blamed for what happened to them.

Researchers have found that about 46% of survivors who reported sexual violence experienced at least one form of institutional betrayal (Linder & Myers, 2018). Drawing from the experiences of survivors in this research, I observed they each experienced a form of institutional betrayal. This ubiquity of experiencing institutional betrayal emphasizes understanding of institutional betrayal on a spectrum. Some survivors experienced more betrayal than others, but each of them left the experience of attempting to report feeling some form of betrayal. For example, Alex did not experience as much betrayal from their institution as other survivors, the consequences of the betrayal were less severe and led to fewer consequences than they did for other survivors. However, they still experienced betrayal in that they experienced gender-based violence on campus, and their campus could not keep them safe from the violence reoccurring by continuing to have to see the person who caused harm. This insight reflects the importance for institutions and supporters to understand and proactively seek to prevent betrayal from occurring.

Supporter Experiences

In the literature, institutional betrayal is discussed regarding the experience of student survivors when reporting campus gender-based violence. The literature does not discuss the implications of institutional betrayal on other actors in the system, such as for supporters. Yet, the literature has called for further investigation into decision-making done by supporters (Cipriano et al., 2021). The findings demonstrated the common frustrations that supporters have with the response procedures that they are responsible for overseeing.

Supporters acknowledged that they likely betray survivors they work with. Yet, as supporters revealed in their interviews, these forms of betrayal often occur no matter how strong

the effort is on the supporter's end. Here, the supporters echo other research findings that policy and institutional structures can lead to the supporter's reenactment of betrayal (Lorenz et al., 2022). From interviews, this experience of betrayal seemed to be amplified by the supporter's desire to provide support to survivors. The supporters described the passion, commitment and care they hoped to provide to the survivors. Yet, the supporters noted the betrayal they felt when they could not provide the support that they knew survivors needed. The supporters' (often, inadvertent) betrayal is important for two reasons. First, supporters already work in a field that exposes them to violence, conceptualized in the literature as secondary victimization (Branson, 2019; Najmabadi et al., 2023). Their secondary victimization may be compounded by additional exposure to institutional betrayal. Second, the supporter must continuously disappoint survivors, whether with a lack of sanctions for their case, or news of their inability to proceed with the case; both decisions often being outside of the supporters' control. Supporters are often subject matter experts on campus sexual violence, yet their role often does not enable them to utilize this expertise to provide input on specific cases. Rather, staff in higher-up administrative roles, with less expertise on sexual violence, are given the role of decision makers. It would likely benefit the survivor more if all decisions about their case were vetted by the supporter, rather than solely resting on administrators as decision makers. In addition, the supporters' experiences of institutional betrayal likely contribute to normalizing institutional betrayal for them. If the supporter has been experiencing institutional betrayal every day for the time they have been working on campus, the experience of betrayal itself becomes a part of their routine while working in the institution. When considering the reactions of survivors, it is conceivable that the supporters continued experiences of institutional betrayal as normal are projected to the survivor.

Scholars have found that institutional betrayal is particularly salient when the betrayal is not acknowledged by the institution in power (Lorenz et al., 2022). When considering the experience of supporters, it is additionally noteworthy that this form of betrayal is not acknowledged by the supporter's employer. The use of betrayal blindness is prevalent among supporters, who cannot detach from the institution that is causing them harm without leaving their employment entirely. Different than survivors who are students, the supporters require increased dedication and longer time commitments to the institution. Linder and Myers (2018) highlight that power related to social identities can compound the effects of institutional betrayal. The more marginalization one faces in their institution, the more likely they are to experience more severe institutional betrayal. Because patriarchal histories and power structures are embedded within post-secondary institutions, the supporters, who were all women, likely experienced more institutional betrayal than a man would in a supporter position (Marshall, 2005). The supporters' experiences of institutional betrayal correlate with their social identities and their exclusion from institutional decision-making.

The experiences of betrayal the survivors felt were often expressed in interviews as tied to a specific staff person. However, when considering the institutional structures alongside the literature and interviews of survivors, it is apparent that the betrayal caused by supporters is situated within systems of institutional power where individual autonomy is removed. The lack of autonomy for supporters has been expressed in other research, where scholars have found that most decision-making about sexual violence policy is conducted by administrative staff without training in the subject area (Shankar & Tavcer, 2021). As highlighted in the findings, the supporters in this research echoed that they felt that the upper administration wielded decision-making power about policy and individual cases. Institutions should provide individual

autonomy for supporters to allow them to fully utilize their subject matter expertise to support survivors, for the benefit of both supporters and survivors. Yet, institutions as a whole continue to deny that campus gender-based and sexual violence is a problem or allocate sufficient resources to prevent and respond as a result of neoliberal ideologies surrounding institutions as a brand that has an image that must be maintained (Gorsak, 2019; Linder & Myers, 2018).

Cultures of Institutional Impunity

Examining the impact of institutional betrayal reveals how and why the reporting systems on campus cause harm to survivors and supporters. The concept of “culture of impunity” was highlighted in the literature review, coined to express how institutional cultures that lack transparency permit campus officials to make mistakes without consequence (Ridolfi-Starr, 2016). Ridolfi-Starr argues there is a lack of transparency on campus regarding procedures for responding to campus sexual violence, for both survivors and people who have caused harm. Survivor participants expressed confusion and a lack of understanding about why their cases were not taken up. Conveying decision-making from the supporter to the survivor did not seem to be clear to the survivor. Bedera (2022) offers the term *organizational dependency* to describe how survivors become dependent on institutional supporters to make decisions when they do not understand the policy and therefore cannot make decisions themselves. Organizational dependency here centralizes power in the hands of the institution and disempowers the survivor - even when they are given choices, they are still dependent on the institution. Organizational dependency may be a result of complex policy, and the survivors coming from a place of trauma; however, the prevalence of survivor disempowerment in contrast with the reliance instituted through policy highlights the role of organizational dependency. Through simultaneous disempowerment and forced dependency, organizational dependency can compound the cyclical

nature of trauma that survivors experience while seeking support. Cultures of impunity are also placed upon supporters from upper administration, where those with the most responsibility are not held as responsible by their institution for issues that arise in sexual violence response, pushing the responsibility onto the supporters.

Ridolfi-Starr (2016) highlights that the lack of transparency can be an intentional effort to cover up mistakes, or be subconscious through biases, and a lack of training and expertise. When Noah reached out for support, he was met with support staff who could not differentiate between autism and trans identities, despite working in an area that responds to violence. This trend reveals a lack of training or qualifications for staff working with sexual violence. Here, the cause of this culture of impunity is more likely to be non-deliberate, a result of subconscious biases or lack of training. However, Noah's example highlights the real and detrimental effects of these non-deliberate forms of institutional harm. Non-deliberate harm perpetuated by institutions through providing staff members who lack training can have a detrimental effect on survivors' abilities to see their experience as valid and heal from their experience of victimization.

Confusion in reporting processes is characteristic of post-secondary institutions. Sara Ahmed (2021) posits that confusion is a deliberate symptom of institutions creating complaint processes with the goal of complaint procedures to prevent change from happening. The lack of transparency resulted in survivors' feeling disempowerment and confusion. Survivors did not have a path of recourse because there is only one avenue to receive support for gender-based violence on campuses. A lack of transparency meant survivors were left with confusion regarding their report entirely, and with no recourse to correct this confusion a culture of impunity is reinforced. Ahmed (2021) highlights that the lack of transparency is built into the institutional reporting processes, where if the survivors follow the procedures of the reporting

process properly, they are told they should succeed in their report and be rewarded with justice. However, in reality, Ahmed argues that the reporting systems are missing procedures, have gaps in the steps, and are often unfriendly to survivors. Institutions hide the reality of the procedures to obscure the harm but do not receive any complaints as a result of the culture of impunity (Ridolfi-Starr, 2016). Survivors internalize the impacts of cultures of impunity and are not able to act because of their frustration and disempowerment, and in many cases, they ceased seeking support altogether.

The normalization of confusion resulting from opaque procedures and cultures of impunity not only impacts the survivor's emotional state during these procedures but also affects the support and accountability they receive. When survivors were not given all of the information about their case such as why it was not taken up by the office, they became reliant on the decision-making capabilities of the support offices, subsequently reducing their own autonomy and decision-making capabilities (Bedera, 2022). In her research, Bedera found that when survivor's autonomy in decision-making was reduced as a result of confusion, the sexual violence offices (Title IX), would select the process that created the least amount of action from the institution, regardless of the survivor's preferences. On the campus Bedera studied, Title IX practitioners would choose informal reporting options for survivors, requiring fewer institutional resources. As discussed in chapter 5, survivors in this study were also left out of decision-making about their cases, seemingly in favour of reducing the use of institutional resources. When the survivors were not informed of the logic behind the decisions that the supporters were making, they were subsequently removed altogether from the process of making decisions about their case. This reality contrasts with legislation and campus policies that make it clear survivors are to make their own choices about what happens in their case (Ministry of Advanced Education,

2017). Yet when survivors are not given transparency about how and why decisions are made about their case, they are not able to exercise autonomy in the reporting process. The lack of transparency and normalization of confusion demonstrates a link to the culture of impunity relating to campus reporting processes (Ridolfi-Starr, 2016). Cultures of impunity shape the way that institutional trust functions on campuses, which will be discussed in the next section.

Institutional Trust: Academic Accommodations

Institutional betrayal emerges throughout this thesis; however, salient practices that promote trust also arose from the research. All the survivors expressed the importance of academic accommodations, whether they received them or not. Academic accommodations have been argued to be essential in promoting survivors' healing on campus (Khan et al., 2019). Previous research that has found experiences of sexual violence victimization have led to decreased academic performance and graduation rates (DeLong et al., 2018). Academic accommodations support survivors to continue their access to education and diminish the negative impact of their experiences. All survivors expressed the importance of these types of accommodations. Survivors highlighted the accommodations allowed them to continue in their academic journeys with less negative impact than they would have otherwise.

Academic accommodations have many positive benefits. However, these accommodations were given inconsistently across survivors' experiences. Only Alex and Emma received academic accommodations through the sexual violence support offices on their campuses. Madison received academic accommodations as well but as a result of a previously existing relationship with counselling services and the accessibility office. The other survivors were not offered academic accommodations, demonstrating that there is a lack of consistency and procedures for how survivors are offered academic accommodations. Different resources

seemed to be made available on different campuses, which also highlights the inconsistencies across campuses. However, for survivors from the same campus, there were also examples where two survivors were offered different supports. The survivors who received academic accommodations were those who had more engagement with the sexual violence office in general. However, this was not true for Madison who engaged with the office over an extended period, but was never offered academic accommodations. The survivors who were not offered any support could have felt more supported had they been given academic accommodations, especially if their cases were not brought forward due to policy scope. Advocates emphasize the importance of streamlined academic accommodation protocols as being key to survivor-centred policy (Crocker et al., 2020). The lack of consistency with academic accommodations, alongside the lack of related processes for academic accommodations, is echoed across research from across Canada (Protetch & Rosser, 2021). The negative impact this has on survivors emphasizes the importance of campuses' need to create standardized procedures that offer accommodations to all survivors.

Institutional Shuffle

The bureaucracy within institutions was evident through the complicated paths that survivors had to take when attempting to receive support. Through navigating the institutional systems, the survivors often identified that the reporting process was not linear as they were told, but a circle that they had to continue on until finally finding support, or give up (Ahmed, 2021). Survivors explained how many different offices and staff members they had to talk to receive support, sometimes out of their own initiative and sometimes as a result of receiving various referrals from other staff members. I refer to this process as the *institutional shuffle*. The institutional shuffle refers to the way that institutional practices put the survivor through a series

of referrals with the assumption that each new referral will be able to provide the support the survivor needs. Yet, reporting is often circular in nature, rather than linear as policy and education attempt to project (Ahmed, 2021). The implication of the institutional shuffle is salient because advocates have expressed concern about further harm being caused to survivors when they are required to disclose multiple times to seek the appropriate resources (Khan et al., 2019). Organizational practices that trigger painful memories can lead to re-traumatization for the survivor (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). In turn, the institutional shuffle is a practice that is not documented in policy, yet took place frequently across survivors' experiences.

Violet and Stephanie's experiences reporting to their campuses exemplify the concept of the institutional shuffle. When Violet attempted to bring forward experiences of transphobia on campus, she was not offered support and ended up sitting on a committee created to address transphobia on campus. Yet, the establishment of this committee demonstrates a commitment to bureaucracy and the bureaucratization of responses to gender-based violence through the reliance on committees. Notably, Violet identified that those invited to the committee had not been offered tangible emotional or academic resources to support them through their participation on the committee. For Violet, shuffling her experience of victimization through the support office to a committee, without receiving support, is symbolic of the institutional violence that relies upon moving students through a circle deferring their ability to receive support. Stephanie had a similar experience. When she expressed frustration about the lack of tangible support she received from the sexual violence office, they referred her to a student group that provided peer support. The student group had never been able to provide tangible support. Practices of the institutional shuffle result in discouraging the survivor from seeking further support. These

experiences of being shuffled throughout offices within the institution show the ways that bureaucracy enacts further violence onto survivors.

Policy as Performative

The goal of campus sexual violence policies is clear; to provide protocols and clear procedures to be followed when a student comes forward with an experience of sexual violence (Gorsak, 2019). Yet, the accounts from survivors have shown that the experience of reporting is anything but straightforward. This lack of clarity may be a characteristic of symbolic compliance in policies, where campuses create policies that appear to respond to sexual violence, yet they are only engaged symbolically, on a performance level, rather than substantively (Bedera, 2022). At times, the loose following of policy can benefit supporters and survivors, as discussed further in the section about unwritten procedures. Applying critical feminist thought to policies, reveals policies are sites of power that are complex and infused with values (Gorsak, 2019). When a campus creates a policy that superficially checks the boxes for a *survivor-centred* and *trauma-informed* policy, yet in practice, produces experiences of harm and betrayal, a form of institutional violence occurs (Bedera, 2022). The symbolic compliance enacted by the institution favours its public reputation and frames the institution as rational, reasonable and expert in responding to campus sexual violence (Gorsak, 2019). However, these very policies are often not enforced or practiced as they are written, reflecting the ways that policy documents are active, and how they are used differs across situations (Gorsak, 2019; Smith, 2005). The symbolic compliance of institutions to their policy has been reified from research done by the BC Government (2022), which revealed students viewed the actions their campus took were not in line with the values and practices described in the policy. This section continues to explore how

policy is performative through examples of education and training, hierarchies of violence and unwritten procedures.

Education and Training

Education and training are essential to create safe campus spaces. Institutions in BC are not mandated by legislation to implement education and training programs, though they are encouraged in the guiding document distributed by the province (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017). Supporters highlighted how training on campus for students revolves around education about sexual violence and information about where to receive support on campus. Staff and faculty training was brought up less frequently. When staff and faculty training was discussed, supporters noted that the training focused on two central topics: power and authority, and response to disclosures. The training on power and authority focuses on educating staff and faculty about the power they have to address gender-based violence between faculty or staff and students. Training on responses to disclosures aim to give staff and faculty the tools they would need to respond to a student's disclosure appropriately and supportively. Supporters highlighted increasing efforts to educate staff and faculty, despite the lack of legislated requirements. The supporters emphasized the importance of staff and faculty roles as members of the campus ecosystem.

The importance of the role of staff and faculty was also noted in the experiences of survivors. Survivors' experiences of first seeking support highlighted that often they did not know where to seek support, and often ended up disclosing to an authority figure who was close in proximity, like one of their professors or supervisors. Most of the survivors said they did not know about the sexual violence office before they needed support. The lack of awareness about the sexual violence office highlights a general gap between the effort of providing education

from the supporters and the students not receiving or digesting the information. The lack of digesting information may be a result of students often externalizing issues regarding sexual violence, assuming that they will not be victimized until it happens, which points to a need for increased education.

The survivors sought support from those in proximity to them, such as a professor, a supervisor at work, or the student union. Often, when survivors reached out to individuals outside of the campus sexual violence office, yet as shown here they were brushed off or left unsupported, without any referral. Even when survivors know formal support options, research shows they are more likely to reach out informally for support first, to a trusted professor or supervisor, rather than seeking formal support from the institution (Holland & Cortina, 2017). The fact that the survivors felt empowered to reach out to an authority member in close proximity demonstrates they felt comfortable asking for support and disclosing an experience of violence. Yet, the lack of knowledge and lack of referrals highlights a gap in awareness on campus. This is particularly prevalent for the authority figures who held official roles on campus. Whether it is a professor, student union staff person or the student-run sexual violence support office, these venues should be referring student survivors to the institutional campus support office, especially when the individual is not able to support the survivor themselves.

When survivors were not immediately referred to the institutional office, they were often left feeling alone and unsure of the next step to take. Survivors expressed that their harm was compounded during these instances. This experience was not unique to one survivor but happened multiple times across the sample; highlighting the importance for authority figures on campus to receive training and education about campus sexual violence and available resources. Perhaps education for authority figures is even more important than education for survivors.

Survivors did not retain the information about the sexual violence support services, despite the fact they likely had received some form of education or seen a poster on campus. Previous research has found that students often do not digest information about sexual violence resources, even if the information is present on their campus (Bloom et al., 2022; Garcia et al., 2012). The lack of knowledge the survivors had signalled the importance of authority figures on campus to hold this knowledge for them. Whether it is due to age, externalization of sexual violence or too much information during education sessions, students should not be solely responsible for knowing where to seek help. It is essential that individuals on campus, especially in authority roles, have the knowledge and the ability to provide referrals for students when they are seeking support.

Performance as Activating. Under the portfolio of education and prevention, policy and supporters show that campuses heavily rely on initiatives such as educational posters to raise awareness about sexual violence. These educational materials are intended to signal to students and the greater public that campus is a safe place, and that the institution is the responsible protector in these instances. The institution as the responsible protector is built on the public messaging that positions institutions this way (Marques et al., 2020). In effect, public-facing education materials play two roles: first, in an attempt to passively provide education to students about support resources; and second, to create the appearance of the institution as the responsible provider of a safe place. Existing research has not considered the impacts of these types of messages on survivors. The survivors in this research identified that seeing these pieces of public messaging on their campuses created a variety of emotional responses. First, survivors identified that having to visually witness these educational materials on campus reminded them of their victimization and subsequent betrayal from their campus. Seeing posters that said, “We believe

you,” frustrated Madison because she had already attempted to seek support and was not met with the message promised on the poster. For Madison, seeing these posters daily was a constant reminder of the harm she experienced on campus. Similarly, Emma experienced sexual assault at a party in a frat house that had posters up inside that highlighted the importance of consent, and that sexual assault was prohibited. Though there is thoughtful discussion about triggers in the classroom (Bedera, 2021; Stromberg, 2023), prevention materials and triggers are not discussed in the literature, and more inquiry into this occurrence would provide further insight. Although notably, survivors seemed to highlight that prevention campaign materials were more triggering than conversations in the classroom.

Hierarchies of Violence

Institutional responses to the survivors ranged greatly based on the details of each case. It is notable that the type of violence the participant reported seems to play a role in how their case was handled, or whether it was engaged with at all. As highlighted in the literature review, gender-based and sexual violence exists on a spectrum, where experiences from sexual assault to misogynistic comments have their place on the spectrum (Sheehy & Gilbert, 2017). The “Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy” from the BC Government (2016) includes both sexual violence and sexual misconduct as behaviours that institutions should respond to. From the participant’s experiences, it seems that the institutions often respond to disclosures on a hierarchal spectrum, where harassment is brushed off while gender-based and intimate partner violence are taken more seriously. This follows the stereotypical assumptions that anything other than sexual assault is normalized as a part of everyday experience (Hlavka, 2014). From the survivors’ experiences, the only cases that moved forward in the reporting process were cases that were intimate partner violence, the cases that were sexual assault and sexual harassment were dismissed by the sexual

violence offices. The differential responses to different forms of violence on campuses may also be a product of cultural assumptions built upon stereotypes and power structures, about which cases are seen as credible, and which are not (Yap, 2017). Credibility is built based on culturally imposed ideals such as peer sexual assault involving alcohol being categorized as less severe than stranger sexual assault in a public space – despite both involving the same type of violence.

The differential responses to sexual violence were especially notable when comparing the cases brought forward by the trans survivors, in comparison to the participants who were not trans. This is particularly noteworthy because trans students have been recorded to be less likely to seek campus support for sexual violence, than non-trans students (Gartner et al., 2023). The three trans participants who attempted to report sexual harassment, primarily harassment that was transphobic in nature, were not supported. Though transphobia can be a form of sexual violence, it is more commonly categorized as gender-based violence. Given most campus policies only focus on sexual violence, including behaviours like harassment and assault, many policies do not directly include transphobia as a part of the violence they respond to. Given the experiences of trans students in this research, it is crucial that sexual violence policies directly include transphobia, and that supporters respond to transphobia, even if it is not included in the policy. This is not unique to campus responses, police responses to sexual violence have been criticized for their responses to non-heterosexual and gender-diverse survivors (Killean et al., 2021). The lack of action towards reports of transphobic harassment is reflected in institutions' connections to patriarchal and cisnormative systems that validate and uphold transphobia; reaffirming that these systems were not created to protect trans students (Gartner et al., 2023). The dismissal of trans students' experiences may be upheld by campus policies centring around sexual violence, rather than gender-based violence.

Unwritten Procedures

Both survivors and supporters highlighted actions the sexual violence office took that did not align with the policy. These actions can be referred to as *unwritten procedures*, where a set of procedures are often followed but are not officially included in the policy and formal procedures (Bedera, 2022). Bedera (2022) shows how unwritten procedures often harm survivors because the post-secondary institution uses these unwritten procedures to guide the survivor toward the path of least resistance. In contrast, the stories from supporters in this research highlighted how unwritten procedures can be used as methods of resistance against the institution's policies. Chapter 4 summarized the various ways that supporters responded to cases with off-policy measures, through unwritten procedures they had created without consultation with or permission from the institution as a whole. These unwritten procedures included actions like finding additional and atypical supports, guiding group reporting, and facilitating restorative justice conversations with those who had caused harm, which some survivors explicitly stated they wanted. The emphasis on desires for alternative, and non-punitive supports highlights the importance of restorative justice and non-traditional reporting options on campus. Supporters shared that these unwritten procedures permitted them to engage further with principles of restorative justice, which (other than for one supporter), were not captured or validated by the formal policy approach. The unwritten procedures allowed the supporters to engage in these alternative ways of responding without having to make it palatable to the institution and have it approved as a part of formal policy. These unwritten procedures centralize relational building and accountability, rather than the carceral model relied on in the formal policy.

Yet, because unwritten procedures remain undocumented through the institution, the supporters are not recognized for doing this work, nor are the positive survivor responses to these alternative measures. If they are not documented in policy, unwritten procedures are entirely

dependent on specific individuals in the sexual violence office. The lack of documentation is important when looking at statistics like reporting rates and funding allocation based on service demand and use. Unwritten procedures rely on the individual supporter's knowledge and motivation, and until unwritten procedures become a part of the policy, they remain unknown to many students and are in danger of being lost when there is a staff changeover. Simultaneously, mandating that all unwritten procedures should be adopted into policy, risks over-reliance on bureaucratization, which as discussed in Chapter 5, can also be harmful to survivors.

Implications and Conclusion

This research has explored factors associated with the experience of reporting an experience of gender-based violence on campus. The literature review contextualized the historical and contemporary cultures that surround campus gender-based and sexual violence in Canada and the United States. The review also provided an overview of critiques from student advocates, information about the importance of campus responses, and the importance of survivor-centred, and trauma-informed research. The findings detailed the institutional procedures for response protocols, providing further depth and insight in comparison to the brief overviews provided in the campus policies. These findings also shed light on what the supporters see as promising practices in the process, and which aspects of the response process they see as contributing to further harm. I also provided survivors' lived experience narratives to illustrate how they saw the response process unfold. I highlighted how survivors felt disempowered, and frustrated through the process. The findings also revealed survivors' views on what types of support felt most nourishing and empowering, including which resources were most impactful, and what survivors wished the process was able to provide them with.

In response to the first research question, “How does the response process coordinate the experiences of survivors and supporters?” Institutional betrayal was a prevalent concept that was seen throughout both supporter and survivor experiences. The role of institutional trust was fundamental in how survivors and supporters viewed the response process. When survivors had more trust in their institution, there was less prevalence of institutional betrayal. In contrast, institutional betrayal embedded in campus culture creates a culture of impunity through the diffusion of accountability and lack of transparency from decision makers, creating a cycle of institutional betrayal between survivors and supporters. Bureaucratic strategies like transferring a survivor from support to support on campus without providing an explanation to the survivor creates institutional shuffling, which compounds harm for survivors. Yet, there were also elements of the response process that positively impacted survivors and supporters such as the trust building that occurred between the survivor and the supporter, survivors receiving academic accommodations, and making the survivor feel that the institution supported them and their healing.

The second research question asks, “How do campus policies guide the survivor through the response process?” Ultimately, I found that campus policies provided values and goals, rather than a complete process that provided full guidance to the survivor. When supporters described their procedures as following the policy, the policy itself still did not contain enough information to provide a full overview of the procedure on its own. This lack of detail is notable, as provincial legislation emphasizes the importance of campus policies denoting the procedures and processes in their policy (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017). The lack of information could be seen as representing an element of performativity in the policy, existing as a placeholder rather than an active document that shifts based on interpretation and implementation. Survivors

could tell when the policy was being used as a piece of performance material and described the emotional consequences of this. The separation between practice and policy is important to document, highlighting that advocacy efforts should be more focused on ensuring campuses document their procedures in policy and follow the policy, or focusing generally on improving clarity and transparency when the policy is and is not followed. Supporters shared how unwritten procedures are adjacent to policy. These unwritten procedures offered survivors further choice and support in the response process. Despite policy procedures not being robust enough to guide survivors through the process or provide transparency of what the process looks like, supporters emphasized that the policy was an important guiding document in their work on campus so that supporters could use the policy to advocate for survivors across campus (e.g. to a professor for an extension). Next, I discuss the implications this research has for campuses and the field at large.

Implications

This research has uncovered a variety of best practices, to make the response process more survivor-centred and trauma-informed. I will highlight the implications of the findings to the question: *So, what does this all mean?* Here, I share takeaways most applicable within the current context of campus responses, systems of justice on campus, and campus policies. Importantly, this does not summarize the entirety of this research, nor is it an effort to.

Other literature has questioned whether campuses are the right venue to respond to gender-based violence in the first place (Henrick, 2013). The findings from this research highlight the opposite, emphasizing the importance of campus-specific response systems. In line with Sheehy and Gilbert's (2017) findings, the importance of the campus response system was clear from the survivor narratives. The anecdotes that supporters shared from their roles also

emphasized the importance of the campus response systems. Despite the harm the system can cause, the system itself remains important for providing survivors and the campus community with resources and support.

Survivors in this research highlighted the importance of reporting to obtain resources for their individual healing, to protect others from experiencing violence from the same person who caused harm, and to shed light on the hostile campus culture as they did not want to let experiences of gender-based violence go undocumented. Importantly, most of the survivors emphasized that consequences to the person who caused harm were not a primary desired outcome from the reporting process. This mirrors findings from Scoglio and colleagues (2021) that found traditional justice was not always desired by survivors. Chapter 4 discussed how supporters use unwritten procedures to provide survivors with the option of more restorative approaches to justice. Most of the supporters did not have restorative options in their policies. This points to the importance of campus policies including alternate measures of justice, specifically focusing on restorative and less punitive methods of response when it is desired by the survivor. Importantly, Deer and Barefoot (2020) provide a reminder that restorative justice and other forms of less punitive justice are not by default more survivor-centred. Rather, upon hearing stories from survivors in this research, I advance that increasing options for alternative forms of justice that are less punitive, while centring decision-making in the hands of the survivor helps provide autonomy and decreases barriers for survivors seeking to report. This call would make these procedures more known and readily available for students allowing for better documentation of existing work and increased support from the institutional system. Providing options for less punitive justice on campus also resists carceral responses to violence which

historically center individual safety over collective safety, and often reinforce systems of racism and misogyny (Brockbank & Greene, 2022).

The institutional betrayal highlighted in this research demonstrates the importance for campus policies, supporters and administration to implement practices to reduce experiences of institutional betrayal for survivors and supporters. As discussed in this chapter, institutional betrayal was created in two ways: 1) through the dismissal of disclosures, and 2) through the bureaucracy associated with the reporting process. As highlighted in Chapter 5, many of the survivors experienced dismissal from their institution when they attempted to report and lacked clarity as to why their case was not further considered. This finding indicates that campuses must increase their efforts to ensure every survivor who discloses receives support, even if the case is outside of the parameters of the reporting procedure. Existing advocacy efforts have focused on the trauma that can be caused through investigations, yet, survivors in this research showed it was the bureaucracy before the investigation stage was most harmful (Khan et al., 2019; Salvino et al., 2017). Increased attention to what takes place before the formal reporting process is required. The findings in Chapters 5 and 6 indicate that campuses need to increase transparency with survivors to clearly illustrate why their case was not considered, or why they were shifted to another support office or staff person. When survivors are shifted to another resource, they should be accompanied (physically or virtually), by the first staff person they encounter, to build trust and allow them to ask questions while they are moved, rather than having to navigate it on their own.

Limitations

This thesis project uncovered what the response process for gender-based violence looks like on campuses across BC. However, the small sample size as a result of project scope means

that the findings of this research are not generalizable, or even applicable across campuses. It would be important to conduct research of a similar nature on a larger scale to see if the findings from this research were unique to the specific participants, or if they connected with another sample. Further research about the response process is needed to increase transparency about how the processes work and can be ameliorated. For instance, it would be meaningful to discuss the response process with individuals in administration roles (e.g. Vice President of Students) and from campuses where there are specific investigations offices. Interviewing supporters who are currently working as supporters meant that participants may have felt pressure to represent their work and institution in a certain light. Though many important findings came out of these interviews, interviewing supporters who are not actively employed or involved with a campus institution may provide further insights that currently employed supporters were not comfortable sharing.

The recruitment for survivor participants was primarily through student groups or student unions. This meant that most participants were involved with their campus to a degree, with many being involved with advocacy on campus. Student survivors who are less engaged on campus and less involved with advocacy may have different perspectives and experiences on campus that were not captured by this research. There were also no cisgender men in either sample. It would be important to research the experiences of cisgender men with the response and reporting process, especially because of their decreased likelihood of reporting gender-based violence (Burczycka, 2020).

The findings from this research indicate that much of what happens in the response process is not necessarily written into policy, whether that is a survivor being dismissed from campus support, or supporters being creative with their response resources. Further research into the role

of unwritten procedures in other provinces would provide more context about the role of policy in campus response procedures. I anticipated the research to focus more on the process, though I found that survivors are not able to report in the first place. This phenomenon is better documented in the literature regarding police reports but has been less explored on campuses (Johnson, 2017; Murphy-Oikonen & Egan, 2022). It would be beneficial to have quantitative studies to gauge how many students attempt to report, in comparison to how many get past the reporting gatekeepers. The survivor's lack of ability to report their experiences demonstrates further attention in the field should be oriented toward what happens before the formal reporting and investigation processes.

As the reader, I encourage you to consider questions that may have arisen, as they have for me throughout the undertaking of the research and thesis production. Why are there formal systems to evaluate whether a case of gender-based violence is unfounded or founded? Who benefits from these formal systems, and whose principles of justice are they founded on? What are the implications of creating clear separations between survivors and people who have caused harm? What could campuses look like if there were fewer procedures for receiving support and resources, whether students required them for trauma from gender-based violence, or another reason? What could it look like for institutions to take more accountability for the rape culture that exists on their campus? These questions also offer suggested paths forward for future research, examination and transformation.

In light of what I have learned, considered, and sat with throughout this research process, I do not necessarily have a singular solution for these questions, or know how to resolve the tensions in campus gender-based violence responses. Yet, I know that to improve our responses to campus-based gendered violence, and to reduce the harm caused for survivors (and those who

support them), campuses should seize their opportunity as non-criminal justice systems to explore alternative options of justice for survivors who are interested in less formal systems and principles of justice. This means moving away from carceral principles of justice that seek to evaluate whose evidence is most trustworthy or convincing and move toward understanding and responding to gender-based violence as deeply rooted within cultural norms and ideologies that reinforce and normalize gender-based violence. This means shifting to viewing accountability, rather than punishment, as the goal of campus systems. This type of response centers believing students when they seek support, whether or not there is clear evidence, and putting effort into providing resources rather than evaluation of fact. Rather than scrutinizing individual survivors, institutions must move forward by scrutinizing the cultures that permeate their campuses and seek to respond to violence throughout all levels of campus, not only solely from sexual violence offices.

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Appendix A
Call for Participants



CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

FOR A STUDY ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE COMPLAINTS/RESPONSE PROCESSES AT POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

PARTICIPANTS MUST:

- Be over 19 years old
- Attend/have attended a post-secondary institution in British Columbia (LREB, UBC, UBCO, KPU, DC, RRU, SFU, CAPU, UFV, TRU, VIU, BCIT, UNBC, CCREB).
- Have filed or attempted to file a complaint about campus sexual violence as a student at a post-secondary institution in British Columbia during or after 2016 – and be comfortable discussing this experience

\$25 HONORARIUM

Participants will engage in a 1 hour interview
(virtually or in person)

If you are interested in participating or have any questions, email Nell at nellperry@uvic.ca

This project is being conducted by Nell Perry as part of her Sociology MA Thesis, under the supervision of Dr. Humphrey who can be reached at tamarahumphrey@uvic.ca. You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Appendix B

Consent Form – Supporters



University of Victoria *Participant Hand Out/ Consent Form*

Responses to Campus Sexual Violence: Exploring the interactions between survivors, responders, and policy

Group 2: Sexual Violence Responder Participants

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Responses to Campus Sexual Violence: Exploring the interactions between survivors, responders and policy*. This study is being conducted by me, Nell Perry at the University of Victoria (UVic). I am a Master's student in the Department of Sociology at UVic and can be contacted by email at any time with questions: nellperry@uvic.ca

This research is for my Thesis which is part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Sociology. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tamara Humphrey. You may also contact Dr. Humphrey at tamarahumphrey@uvic.ca. You can verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria by phone: 250-472-4545 or email: ethics@uvic.ca.

This consent form will be provided to you in advance of the interview. I will go over the form out loud at the beginning of the interview and will answer any questions that may come up. Please sign below if you consent to being a participant in this research.

Participant Hand Out/Consent Form

Thank you so much for taking the time to share your experience with the reporting process of sexual violence at a post-secondary institution. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how post-secondary institutions in BC respond to campus sexual violence, the role of policy in this process, how the process impacts those who have gone through the process of reporting, as well as those who guide the process. I want to hear about your experiences with, and knowledge about reporting campus sexual violence and the response/complaints process.

Procedure

Your participation will consist of one interview for about one hour. Questions will focus on your experience guiding the sexual violence reporting process for survivors/complainants at a post-secondary institution in British Columbia (BC). The interview will be recorded through a voice recorder (if in person) or through Zoom (if virtual) and with a backup recording on a cellphone. Only audio will be recorded, and you do not have to appear on camera if the interview is on Zoom. Your participation is completely voluntary; if at any point you don't feel comfortable with a question or topic, please do not hesitate to say so and we will skip it. You can inform me in advance if you are aware of any topics which you do not want to discuss in the interview. We can

take breaks at any point throughout the interview. We can stop the interview at any time, at your discretion, for any reason. We can reschedule the interview if you choose, or you may also withdraw from the study without explanation or consequences. If the interview is ended prematurely, you will also have the option to withdraw your previous answers.

You will have the option to review your transcript if you want to give you control over what is shared in the research. If you identify you would like to revise the transcript before analysis, this will be facilitated. If you identify you would like to revise the transcript after analysis has occurred, you will be permitted to revise the transcript and have pieces of your story omitted from dissemination, but it cannot be extracted from analysis. If the research has been disseminated, there will no longer be a possibility over transcript reviewal.

Risks and Benefits

Participating in this research that focuses on sexual violence and your experience working in the complaints and response process may bring up some emotional distress or feelings of awkwardness and/or discomfort when discussing sensitive topics relating to past experiences. My biggest priority is your well-being, and I have designed this process to give you the greatest amount of control over your participation. To centre your safety and comfortability I will be checking in throughout the interview and offering the opportunity to take breaks.

In the interview you will be asked about your workplace. It is not required to receive permission from your employer to engage in this research, and your interview will be kept confidential and will only be shared with the public once the data has been anonymized. There are risks to participating in the research without your employer's permission, including risks to reputation, employment risks, emotional distress, etc. If you would like to seek permissions from your employer and require my support to do so, please let me know and we will work together to do this.

Here are resources available across BC for sexual violence support and support for responders:

VictimLinkBC

24-Hour Confidential, Multilingual Line (call or text): 1-800-563-0808

KUU-US Crisis Line (Indigenous-specific crisis support)

24-hour Crisis Line: 1-800-588-8717

WorkSafeBC Crisis Support Line (Emotional crisis support)

24-hour: 1-800-624-2928

Care to Speak (Confidential peer support to health and social support workers in BC)

9am-9pm Monday to Friday

Call: 1-866-802-7337

Text: 1-866-802-7337

Online Chat: <https://careforcaregivers.ca/caretospeak/>

Here are resources specific to [participant's location]:

[Specific resources listed].

The benefits of participation include, but are not limited to, the opportunity to share your experience of your work in a confidential way which you may not have had the chance to do; because you are in a role that seeks to support safer campuses and survivors, being a part of this research allows you to contribute to suggestions about reporting processes. Engaging in this research may also help you uncover other consequences and benefits of the current process, which may enable you to create change within your institutions. You will also have the opportunity to share promising practices that may be helpful for other institutions that can be disseminated through this research.

Private Information

The only identifying information I will keep in my notes is your name which will be kept secure on a personal, password-protected laptop which only I have access to and stored on UVic's security encrypted server. Any information derived from this research that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as required by law. All raw data (audio files) and data with personal identifying information of participants will be stored for five years after project completion in December 2024 and then will be deleted. Personal notes and de-identified transcripts of these interviews will remain on my personal, password-protected computer for up to ten years for archival, publishing, presentation purposes and future scholarly activities such as an application for a PhD program. Data will be destroyed by permanently deleting the files from the University of Victoria server and my computer.

The data from this project will not be used for any commercial purposes. Myself and my supervisor, Dr. Tamara Humphrey, will be the only ones who have access to the data from this interview. I will not show or provide any of this data to anyone else without contacting you for consent (which is not something that I anticipate).

I will take every precaution to ensure your identity remains protected and confidential. As such, all data will be kept de-identified, names in any production of this research will be changed, and geographic details will be obscured. Only audio will be recorded during the interview. After the interview, I will ask you if there are any concerns relating to information that was shared. I will also share the transcript after the interview, so you have the opportunity to remove or amend any information. Should there be any concerns, I will work with you to figure out whether some responses should be omitted, or not included in any public productions of this research. This includes details like your name, the institution you work(ed) at, a precise geographic location, and the names of any other individuals that came up in the interview process.

It is anticipated that I will present the results of this research to my committee for my Master's and may share the results of this research in other ways, such as in a presentation at a conference, a published article, chapter or book. I hope that the results from this research will be beneficial to post-secondary institutions, knowledge surrounding campus sexual violence, anti-violence activists and grassroots organizers, governments, and importantly, survivors who have been

through this process. All identifying information will be removed from any production of this research, your identity will be anonymized and remain confidential.

Should you choose to withdraw from the study, I will keep all provided data from the interview unless you have directed me otherwise.

Consent for Recording

I would like to audio record your answers through the Zoom recording feature for virtual interviews, and through a recording device for in-person interviews. Video will not be recorded. I would also like to record the interview on my cellphone as a backup method. This is completely optional, and you are welcome to say no without explanation or consequences. The audio file will have limited personal information, just your name and answers. Myself and my supervisor, Dr. Tamara Humphrey, will be the only ones with access to the recording. Audio recordings will be stored on the University of Victoria server, and I will store the recording after my project is complete for up to five years. *Please be advised that this research study includes data storage in U.S.A. As such, there is a possibility that information about you that is gathered for this research study may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the U.S. government, in compliance with the U.S. Freedom Act.*

If you consent now, you can request that I turn off the recording device at any time during the interview.

Please initial here if you consent to these recording procedures: _____

Full Disclosure

There are no known conflicts of interest in this study, this research is not funded by or sponsored by an outside entity.

Written Consent

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Participant Signature

Date

Appendix C

Consent Form - Survivors



**University
of Victoria**

*Participant Hand Out/Consent
Form*

Responses to Campus Sexual Violence: Exploring the interactions between survivors, responders and policy

Group 1: Survivor Participants

You are invited to participate in a study titled *Responses to Campus Sexual Violence: Exploring the interactions between survivors, responders and policy*. This study is being conducted by me, Nell Perry, at the University of Victoria (UVic). I am a Master's student in the Department of Sociology at UVic and can be contacted by email at any time with questions: nellperry@uvic.ca

This research is for my Thesis, which is part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Sociology. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tamara Humphrey. You may also contact Tamara at tamarahumphrey@uvic.ca. You can verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria by phone: 250-472-4545 or email: ethics@uvic.ca.

This is a consent form that was provided to you in advance of the interview. I will go over the form out loud at the beginning of the interview and will answer any questions that may come up. Please sign below if you consent to being a participant in this research.

Participant Hand Out/Consent Form

Thank you so much for taking the time to share your experience with reporting sexual violence at a post-secondary institution. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how post-secondary institutions in British Columbia (BC) respond to campus sexual violence, the role of policy in this process, and how the process impacts those who have gone through the process of reporting. I am particularly interested in how you have been affected by going through this process and if/how you were guided through the process of reporting.

Procedure

Your participation will consist of one interview for about one hour. Questions will focus on your experience going through the process of reporting an experience of sexual violence at a post-

secondary institution in British Columbia (BC). The interview will be recorded through a voice recorder (if in person) or through Zoom (if virtual) and with a backup recording on a cellphone. Only audio will be recorded, and you do not have to appear on camera if the interview is on Zoom. Your participation is completely voluntary; if at any point you don't feel comfortable with a question or topic, please do not hesitate to say so and we will skip it. You can inform me in advance if you are aware of any topics that you do not want to discuss in the interview. We can take breaks at any point throughout the interview. We can stop the interview at any time, at your discretion, for any reason. We can reschedule the interview if you choose, or you may also withdraw from the study without explanation or consequences, and you will still receive the honorarium (\$25). If the interview is ended prematurely, you will also have the option to withdraw your previous answers.

You will have the option to review your transcript if you want to give you control over what is shared in the research. If you identify you would like to revise the transcript before analysis, this will be facilitated. If you identify you would like to revise the transcript after analysis has occurred, you will be permitted to revise the transcript and have pieces of your story omitted from dissemination, but it cannot be extracted from analysis. If the research has been disseminated, there will no longer be a possibility over transcript reviewal.

Should a participant show signs of distress that appear to be more severe than generalized evocative emotions, I will remind them that they can end the interview if they would like and remind them about local support resources they can access. Additionally, participants will be reminded throughout the interview process that they can decline to answer a question or stop the interview at any time for any reason.

Examples of the questions that will be asked in the interview:

- How did you decide to engage in the reporting process?
- How did it feel when you first decided to begin the reporting process? What about when you sent the first email/confirmed verbally that you would proceed?
- How would you describe your experience with the reporting process?

Risks and Benefits

Participating in research that focuses on discussions of sexual violence means there is a potential risk to you including emotional distress or feelings of awkwardness and/or discomfort when discussing sensitive topics relating to past experiences of sexual violence and interactions with institutions within a complaints process. To avoid these risks of harm to a reasonable extent, I will not ask or prod for details about your experience of sexual violence. My biggest priority is your well-being, and I have designed this process to give you the greatest amount of control over your participation. To centre your safety and comfortability I will be checking in throughout the interview and offering the opportunity to take breaks.

Here are resources available across BC for sexual violence support:

VictimLinkBC

24-Hour Confidential, Multilingual Line (call or text): 1-800-563-0808

KUU-US Crisis Line (Indigenous-specific crisis support)
24-hour Crisis Line: 1-800-588-8717

Here are resources specific to [participant's location]:

[Specific resources listed]

The benefits of participation include, but are not limited to, the opportunity to reflect on your experience with the sexual violence complaints process; have your voice heard on a topic that often silences voices of survivors who have gone through this process; and, having your experience contribute to suggestions about improving the reporting process.

Private Information

The only identifying information I will keep in my notes is your name which will be kept secure on a personal, password-protected laptop that only I have access to and stored on UVic's security encrypted server. Any information derived from this research that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as required by law. All raw data (audio files) and data with personal identifying information of participants will be stored for five years after project completion in December 2024 and then will be deleted. Personal notes and de-identified transcripts of these interviews will remain on my personal, password-protected computer for up to ten years for archival, publishing, presentation purposes and future scholarly activities such as an application for a PhD program. Data will be destroyed by permanently deleting the files from the University of Victoria server and my computer.

The data from this project will not be used for any commercial purposes. Myself and my supervisor, Dr. Tamara Humphrey, will be the only ones who have access to the data from this interview. I will not show or provide any of this data to anyone else without contacting you for consent (which is not something that I anticipate).

I will take every precaution to ensure your identity remains protected and confidential. As such, all data will be kept de-identified, names in any production of this research will be changed, and geographic details will be obscured. Only audio will be recorded during the interview. After the interview, I will ask you if there are any concerns relating to information that was shared. I will also share the transcript after the interview so you have the opportunity to remove or amend any information. Should there be any concerns, I will work with you to figure out whether some responses should be omitted, or not be included in any public productions of this research.

It is anticipated that I will present the results of this research to my committee for my Master's and may share the results of this research in other ways, such as in a presentation at a conference, a published article, chapter or book. I hope that the results from this research will be beneficial to post-secondary institutions, knowledge surrounding campus sexual violence, anti-violence activists and grassroots organizers, governments, and importantly, survivors who have been through this process. All identifying information will be removed from any production of this research, your identity will be anonymized and remain confidential.

Should you choose to withdraw from the study, I will keep all provided data from the interview unless you have directed me otherwise.

Consent for Recording

I would like to audio record your answers through the Zoom recording feature for virtual interviews, and through a recording device for in-person interviews. Video will not be recorded. I would also like to record the interview on my cellphone as a backup method. This is completely optional, and you are welcome to say no without explanation or consequences. The audio file will have limited personal information, just your name and answers. Myself and my supervisor, Dr. Tamara Humphrey, will be the only ones with access to the recording. Audio recordings will be stored on the University of Victoria server, and I will store the recording after my project is complete for up to five years. *Please be advised that this research study includes data storage in U.S.A. As such, there is a possibility that information about you that is gathered for this research study may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the U.S. government, in compliance with the U.S. Freedom Act.*

If you consent now, you can request that I turn off the recording device at any time during the interview.

Please initial here if you consent to these recording procedures: _____

Full Disclosure

There are no known conflicts of interest in this study, this research is not funded by or sponsored by an outside entity.

Written Consent

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Participant Signature

Date

Appendix D

Interview Guide – Supporters

1. Consent

- a. Before starting any of the research, I first want to go over the consent form. The purpose of the form and of highlighting it be the interview starts is to keep you safe, and make sure you understand your rights and options around what this process will look like
- b. I have a condensed version of the form we will go over, but before I do so, did any questions come up while you were viewing the consent form in advance?
- c. Condensed script: This research is a part of my Master’s Thesis for an MA in Sociology that I am doing at UVic under the supervision of Dr. Tamara Humphrey. This study has received ethical approval from the University of Victoria. The research I am conducting for my master’s thesis focuses on how post-secondary institutions in BC respond to campus sexual violence, the role of policy in this process, and how processes impact those who have gone through the reporting process and the experiences of guiding someone through the processes. Which is the reason why we are chatting today, I am so grateful that you are willing to share some of your experience with reporting processes. That being said, I want you to know in advance that it is up to you how much you share, if you want to skip questions or if you want to take a break. This interview and research participation is voluntary, so we can skip questions or topics. We can take breaks at any time. We can also stop the interview at any time, without need for explanation. We can reschedule the interview or you can withdraw from the research.
- d. If you end the interview early or withdraw from the research you can withdraw the information and answers you have shared.
- e. I also want you to know you have control over what is shared in the research. To facilitate this, transcript review will be an option should you want to revise it after our interview today. That being said, it is just an option and isn’t required. One thing to note is that if you identify you want to revise the transcript after analysis has occurred, information can be withdrawn from the sharing of the research, but not from the analysis.
- f. Because of the sensitive nature of this research, I want you to know that I am prioritizing confidentiality throughout the process. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data. I will keep data de-identified, in publication of the research I will give you a pseudonym and obscure institutional or geographically identifying information.
- g. Do you have any questions?
- h. I assume that by your presence here you are ready and comfortable to talk about this, but I do want to verbally check in and ask if you are comfortable starting the interview and talking about this subject today?

2. Introduction

- a. Just to kick things off, I was hoping you could tell me a bit about yourself.

- b. I have some demographic questions to ask as well, which can be a bit awkward! But I ask them to everyone because as you may know, demographic information can be very helpful to research
 - i. How would you describe your gender?
 - ii. On that note, confirm pronouns
 - iii. What about sexual orientation?
 - iv. How would you describe your race or ethnicity?
 - v. How long have you been in this role or working in campus spaces relating to campus sexual violence?
 - c. How did you find out about this research?
 - d. What drew you to participate in this project?
3. To start off, I have a list of guiding questions, but we are of course welcome to deviate or leave behind the questions if needed or when needed they are just here to structure the conversation

MAIN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do most students come to the process? (Do they approach you with a decision made, decide in counselling, have a few meetings then decide, etc.)
 - a) How do you think most students find out about sexual violence support on campus?
2. Can you walk me through your institution's reporting process?
 - a) Are there discrepancies between how the policies and forms detail the process and how it plays out?
3. Which texts/policy documents are relevant to the reporting process at your institution?
 - a. Does the sexual misconduct policy guide your role throughout reporting processes? Does it shape the actions you can/cannot take supporting the survivor/complainant? What about the respondent?
 - i. Do you have autonomy in the reporting process? (or are your actions guided by institutional regulations?)
 - ii. Do you feel like your actions are constrained by institutional regulations?
 - b. Does the sexual misconduct policy guide the reporting process? Does the policy clearly contain information about what steps are to be taken under which situations? If not, what informs how the process proceeds?
 - i. Do other associated policies play a role in guiding the actions you take?
 - ii. If policies don't shape the actions you can/cannot take, what does?
 - c. Are survivor/complainants and respondents recommended to be aware of the relevant policy documents?
 - i. If so, which documents? If not, why?
 - ii. Are the survivor/complainants and respondents given support to understand how the policy may affect them and their case?
4. How do you support students as they determine whether they want to proceed with the reporting process?
 - a. How do you communicate the choices, policy implications and institutional regulations to a survivor/complainant?
5. What are the resolution options on your campus? Are there options for informal and formal resolutions?

- i. How are decisions made about pursuing a formal or informal resolution process?
 - ii. How is it decided what cases are appropriate for which type of resolution?
 - iii. Who makes the final decision about the outcome of cases?
6. What information do you collect/document from survivors/complainants? How is it documented?
 - a) Is the collection process done through forms, interviews, phone calls, etc.? Is this decision made by you or by texts/another department/superior, etc.?
 - b) How do you think students/survivors/complainants are impacted by the information collection process?
7. What kind of support are survivors/complainants offered throughout the process?
 - a) How do they go about accessing these supports?
 - b) Which supports are most commonly offered/used? Which are not?
 - c) Are these supports institutionally documented within policy/texts?
 - d) Does the institution officially record which and how often supports are accessed?
8. How does the reporting process impact you?
 - a) What parts of it feel rewarding or promising?
 - b) What parts of it frustrate you?
 - c) What parts of it feel neutral to you?
9. How does the process come to an end?
 - a) What is often the outcome of the process?
 - b) How do you think this process impacts survivors/complainants?
10. If you could change this process, what would you change about it?
11. Is there anything else you would like to discuss?
 - a) Were there any other topics or questions you wished I would have asked?
 - b) Do you have any other colleagues you think would be interested in participating in the research? Or any networks or spaces you could share information about the survivor group recruitment?

Appendix E

Interview Guide - Survivors

1. Consent

- a. Before starting any of the research, I first want to go over the consent form. This form is a bit jargon-y and bureaucratic, but the purpose of the form and of highlighting it be the interview starts is to keep you safe, and make sure you understand your rights and options around what this process will look like
- b. I have a condensed version of the form we will go over, but before I do so, did any questions come up while you were viewing the consent form in advance?
- c. Condensed script: This research is a part of my Master's Thesis for an MA in Sociology that I am doing at UVic under the supervision of Dr. Tamara Humphrey. This study has received ethical approval from the University of Victoria. The research I am conducting for my master's thesis focuses on how post-secondary institutions in BC respond to campus sexual violence, the role of policy in this process, and how processes impact those who have gone through the reporting process. Which is the reason why we are chatting today, I am so grateful that you are willing to share some of your experience about reporting. That being said, I want you to know in advance that it is up to you how much you share, if you want to skip questions or if you want to take a break. This is a hard topic to talk about and I want to center that you are the expert of your experience and how you want this interview to go. This interview and research participation is voluntary, so we can skip questions or topics. We can take breaks at any time. We can also stop the interview at any time, without need for explanation. We can reschedule the interview or you can withdraw from the research. If you withdraw from the interview or research broadly you will receive the honorarium.
- d. Are there any topics in particular you want to skip or not address?
- e. If you end the interview early or withdraw from the research you can withdraw the information and answers you have shared.
- f. I also want you to know you have control over what is shared in the research. To facilitate this, transcript review will be an option should you want to revise it after our interview today. That being said, it is just an option and isn't required. One thing to note is that if you identify you want to revise the transcript after analysis has occurred, information can be withdrawn from the sharing of the research, but not from the analysis.
- g. Because of the sensitive nature of this research, I want you to know that I am prioritizing confidentiality throughout the process. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data. I will keep data de-identified, in publication of the research I will give you a pseudonym and obscure institutional or geographically identifying information.
- h. Do you have any questions?
- i. I assume that by your presence here you are ready and comfortable to talk about this, but I do want to verbally check in and ask if you are comfortable starting the interview and talking about this subject today?

2. Introduction

- a. Just to kick things off, I was hoping you could tell me a bit about yourself.

- b. I have some demographic questions to ask as well, which can be a bit awkward! But I ask them to everyone because as you may know, demographic information can be very helpful to research
 - i. How would you describe your gender?
 - ii. On that note, confirm pronouns
 - iii. What about sexual orientation?
 - iv. How would you describe your race or ethnicity?
 - v. Are you currently a student? What type of degree?
 - vi. Are/were you a domestic or international student?
 - c. How did you find out about this research?
 - d. What drew you to participate in this project?
3. To start off, would you like to just tell me about your experience with reporting, or would you like me to take you through the guided questions?

OTHER QUESTIONS

4. How did you decide to engage in the reporting process?
- a. How did you know this was something you wanted?
 - i. Did you engage in this decision-making process alone or with support from others? If alone, how did you come to this decision? If others, who?
 - ii. Did you feel supported while you made this decision? How were you supported through this process? If you weren't supported, why do you think you didn't receive the support needed?
 - 1. What felt most supportive while you made this decision? What didn't make you feel supported?
 - iii. Whether from friends, family, the institution, or institutional staff?
 - b. How did you find out that this process existed? How did you know it was available to you/your case specifically?
 - c. How did it feel when you first decided to begin the reporting process? What about when you sent the first email/confirmed verbally that you would proceed?
 - d. After you decided to engage in the process, what were the next steps the institution required from you?
 - i. Were you required to attend an appointment with someone from the institution's legal team? Did you have to fill out paperwork?
5. What information did the institution collect from you? And how was it collected? (Verbally, you filled out on paper, etc.)
- a. How long did it take them to gather the information required? (One attempt or more?)
 - b. How did you get forms that you were required to fill out? Do you remember what they were?
 - c. Did you understand how the process would proceed? Did you have any questions about it?
 - i. If you had questions, were they answered sufficiently if/when asked? If unasked, why didn't you ask?
 - ii. Were there any parts of the process that felt unclear or that you didn't understand?

- d. How did you feel in terms of the way the institution responded to you? Did you feel supported by the institution/process when you shared this information?
 - e. Were you shown or directed to read any of the institution's policy documents? Were there any other policies you were informed about?
 - f. Did a specific staff member lead you through the process, or was it up to you to follow up, etc.?
 - g. How did you take care of yourself during the process?
 - h. Did you access any accommodations from the institution during the process? Formal support may include counselling, academic accommodations (exam deferral, withdrawal from class without penalty), housing accommodations (continuing studies off campus, change in housing situation)
 - i. Did you seek support off-campus during the process?
6. What was the outcome of the process, or when did the process end?
- a. Was there an investigation? If not, were you informed or a part of the decision to not proceed this way? If so, were you informed of the decision to proceed this way?
 - b. Were you given an expected timeline for the process? Was it followed?
 - c. (If there was an investigation) What was the process of the investigation? Who did you have to interact with? How did this impact you?
 - d. How did you feel after the process? How did it impact you?
 - e. Did you access any institutional support resources? Or any off campus? Such as counselling, peer support, support groups.
 - f. How did the experience of the process impact your relationship with your institution, campus life, etc.?
 - g. How did the experience of the process impact other aspects of your life? Such as friends, family, work, social life, etc.
 - h. In retrospect, would you choose to go through the process again?
7. How would you describe your experience with the reporting process?
8. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?
- a. Were there any other topics or questions you wished I would have asked?
 - b. What is the best way to get you the honorarium for this research? Etransfer? Or I have cash on me now?