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University Women's Beliefs and Attitudes about Sexuality: A Feminist Ethnography

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University Women's Beliefs and Attitudes about Sexuality: A Feminist Ethnography

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores female university students' beliefs and attitudes about sexuality. A feminist ethnography was utilized in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 female university students between the ages of 18-28 at the University of Calgary. Themes were compared across interviews and common themes and sub-themes were identified. The major themes that arose from participant interviews were as follows: defining features of university culture, defining sexuality, gender roles and sexual relationships, consent, and rape myths. Within the literature, themes regarding gender roles, consent, and rape myths are beliefs that can influence sexual assault labelling and reporting behaviours. Primary findings indicated that more research is needed to understand these beliefs and attitudes and how they influence both sexuality and sexual assault reporting behaviours in a university context. Lastly, direct participant recommendations are provided which discuss areas of change regarding sexual violence prevention and consent education.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

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UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

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UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

To all women struggling with binds for sexual expression and freedom.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN’S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Dedication	V
Table of contents	vi
Table of Contents	vi
CHAPTER 1	1
1.2 Purpose and significance	3
1.3 Motivations to pursue research	5
1.4 Feminism as a theoretical framework	6
1.5 Reflexivity	7
1.6 Definitions	9
1.7 Conclusion	10
1.8 Thesis overview	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 Binge drinking and partying.	12
2.1.1. Hooking-up and sexual victimization.	13
2.1.3 The female experience of university.	15
2.2. Defining sexuality	18
2.3. Sexual scripts	18
2.4. Labelling unwanted sexual experiences	20
2.5. Rape myths	22
2.6. Consent	23
2.6.3. Women are the gatekeepers of consent.	26
2.6.4. Non-verbal cues can communicate consent.	27
2.7. Gender Roles	28
2.7.1. What does it mean to endorse traditional gender roles?	28
2.8. Summary of Findings	30
2.9. Limitations of literature	31
2.10. Research Questions	31
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	33

UNIVERSITY WOMEN’S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

3.1 Nature of research design	33
3.2 What is ethnography	34
3.2.1 History and origins	35
3.3 Feminist ethnography	37
3.4 Fit within social work	39
3.5 Methods	40
3.5.1 Fieldwork.	41
3.5.2 Data analysis	43
3.5.3 Summary of methods	43
3.6 Current study	44
3.6.1 Sample	44
3.6.2 Data collection	46
3.6.3 Ethnographic interviews	46
3.6.4 Procedure	47
3.6.5 Data analysis	47
3.7 Trustworthiness	48
3.7.1 Credibility	48
3.7.2 Transferability	49
3.7.3 Dependability	49
3.7.4 Confirmability	49
3.8 Ethics	50
3.9 Limitations	51
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	53
4.1 Demographic table	54
4.2 University culture	55
4.2.1 Freedom to experiment	55
4.2.2 University is a party	56
4.2.3 The pressure to hook-up	58
4.2.4 It’s not safe for women	59
4.3 Bars and Clubs	60
4.3.1 Being groped is not a compliment	60
4.3.2 Feeling afraid is normal	61
4.3.3 Women go to bars for sex	62
4.3.4 Community for education	63
4.4 Defining sexuality	66
4.4.1 Sexual orientation and gender identity	66
4.4.2 Body image	67
4.4.3 Religious influence	68
4.4.4 Gender roles	68

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

4.4.5 The struggle with gender roles	68
4.4.6 The mystery of gender roles in same-sex relationships	70
4.4.7 Origins of gender roles	71
4.5 Sexual relationships	72
4.5.1 Acceptable sexual behaviours	72
4.5.2 Unacceptable sexual behaviours	73
4.5.3 Origins of decision making	75
4.6 Consent	75
4.6.1 Communicating consent	76
4.6.2 The complications of consent in committed relationships	76
4.6.3 Women as gatekeepers of consent	77
4.6.4 The influence of alcohol and drugs	78
4.7 Rape myths and stereotypical beliefs about women	79
4.7.1 Sex is for men	79
4.7.2 Rape myths and ways to own women	80
4.8 Women should keep their mouths closed	81
4.9 Summary	83
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	84
5.1 A creative synthesis	84
5.2 Introduction	86
5.3 University Culture	87
5.4 Defining sexuality	88
5.5 Gender roles and sexual relationships	89
5.5.1 Accepting traditional gender roles	90
5.5.2 Origins of beliefs of gender roles	90
5.5.3 Rejecting gender roles	91
5.5.4 Same sex relationships and gender roles	91
5.5.5 The complication of communication in sexual relationships	92
5.6 Understanding the complexity of consent	93
5.6.1 Communicating consent	93
5.6.2 Consent in committed relationships vs. casual relationships	94
5.6.3 Women are the gatekeepers of consent	95
5.6.4 The influence of alcohol and drugs on consent	95
5.7 Rape myths and stereotypical beliefs about women	95
5.7.1 Women should keep their mouths closed	96
5.7.2 Sex is for men	96
5.7.3 Rape myths and ways to own women	97
5.8 Implications for social work practice	98

UNIVERSITY WOMEN’S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

5.9 Recommendations from participants	100
5.9.1 Social media tools for sex education	100
5.9.2 Increase security on university campuses	101
5.9.3 Providing sex education that does not involve alcohol	101
5.9.4 Deconstructing unhealthy masculinities	101
5.9.5 Implementing consent into primary and secondary education	102
5.10 Conclusion	102
REFERENCES	104
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE	114
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM	118

CHAPTER 1

Women attending university are 30% more likely to experience a sexual assault than the general population (Aronowitz, Lambert, & Davidoff, 2012). Subsequently, women aged 16-24 are categorized as the group most vulnerable to sexual assault (Aronowitz et al., 2012). A factor that contributes to the perpetuation of sexual assault against women is that sexual assault is seldom reported to the police (Harned, 2005). In addition, the prevalence of sexual assaults on university campuses is relevant and widely captured in the media. For example, the Guardian published an article that outlines how universities have become notorious for failing to support victims of sexual assault and subsequently actively covering up these instances (Davidson, 2017). Davidson (2017) highlights that universities often turn a blind eye, claiming no responsibility and covering up sexual assaults. While universities in Alberta are creating sexual assault policies, university culture can often produce environments where sexual assault thrives and goes unreported.

From a feminist perspective, the influence of the patriarchal system shapes how women are viewed as sexual individuals. Patriarchy constructs views that women are fundamentally inferior, open to domination and discrimination, and viewed as a lesser sex which justifies acts of inequitable treatment (Ortner, 2014). Therefore, patriarchal beliefs provide justification for women to be sexually assaulted while inhibiting their ability to report the crime.

Furthermore, there are values under the patriarchal system that enforce beliefs that women deserve to be sexually assaulted. An example of a larger force that has been created under the patriarchal system is rape culture. Klaw, Lonsway, Berg, Waldo, Kothari, Mazurek and Hegeman (2005) define rape culture as an environment where sexual violence is normalized and perpetuated through use of language, actions, and the glamorization of sexual assault. Additionally, Klaw et al. (2005) argues that rape culture is largely prevalent on university campuses as the sub-culture of university encourages sexual aggression and the consumption of large amounts of drugs and alcohol. The association between

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

rape culture on campuses and the high incidences of sexual assault further demonstrate the need to examine the sub-culture of university students. While this thesis is not about sexual assault, there is a strong relationship between sexual assault reporting behaviors and the following beliefs described below. The amount of discussion regarding sexual assault in the current study is to highlight the importance of understanding beliefs and attitudes about sexuality.

Research has explored specific beliefs that enforce rape culture on university campuses. Specifically, the concept of rape myth acceptance has been largely explored as a belief that re-enforces rape culture. Rape myths are beliefs that suggest women provoke their own sexual assault by specific activities and behaviors such as: the clothing they wear, their attitudes and disposition, consumption of alcohol or other substances and by being alone and being out late at night (Deming, Krassen Covan, Swan, & Billings, 2013). Additionally, numerous studies have found that rape myth acceptance decreases the likeliness to report a sexual assault (Aronowitz et al., 2012). It is key to understand the relationship between rape myth acceptance and the likeliness to report a sexual assault, however it is equally as valuable to understand how rape myths influence other experiences. To grasp a greater understanding of the influence of rape myths, it is important to examine how they influence all aspects of sexuality, in addition to sexual assault.

In addition, beliefs and practices regarding consent and gender roles can influence sexual assault reporting behaviours. If individuals are unclear as to what constitutes verbal consent or have internalized stereotypical beliefs about who must communicate consent, there can be misconceptions regarding if a sexual encounter was consensual (Beres et al., 2004; Hall, 1998, Hickmen & Muehlenhard, 1999; Jozkowski & Wiersma, 2015). Misunderstanding and miscommunicating consent, coupled with the binge drinking atmosphere of university creates problematic issues when trying to label a sexual encounter as a sexual assault (Jozkowski & Wiersma, 2015). Beliefs regarding gender norms also have an influence on sexual reporting behaviours. By endorsing traditional heteronormative gender roles

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

(man as dominant, woman as submissive), individuals are more likely to endorse rape my acceptance which limits the ability to report a sexual assault (Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012; King & Roberts, 2011; Swank, Fahs, & Haywood, 2011).It is essential to highlight these key beliefs regarding sexuality and how they influence sexual assault reporting behaviours. By situating these stereotypical beliefs and values in the context of university culture, where rape culture thrives, it can provide insight to the incidence and prevalence of sexual assaults on university campuses.

1.2 Purpose and significance

The purpose of the study is to use a feminist ethnographic lens to explore specific beliefs and attitudes about sexuality of female university students. There is limited social work research that explores the topic of female university student sexuality. In addition, using a feminist ethnographic lens is a unique methodology which aims to describe culture while focusing on specific topics that influence the marginalization and oppression of women (Gobo, 2008). By using a feminist ethnographic lens, the purpose of the study is to add to existing literature on topics of sexuality, university culture, female university students, and subsequently the fit of feminist ethnography in social work research.

Exploring the beliefs and values regarding sexuality on university campuses may be a way to understand sexual assault reporting behaviours. As female university students are considered a vulnerable population to sexual assaults (Aronowitz et al., 2012), exploring their beliefs and values may be able to shed light on the incidence and lack of sexual assaults reported on university campuses. In addition, there is limited research that explores female university students and their beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality. The dearth of literature will be further explored in Chapter two.

Exploring the beliefs and attitudes of female university students regarding sexuality fits within social work practice in three ways: practice, policy, and research. Firstly, social workers who work on university campuses in areas such as health, wellness, advocacy, and counselling benefit from understanding the unique experience of being a female university student. Additionally, on a practice

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

level, social workers that work in sexual assault prevention agencies benefit immensely from the knowledge gained from understanding the underlying beliefs that contribute to labelling and reporting rape. Furthermore, as female university students are more vulnerable to sexual assault than the general population, it is key to understand their cultural behaviours, beliefs, and values (Aronowitz et al., 2012).

In terms of policy, the topic relates to social workers that advocate for social policy and public policy regarding issues around multiple aspects of sexuality. Social workers who advocate for equitable policy change of legislation regarding sexual health education would explicitly benefit from understanding the beliefs and values that influence sexual assault labelling and reporting behaviours. Specifically, the literature regarding consent provides additional understanding for social workers that advocate for the implementation of consent into sex education curriculum in primary and secondary education systems.

Lastly, the topic of female university students' beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality relates to the existing body of social work scholarship on sexuality, sexual health, and sexual education. As multiple social work journals publish on sexuality, this topic has the potential to contribute to the existing literature, while filling some of the research gaps. Thus, the following research questions guide the current study.

Main Question: What are the beliefs and attitudes of female university students regarding sexuality?

Sub-Questions:

1. What are the defining features of university culture?
2. How do female university students define sexuality?
3. What are female university students' beliefs regarding gender roles and sexual relationships?
4. What are female university students' beliefs regarding communicating consent in sexual relationships?
5. How is female university student's sexuality influenced by rape myths?

1.3 Motivations to pursue research

It is essential to provide an overview of my motivations for pursuing this topic. At the time of conceptualizing my study and collecting data, I had been a female university student for six years. This brought both insight and bias to the current study. I chose to explore the topic of sexuality, as during my undergraduate degree, I found there were limited conversation in my social group which primarily comprised of social work students. We did not have the language to grasp how our sexual expression and freedom were influenced by university culture. We believed that cat-calling, being groped at bars, and feeling generally unsafe on campus was part of the female university experience. When I started my graduate work, I wanted to explore a topic that would try to give me answers to the system that perpetuates sexual violence against women. Finding literature that explored rape culture and rape myths fascinated me. Subsequently, through my journey reading the literature I found that specific beliefs and attitudes can predict and influence sexual assault labelling and subsequently sexual assault reporting behaviours. I wanted to understand what female university students' beliefs and attitudes were and if they had a different experience than I did.

In addition, my choice for methodology and theoretical framework were influenced by my personal experiences. In both my personal and professional life, I identify as a feminist. For this reason, I chose to embrace a feminist research approach. In feminist research, the aim is to explore and correct the misrepresentation of the female experience to deconstruct the unequal social position of women (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, a feminist research approach focuses on the experiences of women and aims to “make women visible, raise their consciousness and empower them” (Gelling, 2013, p.69). By employing a feminist research approach, my hope was to impact the deconstruction of sexist and unequal experiences of women in the university sub-culture.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

1.4 Feminism as a theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study is feminist theory. For the study, it is necessary to unravel how my feminist identity and understanding of feminist theory influences the research process. The first wave of feminism began in the late 1800's with feminist activists seeking both political and property rights, with second wave feminism sparking in the 1960's and onwards with advocating professional equality, political influence, and shifting attitudes towards women within interpersonal relationships (Payne, 2005). Subsequently, different bodies of feminist theory arose such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist or Marxist feminism, black feminism, and post-modern feminism (Dominelli, 2002). Postmodern feminism is what I most identify with, which acknowledges discourses such as language that create social assumptions about how women should be treated in society (Payne, 2005). Additionally, postmodern feminism embraces equity for all genders and uses an intersectional lens (Pomeroy, Holleran, & Kiam, 2004). While I most align with postmodern feminism, it is impossible to reject the other feminist theories and ideologies as they continually shape my understanding of feminism.

Feminist theory is also uniquely fit to address the concerns of sexuality, sexual assault, and sexual violence. Feminist theory defines sexual assault as a cultural and political issue, rather than an individual pathology (Alcoff, 2013). Similarly, my personal view of sexual assault is to place responsibility on larger cultural, societal, and political beliefs rather than on victims and perpetrators. Applying a feminist lens when exploring issues concerning sexuality and sexual assault encourages one to explore underlying beliefs and values that create behaviours, which foster a culture where women are sexually vulnerable.

While other theoretical frameworks are commonly applied to literature that explore sexuality and sexual assault, as a feminist and social worker, feminist theory lends itself both to my personal values as a researcher and the way I framed the study. Frameworks commonly used in the literature come from a

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

criminology or psychology background which may not always align with my personal values and values of the profession of social work.

It is also important to discuss my personal definition of feminism and how feminist theory has influenced my research process. Defining feminism is nearly impossible with multiple sects and beliefs surrounding this ideology. My personal definition of feminism extends to deconstructing gender roles that inhibit all genders from fully participating in society. I believe that men have a vital role as allies in creating an equitable world where each individual is free of specific gender expectations. I believe feminism is a key piece in creating equitable opportunities for all genders, and that feminist thought can aid in deconstructing beliefs that marginalize all genders. My personal definition is key to highlight for my research process, as I do not believe in blaming or shaming men for the oppression and marginalization of women. Additionally, throughout the process of data collection, I tried to address larger systemic beliefs that marginalize women, while shifting away blame around the individual. Lastly, my personal definition of feminism and theoretical framework immensely influenced how I analyzed my results. My aim when analyzing was not to place blame or responsibility on an individual, rather explore the larger societal beliefs that influenced participants' views on sexuality.

1.5 Reflexivity

As outlined by my motivations and choice of research approach, it is evident that I have bias regarding this topic. Therefore, for the importance of rigour and my methodology, it is key to address reflexivity and how I remained reflexive throughout the research process. In qualitative research, reflexivity refers to how a researcher's values and beliefs influence the research process in terms of the design of the study, data collection, and data analysis (Creswell, 2007). To remain reflexive throughout the research process, there are specific activities a researcher can follow. This section will discuss examples regarding how I remained reflexive throughout the research process and how my choice of methodology requires the researcher to pay attention to reflexivity.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

The sub-culture I examined was female university students, aged 18-30. This is key to highlight as I still belong to this sub-culture. I have been a university student for the past eight years, which influences by biases regarding the sub-culture, particularly beliefs and attitudes around sexuality. I have witnessed how peers and I experience sexuality as a member of this sub-culture. Specifically, I believe that university values influence all facets of sexuality among female university students. As a personal example, rape myths and rape culture have influenced how I see myself as a sexual object, my sexual rights, and how I label sexual assault. My biases influenced my perceptions that beliefs such as rape myths and gender norms influence sexuality, however this was not always the experience of my participants. Throughout the research process I was consistently open to participants' experiences, regardless if they did not believe they are influenced by specific university cultural beliefs.

My personal experience offers insight into the phenomenon; however, there is a possibility that my biases negatively influenced the research process. To remain reflexive, I kept two separate journals during the research process, one relating to the data collection process and the other to the data analysis process. This practice allowed me to reflect on my beliefs, biases, and values as a researcher.

While reflexivity is key in any qualitative tradition, ethnography and feminist ethnography identify reflexivity as a methodological underpinning. Ethnographic research requires the researcher to fully immerse within the studied culture, which creates a need for reflexivity throughout the process. "Reflexivity in ethnography refers to the researcher being aware of and openly discussing his or her role in the study in a way that honours and respects the site and participants" (Creswell, 2015, p.478). Assuming the axiological assumption of qualitative design, reflexivity allows for conceptual discussion of the researcher's role, while creating safe boundaries with participants. To enhance and develop trusting relationships, reflexivity facilitates the sharing of researchers' beliefs and values within the studied cultural group. Throughout the research process, I was aware of how my authority as a researcher and social position as a female university student influenced the data collection and analysis.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Subsequently, feminist ethnography emphasizes the importance of reflexivity as a methodological underpinning that informs the research process. Gobo (2008) requires that feminist ethnographers “pay closer attention to reflexivity, to the ways in which researchers construct their data by unconsciously imbuing them with their prejudice and stereotypes” (p.58). As a member of this sub-culture, I have specific beliefs how university has influenced sexuality. However, some participants believed that university culture does not hold any influence over their experiences. When this occurred during the study, I remained non-judgmental and limited the influence of my biases.

1.6 Definitions

It is important to provide definitions of common terms used throughout the study. These definitions appear throughout the study, however providing them here introduces the language used.

Defining sexuality for this study was a journey. There is a lack of consensus within the literature that explores sexuality, which will be explored in Chapter two. For the purpose of this study, a definition from the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) was used. WAS (2014) defines sexuality as “experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships” (p.1).

Another common term used in the study is rape myths, which is defined as beliefs that suggest women provoke their own sexual assault by specific activities and behaviours such as: the clothing they wear, their attitudes and disposition, consumption of alcohol or other substances, by being alone and being out late at night (Deming et al., 2013). Understanding rape myths are important as foundational beliefs that influence sexual assault labelling and reporting behaviours.

Consent is another term that will be commonly discussed throughout this thesis. Consent in this context refers to sexual consent. The definition used for consent is provided by Ward, Matthews, Weiner, Hogan, and Popson (2012) that defines consent as communication, whether verbal or non-verbal that involves an agreement or understanding to sexual activity. It is important to distinguish that

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

consent in this context refers to both verbal and non-verbal communication as participants refer to both modes of communication as consent.

Lastly, the term gender roles or traditional gender roles is often discussed. At times, the term gender norm is used interchangeably for gender roles. Gender roles can be defined as sets of constructed societal norms that dictate types of behaviours that are seen as acceptable for individuals based on their perceived gender (Shnabek, Bar-Anan, Kende, Bareket, & Lazar, 2016). Traditional gender roles are defined as when male identifying individuals take on dominant roles and whereas female identifying individuals would take on a submissive role.

1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sought to add literature on female university students' beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality with hopes to influence specific levels of social work practice and education. By completing this research, I believe I have contributed a unique social work perspective and added direction for future research. It is my hope that the results and recommendations from participants will be utilized to advocate for shifting policy and education programs in primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions regarding sexual assault and sexual health education and programming.

1.8 Thesis overview

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter two provides a literature review and explores beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality and the influence on sexual assault labelling and reporting behaviours. Specifically, in Chapter two beliefs regarding sexual relationships, rape myths, consent, and gender roles will be explored. Outlining these beliefs is important for capturing overall beliefs of sexuality but also as important factors that predict sexual assault reporting behaviours. Chapter three explores feminist ethnography as a methodology and the suitability to the study. In Chapter three the history, origins, and philosophical and methodological underpinnings of ethnography and feminist

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

ethnography will be outlined. In addition, the methods of the study will be captured in Chapter three.

Chapter four focuses on the themes and recommendations from participant interviews. Themes and sub-themes will be presented in Chapter four using direct quotes from participants. Finally, chapter five is the discussion which summarizes the themes within the context of relevant literature and provides recommendations for future research. Lastly, within chapter five, implications for social work practice are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

This chapter begins with a review of the relevant literature. Chapter Two starts with a discussion of the defining features of university culture. Then, defining sexuality is discussed in the context of all university students and the common practices of female university students. Next, key attitudes and beliefs that have been shown to influence sexual assault reporting behaviours are discussed. These beliefs are as follows: rape myths, consent, and gender roles. It is key to address these beliefs because of their significance when labelling and reporting sexual assault and because they have guided the sub-questions of this study. Subsequently the limitations of the literature are addressed. Lastly, the research questions are outlined for the study.

As of 2015, there are more than two million (2,048,019) individuals enrolled in post-secondary education in Canada. Of that number, over 55% are female (Statistics Canada, 2015). This is an important population to explore due to its size, unique sub-culture, and the experiences of university students.

It is important to explore the shared cultural experiences of university students before considering female university students' beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality. It is key to understand how the cultural experience of university may influence all aspects of sexuality. There are several shared behaviours that largely categorize university culture in a North American context, for example: binge drinking, partying, hooking-up, and sexual victimization. Each of these behaviours will be explored in the sections below.

2.1 Binge drinking and partying.

In regards to alcohol consumption, 40% of university students in the United States indicate regular binge drinking (Flack Jr. et al., 2007). Students who engage in regular binge-drinking are more likely to experience academic difficulties, engage in risky sexual behaviours, injure themselves, overdose on alcohol, and drive under the influence of alcohol (Carlson, Johnson, & Jacobs, 2010).

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Overall, regular student binge drinking is a key experience of university culture that has the potential to influence multiple facets of human experience.

University campuses have been noted for producing environmental atmospheres that encourage partying involving the consumption of large amounts of alcohol. A study conducted by Scribner et al. (2007) examined the contextual role of alcohol consumption on university campuses. The partying atmosphere found on university campuses influences the expectation of alcohol consumption on an individual level. The partying at university creates an atmosphere where binge-drinking and consuming large amounts of alcohol is generally accepted (Scribner et al., 2007). While not all universities create contextual environments where binge drinking is accepted, universities that endorse alcohol outlets on campuses such as bars, clubs, and sponsored events see higher densities of alcohol intake (Scribner et al., 2007). Other contextual factors that influence an individual to engage in partying and regular alcohol consumption are their level of involvement on the university campus itself (i.e. living on residence, engaging in extra-curricular activities), the duration of the student's time spent at university, and the age of the individual (Lorant, Nicaise, Soto, & d'Hoore, 2013).

Binge drinking and partying are two contextual behaviours that have largely categorized the cultural experiences of university students. While there are university-specific factors that influence the predictability of engaging in binge drinking and partying, individual developmental factors also play a role. During young adulthood, individuals tend to explore and experiment, which is often facilitated by the consumption of alcohol (Lorant et al., 2013). Throughout the literature, binge drinking and partying are highlighted as behaviours that can produce negative outcomes, however there are few suggestions regarding methods for shifting this normative practice of university students.

2.1.1. Hooking-up and sexual victimization.

Related to binge drinking and partying, hook-up culture has been regarded as one of the most normative practices of university students. Particularly in North America, university students are

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

increasingly engaging in casual relationships while delineating from traditional monogamous, committed relationships (Littleton, Tabernik, Canales, and Backstrom, 2009). Examples of casual dating include relationship scripts such as the hook-up, which is a spontaneous sexual encounter with no previous or future expectation of a relationship, or the friends with benefit relationship, which is a sexual encounter between friends with no expectation of a romantic outcome (Littleton et al., 2009).

Studies that explore the frequency of university students' hook-ups have been conducted in England, the United States, and Canada. A large online survey measured 14,000 students across England and explored their relationship scripts (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Overall, 72% of students reported engaging in at least one hook-up and 67% percent of students reported engaging in sexual intercourse outside of a committed relationship (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). In the United States, between 79-85% of university students reported engaging in at least one-hook up (Littleton et al., 2009). Over half of Canadian students reported engaging in some type of casual sexual relationship (2009).

Exploring hook-ups as a normative behaviour is relevant for several reasons. Firstly, engaging in hook-ups has become the most normative practice for university students in terms of sexual relationships. It is vital to understand this normative practice as it largely categorizes the sexual experiences of university students. Furthermore, the literature has suggested that hook-ups may be directly related to sexual victimization on campus. While consuming large amounts of alcohol has been known to produce risky behaviours (Scribner et al., 2007), some researchers consider hook-ups to be risky situations related to sexual assault. Specifically, Littleton et al. (2009) suggested that as hook-ups often occur in settings where alcohol is consumed, the risk of sexual assault increases. However, this belief suggests that in order to remain free from sexual assault, individuals should restrict their sexual behaviour and engage in committed relationships. From a sample in the United States, over 50% of university women who experience a sexual assault report that the perpetrator was a friend, boyfriend, or

a date (Littleton et al., 2009). Limiting hooking-up in order to remain free from sexual assault does not address the issue of sexual assault on university campuses.

2.1.3 The female experience of university.

The above description of shared behaviours of university students applies to all genders. To further understand the experience of female university students, it is key to explore relevant literature regarding their shared experiences. The majority of literature concerning female university students addresses harmful sexual experiences such as sexual assaults, rape, and unwanted sexual encounters. There are limited studies that explore the sexual experiences of female university students outside of sexual violence. Overall, when discussing the sexual experiences of female university students, it is difficult to ignore their sexual vulnerability.

2.1.3.1. Sexual assault and rape.

The statistic that 1 in 4 women will experience a sexual assault is consistent within the female university population (Harned, 2005). A unique facet of sexual assaults on university campuses is that between 60-80% occur within an acquaintance setting (Boswell & Spade, 1996). Examples of acquaintance sexual assault include when the perpetrator is known by the victim, whether it be a classmate, colleague, roommate, family member, or spouse. One perspective that aims to understand the high incidence of acquaintance sexual assault on university campuses is the idea of the existence of rape culture. Rape culture is a set of beliefs, values, and behaviours, which produce settings where rape is likely to occur (Boswell & Spade, 1996). As discussed earlier, excessive alcohol consumption and engaging in risky behaviours on university campuses increase the likeliness of sexual assault. When examining the amount of acquaintance sexual assault and the pressure to consume large amounts of alcohol, university campuses exemplify a culture where rape often occurs without being reported.

An intersectional study conducted by Hamilton and Armstrong (2009) sought to explore all sexual experiences of female university students. Similar to other studies, one of the main sexual

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

experiences explored was hooking-up. Overall, female participants were fearful to engage in the practice of hooking-up as they feared being labelled a slut and were concerned that men dictated the terms of the hook-up while treating the women solely as sex objects (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009).

Another interesting finding reported on the class difference when exploring beliefs on sexuality from female university students. It was determined that participants from the socioeconomic class known as the working class felt pressured to engage in committed relationships, whereas participants from an upper or middle class background felt the freedom to explore their sexuality during university (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009).

When exploring the unique experiences of female university students compared to males, the literature focuses on sexual experiences and its consequences. When trying to narrow down the stereotypical cultural experiences of female university students, it returns to their vulnerability as women, specifically sexual vulnerability. Before delving into why it is applicable to explore beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality, it is necessary to explore the Canadian literature on the female university student experience.

2.1.3.2. Female university students in Canada.

There is a paucity of literature that explores the experiences of female university students in Canada. The above literature and explanations are from the United States, with some Canadian statistics included as part of the discussion. Literature that explores beliefs from a Canadian female university student perspective covers a variety of topics including consent, sexual orientation, sexual identity, sexual wellbeing, gender roles, and self-worth (Guerin, Arcand, & Duran-Bush, 2010; Humphreys, 2007; Muise, Preyd, Maitland, & Milhausen, 2010). While these studies explore specific sexuality-related experiences, they do not discuss the cultural experiences of being a female university student in

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Canada. Therefore, more research is needed into the cultural experiences of Canadian female university students.

2.1.3.3. Addressing cultural beliefs and attitudes.

Discussing the shared beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours of university students is key to understanding the workings of university culture. Specifically, when exploring sexual assault, there are cultural beliefs and values that often include self-blame and personal responsibility, which is embedded within the university population (Deming et al., 2013). Only by understanding these cultural norms around sexuality and sexual practices can we truly understand the sexual victimization of women on university campuses.

The literature regarding university culture provides numerous interesting conclusions. When exploring what makes up the defining features of a university culture for all genders, much of the discussion focuses on alcohol and sexual activity and the relationship between the two. Unsurprisingly, university campuses that promote alcohol see students who regularly engage in binge drinking. While binge drinking can have consequences, it is necessary to explore sexual experiences outside of this context rather than to suggest limiting certain sexual behaviours such as hooking up. As demonstrated by the literature, universities can create an environment where sexual violence thrives. In addition, the literature focuses on female university students' sexual vulnerability on campus. The findings outlined in this section provide justification for exploring the unique cultural beliefs and attitudes of female university students. However, the above literature describes university culture from the context of the United States and while similar to Canada, there are cultural differences.

The next section of this literature review discusses the beliefs and attitudes surrounding labelling unwanted sex, rape myths, myths about consent, and beliefs regarding traditional gender roles. While this study is not about sexual assault, it is key to understand how beliefs and attitudes about sexuality inform sexual assault reporting behaviours.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

2.2. Defining sexuality

For the purpose of this study, sexuality was defined using the definition from the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS). WAS (2014) defines sexuality as “experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships” (p.1). This broad definition allows the inclusion of research that explores sexual scripts, perceptions of sexual encounters, gender roles, and consent. Moreover, these various topics have been explored in relation to university students. Throughout an exploration of academic literature, there is a paucity of literature that defines sexuality from a university student perspective, specifically a female university student perspective. A search was conducted to find relevant definitions, however while several articles discussed sexuality (Aras, Orcin, Ozan, & Semin, 2007; England & Bearak, 2014; Salameh et al., 2016), it was not defined.

2.3. Sexual scripts

The previous section discussed some of the cultural behaviours of female university students. One way to understand sexual experiences and behaviours of female university students is to explore common sexual scripts. Sexual scripts are defined as a set of culturally constructed norms that have been formed by socialization and interpersonal interaction that define acceptable sexual behaviour (Bernston, Hoffman and Luff, 2014). Additionally, university institutions comprise a unique cultural setting that introduce new ideas of acceptable sexual interactions (Bernston et al., 2014).

One of the major sexual scripts studied in literature regarding the practices of female university students is the hook-up script. Some authors have deconstructed the hook-up script into two different relationships scripts including a sexual intercourse hook-up script or a friends with benefits script (Bernston et al., 2014). The difference between the two scripts is that within the friends with benefits hook-up script, a prior friendship-based relationship has been established, while a sexual intercourse hook-up occurs separate of any type of relationship. Many female university students regard the hook-up

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

script as sexually satisfying while creating their sexual identity (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Alcohol is a major factor that influences the one time sexual encounter of a hook-up (Bernston et al., 2014; Littleton et al., 2009). Overall, several studies have offered insights into why the hook-up script is an essential sexual script to female university students (Bernston et al., 2014; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; and Littleton et al., 2014).

Contrasting with the hook-up script, studies have also explored committed relationship scripts of female university students. In two studies, over half of female university student participants stated that a committed relationship was part of a normative experience during university (Bernston et al., 2014; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Female university students cited that university can be an isolating experience; therefore forming a committed relationship is a way to facilitate a physical and emotional connection (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009).

Lastly, a sexual script that has been thoroughly explored in the literature is the rape script. It is key to explore rape scripts among female university students, as rape is not always labelled and may fit into another category of sexual script (Littleton & Axsom, 2003). Common rape scripts that have been explored by female university students are the "violent stranger assault," "alcohol/drug induced rape," and "date rape" (Littleton & Axsom, 2003; Littleton et al, 2009). When asked about types of rape scripts that occur, these were often most discussed and situated for the context of rape on university campuses. It is relevant to acknowledge the typical rape scripts of female university students as they can be related to hook-up scripts, which is one of the most common forms of sexual scripts found on university campuses. There has been some evidence to indicate that bad hook-up scripts can be interpreted as rape scripts due to ambiguity and are often being labelled as accepted sexual behaviour (Littleton et al., 2009).

The way rape scripts are understood from a female university student perspective is that rape often results from alcohol abuse, violence from a stranger, or from a date rape. Littleton et al. (2009)

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

argued that because hook-ups are often a result of alcoholic intoxication, they are a breeding ground for sexual assault while not being labelled as a rape script. However, this idea seeks to limit and shame female sexual behaviour in order to keep female students safe from sexual assault. As described above, rape scripts are sexual scripts that occur on university campuses and are often categorized within hook-up scripts. Creating and labelling a rape-script can be difficult as common acceptable practices that lead to rape are a part of a normal sexual script. Therefore, it is significant to explore how female university students label rape or unwanted sexual encounters.

Literature regarding sexual scripts reveals ways to understand some common practices of female university students. Hook-ups are key to highlight as they are often discussed as a common practice of university students. Hook-ups can be important for individuals to explore different sexual partners and meet sexual needs without committing to a relationship. However, committed relationships are also a key practice as university can be an isolating experience and personal connection is beneficial to overall health. Lastly, highlighting a rape script is relevant as rape scenarios can be labeled as acceptable sexual behaviour due to miscommunication of consent and the influence of alcohol. While the above scripts do not encapsulate all sexual practices at university, they comprise the majority of practices discussed in the literature.

2.4. Labelling unwanted sexual experiences

Exploring how female university students label unwanted sexual experiences provides an understanding of why sexual assaults are not always reported. If an individual does not label unwanted sexual experiences as sexual assault, she will likely not report the incident. Studies have explored the reasoning and explanation for the labelling process of unwanted sexual experiences. Flack Jr. et al. (2007) explored different types of unwanted sex experienced by female university students. The study found three different types of unwanted sexual encounters that female university students often experience: judgement impaired by alcohol or drugs, it happened before it could be stopped, and being

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

taken advantage of as a result of intoxication (Flack Jr. et al., 2007). Furthermore, exploring the reasons why female university students do not report these types of unwanted sexual encounters has been explored. In a study conducted by Harned (2005), five reasons were given for not reporting or labelling an unwanted sexual encounter as rape or sexual assault: self-blame, perpetrator was unaware it was unwanted, no physical harm, minimization, and victimization. A study conducted by Deming et al. (2013) replicated similar results and found that female university students were likely to offer excuses for the male perpetrator of rape.

Instead of recognizing a sexual assault, participants in both studies minimized their experience and often engaged in self-blame for their unwanted sexual experience (Deming et al., 2013 & Harned et al., 2005). The attempt to minimize sexual assault and individual self-blame inhibits the ability to label the experience as sexual assault or rape. A belief across three studies is that participants expressed reluctance to report the crime due to the culturally accepted practice of victim blaming (Deming et al., 2013; Flack Jr. et al., 2007; Harned, 2005). To acknowledge a sexual assault or rape occurred, women have to first label it as sexual assault while simultaneously limiting self-blame.

It is crucial to understand the labelling process of unwanted sexual experiences. By exploring different types of unwanted sexual experiences, it can be understood how ambiguous situations often lead to unreported sexual assaults on campuses. Linking the culture of binge drinking with the labelling process provides insight into what universities may do to increase the reporting rates of sexual assaults. Furthermore, highlighting the instances of self-blame and minimization provides justification for addressing these norms and provides a method for finding ways to deconstruct these beliefs in the general population. Next, rape myths, which also influence sexual assault reporting behaviours will be explored.

2.5. Rape myths

Rape myths are beliefs that suggest that women provoke their own sexual assault by specific activities and behaviours such as: the clothing they wear, their attitudes and disposition, consumption of alcohol or other substances, or by being alone and being out late at night (Deming et al., 2013). Studies have found that rape myth acceptance decreases the likelihood of reporting a sexual assault (Aronowitz et al., 2012). It is key to understand the correlation between rape myth acceptance and the likelihood of reporting a sexual assault, however it is equally valuable to understand how rape myths influence other experiences. To gain a greater understanding of the influence of rape myths, the ways in which these myths influence all aspects of sexuality, in addition to sexual assault, should be examined. The following section will explore how rape myths influence the reporting of sexual assault and what factors contribute to an individual endorsing rape myth acceptance.

2.5.1. How do rape myths influence reporting of sexual assaults?

The fascination with rape myth acceptance comes from its ability to predict the likelihood of reporting sexual assaults. Numerous studies have found that if an individual endorses the idea that women are responsible for their own sexual assault (rape myths), they are less likely to report a sexual assault, regardless if it they witnessed or experienced the assault (Allen, 2002; Egan & Wilson, 2012; Feldman-Summer & Norris, 1984; Hammond, Berry & Rodriguez, 2011; and Williams, 1984). Rape myths are culturally situated norms that extend across the general population and are not limited solely to university campuses (Egan & Wilson, 2012). The general population plays an important role in preventing rape in terms of reporting a rape or sexual assault that is witnessed and understanding the specific context of what constitutes rape.

While overall rape myth acceptance is known to decrease the likelihood of reporting a sexual assault, other beliefs and values have also been explored. Studies exploring rape myths on university campuses have found that if individuals endorse traditional beliefs regarding male dominance and sexual

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

aggression, they have higher levels of rape myth acceptance (Hammond et al., 2011; Hammond et al., 2011). Moreover, the findings provide further support of specific feminist theories that suggest social hierarchies influence rape myth acceptance (Hammond et al., 2011; Hockett et al., 2009). Interestingly, these studies found large gendered differences in the responses. The findings in the studies suggest that when men believe in the male role of dominance, they are more likely to be accepting of rape myths (Hammond et al., 2011; Hockett et al., 2009). In these studies, men reported higher levels of rape myth acceptance, an increased negative view of rape victims, higher levels of sexual prejudice, and higher levels of sexism as compared to women (Hammond et al., 2011; Hockett et al., 2009).

Exploring beliefs regarding rape myth acceptance and the correlation of reporting sexual assault is crucial. From a feminist perspective, it is key to explore systemic beliefs such as the patriarchal system and rape myths that support beliefs of subjugation and dominance of women. The existing literature surrounding rape myths and rape myth acceptance has found a correlation between reporting behaviours regarding sexual assault. However, current sexual assault prevention techniques and programming may not address beliefs regarding male dominance, aggression, and rape myth acceptance.

The rape myth literature suggests that rape myth acceptance, acceptance of male dominance, and sexual aggression predict reporting behaviours of sexual assault. It is relevant to explore other beliefs regarding sexuality, including an understanding of consensual sex and what constitutes consensual sex, beliefs about gender roles, and how these beliefs can predict understandings of sexual assault.

2.6. Consent

Throughout this next section, consent will be explored as will some of the myths and misconceptions regarding what constitutes consensual sex. However, prior to exploring some of the misconceptions around consent, it is important to define it. Consent, similar to sexuality is a term with many definitions. For this study, a definition outlined by Ward et al., (2012) is adopted that defines consent as communication, whether verbal or non-verbal, that involves an agreement or understanding

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

regarding sexual activity. Exploring beliefs regarding what constitutes sexual consent is significant as it directly influences whether or not a sexual activity is considered sexual assault. Similarly to rape myths, it is crucial to understand how beliefs regarding consent influence sexual assault reporting behaviours. If someone labels a sexual encounter ambiguous or consensual, regardless of whether it constitutes a sexual assault, the crime may not be reported.

While consent may seem simple to understand, major misconceptions and myths have been explored throughout the literature. Some of the myths are related to how specific circumstances influence one's ability to consent to sexual activity. Specific beliefs that will be explored throughout this next section have been considered in a university student population: if you are drunk, can you consent; if you are in a committed relationship, do you need consent; women are the gatekeepers of consent; and non-verbal cues can communicate consent. By outlining these misconceptions of consent amongst a university population, parallels can be understood regarding why sexual assaults are often unreported. The myths and misconceptions highlighted throughout this section provide an understanding for the reporting behaviours of sexual assault of university students.

2.6.1. If you are drunk, can you consent?

It is relevant to explore the influence of alcohol on consent, specifically on university campuses where binge drinking is common. Throughout the literature, there is no consistent message that explores the relationship between intoxication and the ability to consent. Several authors have discussed the issue with alcohol and miscommunication around sexual scripts, which often leads to ambiguity regarding consent.

One of the findings of a study conducted by Jozkowski and Wiersma (2014) was that alcohol influenced university students' feelings around consent. Interestingly, the participants of the study who were intoxicated prior to sexual activity did not experience feelings such as safety, comfort, and agreement, compared to participants who were not intoxicated (Jozkowski & Wiersma, 2014). The

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

feelings around the sexual activity were further complicated due to the sexual scripts of university students, where intoxication is normative. Ward et al. (2012) found that due to the common use of alcohol and hook-up culture, sexual scripts are often misunderstood and lead to ambiguous understandings of sexual assault resulting from unclear consent. Similarly, Fantasia, Sutherland, and Frontenot (2015) found that within a female university student population, concurrent alcohol use leads to poor communication, which often results in the misinterpretation of consent.

Another interesting finding regarding the influence of alcohol on consent that relates to the influence of rape myths is the idea that if a woman is drinking, she should be responsible for providing consent. In a study conducted by Gray (2015), university students discussed how alcohol influences the ability to make sound judgements in sexual encounters. While participants did not explicitly blame women if they were sexually assaulted during intoxication, a conclusion was made that if a woman puts herself at risk, she should be responsible for consent and understanding the consequences of intoxication (Gray, 2015).

The ambiguity surrounding these types of findings further instils the difficulty to implement sexual assault prevention efforts as understanding the influence of alcohol on consent is unclear. The studies that explore the influence of alcohol on consent do not produce findings that provide a clear answer. Rather, alcohol creates ambiguity regarding one's ability to consent, but does not directly influence whether a person is able or unable to consent if intoxicated. These studies further illuminate the complications of alcohol and consent, which creates difficulty in implementing prevention and education programming regarding the limits of consent.

2.6.2. In committed relationships, you don't need consent.

Another interesting argument concerning the necessity of consent amongst university students comes from the comparison of casual and committed relationships. While hook-up culture and casual relationships seem to dominate the sexual patterns of university students, committed relationships occur

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

as well. It is relevant to explore the difference of casual relationships vs. committed relationships due to differing sexual scripts. In long-term, committed relationships, couples are less likely to require verbal consent where non-verbal cues are often the common form of consent. In a study conducted by Humphreys (2007), university students were asked to discuss how the length of a committed relationship influences sexual consent. Overall, results from the study suggest the relationship history influences the perceived need for explicit consent (Humphreys, 2007). In terms of the length of the relationships, participants perceived that in longer relationships, consent was clear and acceptable, regardless of ambiguity (Humphreys, 2007). The study conducted by Humphreys (2007) illustrates that participants are more likely to label ambiguous consent acceptable and clear if the relationship is longer and considered more serious. Additionally, a study conducted by Jozkowski and Wiersma (2014) replicated the findings of Humphreys (2007).

Limited studies have been conducted regarding the way sexual consent is perceived and negotiated in committed relationships. It is vital to highlight the study conducted by Humphreys (2007) as it provides a unique perspective to the understanding of perceived consent in committed relationships on university campuses. The results from the study reinforce beliefs that individuals in committed relationships are less likely to experience sexual assault as consent is usually perceived rather than explicitly verbalized.

2.6.3. Women are the gatekeepers of consent.

Another misconception that has been thoroughly explored in the literature is the idea that women are the gatekeepers of sexual consent. By labelling women the gatekeepers of consent, beliefs are produced that women control the level of sexual intimacy (Humphreys & Herold, 2007). This belief aligns with the traditional sexual script, which re-enforces the idea that men are increasingly more sexual than women and places responsibility of consent solely on women. Related to women as gatekeepers of consent is the idea that men often assume consent in sexual activities. In several studies

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

regarding consent, male university student participants often assumed consent in a sexual activity, rather than asked for it explicitly (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski & Wiersma, 2015; and Littleton & Axsom, 2003). The belief that men can assume sexual consent is normalized by gendered norms that convey the idea that men are relentless and unable to control their sexual desires (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012).

Labelling men as sexually aggressive and women as sexual gatekeepers enforces the belief that women are responsible for consent and that men are allowed to assume consent. In a university atmosphere, this is further complicated by the amount of binge drinking, which produces ambiguous sexual encounters. These beliefs imply that women are explicitly responsible for negotiating consent in sexual encounters, which not only relinquishes male responsibility, but also assumes that men do not experience sexual assault.

2.6.4. Non-verbal cues can communicate consent.

The last myth or misconception regarding consent that will be explored in this literature review is the belief regarding communication of consent. A common theme across the literature is that amongst university students, non-verbal cues are utilized frequently compared to verbal cues when indicating sexual consent (Beres et al., 2004; Hall, 1998, Hickmen & Muehlenhard, 1999; Jozkowski & Wiersma, 2015). This belief can become problematic within a university context, as sexual encounters are often ambiguous in general. Communicating solely through non-verbal cues leaves room for miscommunication regarding consent. Miscommunication of consent can create ambiguous sexual situations regarding what constitutes a sexual assault. There is also a gendered difference regarding communication of consent. In a study conducted by Humphreys and Herold (2007), female university students wanted consent more explicitly and verbally communicated as compared to their male counterparts. This can become problematic as women are considered to be the gatekeepers of sexual consent. The gendered difference provides an additional barrier when communicating sexual consent if

both genders regard communication differently.

The literature surrounding sexual consent amongst university students provided several interesting findings. An overall theme around the myths and misconceptions is that the definitions and understanding of sexual consent amongst university students is unclear and often misunderstood. The unique sub-culture of university creates a context where sexual encounters occur concurrently with alcohol consumption. The findings outlined throughout this section can provide further understanding of the immense amount of sexual assaults that occur on university campuses. With the amount of alcohol, miscommunication, and responsibility falling solely on one gender, understanding consent within the university context is problematic. Without a concrete understanding of consent coupled with consent myths, labeling and understanding consensual vs. non-consensual sexual encounters becomes increasingly problematic.

2.7. Gender Roles

Gender roles have also been explored in regards to university students. Interestingly, the majority of scholarship related to gender roles and university students has been largely conducted outside of North America. Exploring gender roles is significant in regards to sexuality as understanding the function of gender roles aids in predicting sexual assault labelling and reporting behaviours.

2.7.1. What does it mean to endorse traditional gender roles?

Endorsing traditional gender roles has several outcomes. For the purpose of this review, only articles regarding beliefs and attitudes from a university student perspective were included. Throughout this body of literature, two key themes arose regarding the endorsement of traditional gender roles. Firstly, by endorsing traditional gender roles, individuals are more likely to encourage women to limit their careers and practice traditional gender roles such as raising children and taking care of domestic responsibilities. Secondly, throughout several studies, a correlation was found between endorsing traditional gender roles, endorsing beliefs in male dominance, and rape myth acceptance.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

2.7.1.1 Women should not have careers.

Several studies have explored university students' beliefs regarding traditional gender roles and their implications. Some studies have explicitly explored women's roles related to career, family life, and social situations. One study found that while participants believed women could engage in some out of home activities, they believed that women would be unable to fulfill the role of mother/wife while maintaining a career (Adana et al., 2011). Similarly, a study conducted by Sevim (2006) found that participants expressed negative associations between women and the work force. Additionally, Sevim (2006) noted that religious influence was a major predictor when participants expressed negative attitudes towards women in the workforce.

While these two studies explored only university student perspectives, there are still high amounts of endorsement of traditional gender roles. Exploring these two studies gives a slight insight into the concept of traditional gender roles and shows that the endorsement of traditional roles persists.

2.7.1.2 Gender roles and rape myth acceptance.

As outlined in the previous paragraph, traditional gender roles are endorsed in a university population, therefore it is key to explore the outcomes of endorsing these roles. While it is apparent that endorsing traditional gender roles creates sexist ideology, there have been other noted correlations throughout the literature. Several studies have found that if participants endorse traditional gender roles, they are more likely to believe in male dominance and rape myth acceptance (Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012; King & Roberts, 2011; Swank, Fahs, & Haywood, 2011). Exploring the correlation between endorsing traditional gender roles and rape myth acceptance is key for several reasons. Endorsing these roles influences the beliefs of male dominance and rape myth acceptance, which decreases the likelihood of both labelling and reporting sexual assault. The key beliefs and attitudes regarding gender roles should be re-examined to understand how influential they can be to creating a healthy, safe, sexual assault-free environment on campuses. Exploring university students' endorsement

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

of traditional gender roles is crucial, specifically when understanding the correlation between acceptance of male aggression and dominance and rape myth acceptance. As outlined by the relevant literature, it may be crucial to understand the views of gender roles in relation to sexual assault reporting behaviours. Understanding the correlation between the endorsement of traditional gender roles and sexual assault reporting behaviours provides further areas to consider when creating sexual assault prevention education programming.

2.8. Summary of Findings

Overall, the context of university provides a unique culture of shared beliefs, behaviours, and values. Some of the key behaviours demonstrated by university students are binge drinking, partying, hooking-up, and experiencing victimization. When exploring specific sexual behaviours key to female university students, it is important to highlight the typical sexual scripts of university culture. While hooking-up has become one of the most normative practices of female university students, it is not uncommon for committed relationships to occur.

As sexual assault and victimization largely categorizes female university students' sexual experiences, it is key to understanding some of the underlying beliefs and values that contribute to the ongoing perpetuation. The labelling of sexual assaults, rape myths, consent, and gender roles were explored to give some understanding of why sexual assault occurs on university campuses and why it goes unreported. The overarching understanding of these beliefs perpetuate the idea that women are responsible for their own sexual assault, that miscommunicating consent is common on university campuses, and that traditional gender roles are perpetuated. These beliefs and values create a culture where sexual assault thrives, while inhibiting individuals' ability to report the crime.

2.9. Limitations of literature

The literature reviewed has several limitations in regards to the current study. Firstly, the majority of the studies reviewed were conducted from a quantitative lens. One of the limitations of quantitative studies is they do not provide perspectives of rich human experiences.

Furthermore, the majority of the studies reviewed were conducted in the United States. While Canada and the United States do share cultural similarities, there are also vast differences. One of the main differences is the number of fraternities and sororities on university campuses. While the Greek system is vastly popular and widespread in United States' universities, there are limited amounts of fraternities and sororities within Canadian universities, specifically in Calgary.

Interestingly, all of the studies reviewed were not conducted from a social work lens. The primary areas of study were either psychology or criminology. Some of these studies sought to change sexual behaviour and offer solutions such as restricting sexual behaviour in order to remain safe from sexual assault. These suggestions do not acknowledge the systemic beliefs and values regarding rape myths, consent, and gender roles that influence the sexual vulnerability of women.

Furthermore, this advocates for the justification of social work research on the topic of sexuality. Moreover, there has been no social work research on the topic of beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality of female university students in Canada. The majority of literature does not stem from a feminist or social work perspective, which has resulted in studies that do not address key issues of sexuality and systemic influences.

2.10. Research Questions

The specific research questions guiding the current study are:

Main Question: What are the beliefs and attitudes of female university students regarding sexuality?

Sub-Questions:

6. What are the defining features of university culture?

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

7. How do female university students define sexuality?
8. What are female university students' beliefs regarding gender roles and sexual relationships?
9. What are female university students' beliefs regarding communicating consent in sexual relationships?
10. How is female university student's sexuality influenced by rape myths?

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used in the current study. The chapter begins with an explicit overview of the research design and the suitability to the research questions.

Subsequently, feminist ethnography as a methodology was selected for this study, which will be discussed in terms of suitability and key features. Then, research methods, including sampling, data collection, and data analysis will be outlined. Lastly, ethical issues and limitations of the study are addressed.

3.1 Nature of research design

For the current study, a qualitative research design was implemented. Qualitative research aims to find out what people do, what they know, and how they think and feel (Patton, 2002). In addition, methods of qualitative data collection take the form of interviews, observation, and documents, which differs from quantitative data collection (Patton, 2002). By implementing a qualitative design, the study captures a complex view of participants' experiences that is richly descriptive. In addition, qualitative traditions ask researchers to consider their ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions (Patton, 2002). Ontology asks researchers to explore what they believe in regards to the nature of reality, while epistemology explores object separateness (Patton, 2002). Axiology refers to the biases and values that the researcher may bring to the study (Patton, 2002). My worldview fits within the above assumptions as she believes each individual lives and interacts within their own personal construction of reality. In terms of ontology, as I am a member of the group being studied, there is limited belief that she remained completely objective throughout the study. Lastly, my axiology is what led me to the research, which allowed the facilitation of my beliefs, values, and interpretations with participants during the research process.

Choosing a qualitative paradigm was a natural step in designing the current study. I embrace the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions of qualitative research in my personal and

professional identity. The assumptions and aim of qualitative research facilitated a rich, in-depth understanding of the current study.

3.2 What is ethnography

Ethnography is a qualitative methodology where the researcher depicts and interprets the shared and learned patterns of beliefs, values, and language of a specific cultural sharing group (Creswell, 2007). Ethnographic research is concerned with producing rich descriptions and explanations of particular phenomena, rather than testing hypothesis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Ethnography as a methodology is used to understand the specific language, power dynamics, and shared patterns of behaviour of a particular culture (Creswell, 2007). Typically, ethnographic research comprises two research strategies: participant observation and non-participant observation (Gobo, 2008). However, as ethnography becomes increasingly used as a research methodology, the strategies have become more flexible. Ethnography as a methodology struggles to encapsulate a standard, well-defined approach as it has been re-interpreted and re-contextualized through various disciplines to analyze specific phenomenon (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The descriptive approach of ethnography may be the most useful when studying unequal representations in particular contexts to understand how cultural values are transmitted to create institutional discrimination (Fetterman, 1998).

There are specific ethnographic concepts that aid a researcher's decision to employ ethnography as a methodology. Fetterman (1998) outlines nine key ethnographic concepts that guide an ethnographer's work. The nine concepts are culture, holistic perspective, contextualization, emic and etic perspectives, non-judgmental orientation, inter and intercultural diversity, structure and function, symbol and ritual, micro/macro level study, and operationalism (Fetterman, 1998). For this study, it is key to define culture and emic/etic perspectives as they are terms used throughout. In ethnography, culture is defined as a set of behaviours, beliefs, and patterns that inform a specific group (Fetterman, 1998). Emic and etic are defined as two perspectives, emic from within the group being studied, and etic

from the observer or researcher (Gobo, 2008). These nine ethnographic concepts are key to highlight as they guide and shape the ethnographer's study in the field (Fetterman, 1998).

3.2.1 History and origins

Ethnography as a methodology is heavily rooted in cultural anthropology. Ethnography gradually arose from the work of two anthropologists in the early 20th century, Bronislaw K. Malinowski and Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown (Gobo, 2008). Before Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, the majority of anthropologists studied cultural groups through secondary data that viewed members of the culture as primitive (Gobo, 2008). Like their contemporaries, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown were using a naturalist scientific approach; however, they differed by embracing the human sciences approach to collecting data that examined culture (Creswell, 2007). Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown wanted to gain an understanding of culture by undertaking direct observation of shared patterns of behaviour (Gobo, 2008). The initiative to understand this knowledge created an opening for anthropologists to embrace ethnography.

In addition, ethnography as a methodology is rooted in sociology. The Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago adopted ethnography as a methodology in the 1920-30s (Gobo, 2008), attempting to conduct local studies that connected scientific and hermeneutic philosophies (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011). The researchers within this department sought to give scientific meaning to cultural practices in the United States. During this period, these researchers were unsatisfied with data collected from surveys and other quantitative measures (Gobo, 2008) and in response developed the concept of studying culture locally within the United States (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011). The exploration of cultural practices in the urban United States by the University of Chicago and the work of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown have largely influenced ethnography as a methodology. This historical background of ethnography allows current researchers to explore shared meanings within a culture.

Cultural anthropology provides the philosophical underpinnings of ethnography. From the

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

cultural anthropological perspective, ethnographers are immersed within a culture while upholding boundaries. The naturalistic approach encourages researchers to immerse themselves fully within the culture (Katz, 1997). When using this approach, the researcher would practice all aspects of the culture being studied. This approach does not separate the researcher's experiences into fieldwork; rather, the researcher lives entirely within the culture being studied. Cultural anthropologists were naturalistic in their approach to gain a full understanding of the workings of specific cultures (Fetterman, 1998).

Ethnography as a methodology is also heavily rooted in classical anthropology. Classical anthropology stems from a neutral/objective researcher perspective. Malinowski suggested that an ethnographer's goal is to understand the indigenous point of view (Tedlock, 2000). This perspective encourages researchers to invest in the studied culture while maintaining a neutral stance: "In these roles ethnographers are expected to maintain polite distance from those studied and to cultivate rapport, not friendship; compassion, not sympathy; respect, not belief; understanding, not identification; admiration, not love" (Tedlock, 2000, p.457). This process allows the researcher to examine the culture fully, without becoming a full member.

Ethnography is also influenced by the concept of symbolic interactionism. Developed by the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago in the 1920s, symbolic interactionism examines how people react to experiences based on meaning derived from social interaction (Rock, 2001). Ethnographers are continually interested in the meaning of social interaction. As ethnographers examine shared patterns of behaviour within groups, studying interactions is vital, with an importance given to observing language and power dynamics within the culture, and the researcher seeking to understand the motive and power that drives social action (Rock, 2001).

To summarize, there are many philosophical underpinnings that influence ethnography as a methodology. Specifically, the naturalist approach, the neutral/objective perspectives, and symbolic interactionism have largely informed ethnography as a methodology. As the concept of ethnography has

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

evolved, these foundations have shifted. The concepts of a neutral researcher and the naturalistic approach have blended to create a methodology that allows the researchers to observe, but still offer personal understanding. Next, feminist ethnography will be explored as the methodology for the current study.

3.3 Feminist ethnography

Feminist ethnography is defined as a methodology that is committed to capturing the lived experience as it is impacted by race, gender, class, sexuality, and all other aspects of participants' lives (Craven & Davis, 2013). The decision to apply a feminist ethnographic lens to the research study derived from my worldview and research questions. As stated in Chapter One, my worldview is situated in a feminist approach. Feminist ethnography was developed on the principle that the majority of the knowledge produced has been produced by men (Gobo, 2008). Therefore, the need for a methodology that is produced by and for women was required. Various feminist authors have argued that ethnography was created by men and therefore, the research produced was not neutral and was instead biased from the particular mentality of the male (Gobo, 2008). There are multiple debates within the feminist literature around the necessity of feminist ethnography. There have been speculations that feminist ethnography tends to explore the lived experience of privileged, Caucasian women, while discriminating against the voices of underrepresented women (Craven & Davis, 2013). Regardless of the debate within the literature, feminist ethnography continues to generate knowledge that explores and reveals the multiple forms of oppression and marginalization that create systems of structural inequalities (Craven & Davis, 2013).

Comparing traditional ethnography and the feminist ethnography, there are two main differences: the research topic and methodological underpinnings (Gobo, 2008). Research topics informed by feminist ethnography deal with sexual violence, discrimination against women in the workplace, expectations of childbearing, and women's sexuality (Gobo, 2008). The exploration of this study in

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

particular fits within feminist ethnography, as the aim is to gain an understanding of sexuality that is informed by particular social and structural systems.

Subsequently, Gobo (2008) offers guiding methodological principles for creating a feminist ethnography. They are as follows:

- “Pay closer attention to the process of action, its doing in time and space, rather than adopting a structuralist view of social activities;
- Listen to participants and let them talk using active listening techniques; give emancipatory intent to research, which should aim at the conscientization of women so that they become of their inequality and empower them to free themselves from oppressive social constraints;
- Hence, research must have a political impact and not be merely descriptive, in the sense that it must aid understanding of how and why women are oppressed and the solutions that are possible;
- Produce research that will alleviate oppression, promote equal opportunities in corporations, correct both invisibility and distortion of female experiences in ways relevant to ending women's unequal power and social positions;
- Access the experiences of participants, grasping the more subjective, emotional and irrational aspects of their lives;
- Give voice to marginalized groups, adopting a multi-voice approach which lets those who are usually silenced speak out;
- Pay closer attention to reflexivity, to the ways in which researchers construct their data by unconsciously imbuing them with their prejudices and stereotypes;
- Adopt different research ethics based on reciprocity, honest accountability, responsibility, equality, etc., in order to treat participants of ethnography with respect;

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

- Be more caring towards the research participants and acknowledge that the emotional content of women's lives is an integral part of the research agenda, because the aim is to engage in dialogue with the participants, instead of treating them simply or structurally as the sources of data;
- Put the observed and the observer on the same footing so that the power relation usually exploited by the latter is reduced or even eliminated: to do this the researcher may for example devote time to sharing her experiences and opinions with participants;
- Relinquish control over the research, in the sense that the observed should have some control over the data, be able to express themselves, and if need be, contest the descriptions and explanations offered by the ethnographer;
- Pay closer attention to the narratives of the ethnographic text, to the politics of representation, and how ethnographic texts construct reality" (p. 58).

These are the guiding principles that informed the current research study. While some may be more appropriate than others, all of these methodological principles were reviewed and considered throughout the current study. In particular, these methodological principles are what differ between feminist ethnography and traditional ethnography. The practice of feminist ethnography for this research study produced a unique lens that encouraged both myself and participants to be aware of the oppression women face in this particular context of university culture.

3.4 Fit within social work

The choice of methodology fits well within the research question, my worldview, and subsequently within the realm of social work research. In addition, qualitative research fits within social work practice as both try to understand the meaning of structural or individual problems (Creswell, 2017; Howe, 2009). In addition, both qualitative research and social work practice try to gain an understanding of complex human experiences and how difficulties and issues can be addressed (Creswell, 2017; Howe, 2009).

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Ethnography as a methodology fits within social work practice as social work aims to understand how structural forces oppress marginalized groups. In addition, social work practice and ethnography aim to understand the multiple systems individuals interact with, specifically families (culture), institutions, and policy (Miley, O'Melia, & Dubois, 2009). Exploring the parallels between ethnography and social work practices provides context for choosing an ethnographic approach as a social work researcher.

Lastly, social work and feminist ethnography aim to give voices to populations who may struggle to speak out about their experiences. In addition, social work and feminist ethnography aim to create opportunities for political and social change. While the approach to change may be different in each realm, the goal is similar. Lastly, both feminist ethnography and social work practice adhere to anti-oppressive practices (McNamara, 2009).

3.5 Methods

The next section will explore methods used in ethnography. A brief overview of ethnographic methods will be provided, data collection will be explored as it relates to fieldwork, participant observation, and field notes, and ethnographic interview and ethnographic data analysis will be discussed.

As Creswell (2007) states, "there is no single way to conduct the research in an ethnography" (p.70). Ethnography as a methodology provides an opening for exploring different forms of data collection and analysis. While ethnography has been largely categorized by fieldwork and participant observation, this does not rule out other forms of data collection (Gobo, 2008).

The researcher is used as the tool for collecting data, as ethnographers rely on qualitative data. The researcher as an instrument has the potential for unique researcher characteristics to influence the data collection process (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). To guide interpretations and credibility of the research, ethnographers employ specific techniques and procedures such as reflexivity and

memoranda (Fetterman, 1998). Reflexivity refers to the researchers' construction and contextual understanding of the researcher and how this influences the research process (Gobo, 2008). Memoranda are informal notes taken by the researcher in order to capture ideas about the data (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011).

Ethnography generally adheres to an open-ended exploration (Fetterman, 1998). One of the initial steps when designing a study is to identify the research problem and provide an outline for the study. The research question often guides the interpretation of the data and how the ethnographer subsequently creates themes. Unique to ethnography, data collection and analysis often occur simultaneously (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The process of simultaneous data collection and analysis is to ensure the researcher is immersed in the data and the culture (Gobo, 2008).

3.5.1 Fieldwork.

Fieldwork is most often considered to be the prominent form of data collection in ethnography. Fieldwork is categorized as going to a research site and collecting a wide variety of material such as documents, interviews, and artefacts (Creswell, 2007). The goal of fieldwork is to understand the complexity of a cultural sharing group in order to produce a rich description of the culture (Fetterman, 1998). Through the use of gathering materials, conducting interviews, and observation, the researcher is able to produce a rich, thick description of the culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2007).

3.5.1.1 Participant observation

Participant observation is another practice of fieldwork. Participant observation embodies most ethnographic research and may be critical to conducting effective fieldwork (Fetterman, 1998). The importance of participant observation stems from its ability to immerse the researcher into the culture (Fetterman, 1998). However, participant observation as a data collection method is not always encouraged (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The process of long periods of observation coupled with

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

transcribing and producing field-notes while maintaining reflexivity can become unmanageable (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

3.5.1.2 Field notes.

Another key component of fieldwork is field notes. Field notes are typically written during or immediately after an interview or observation (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011). Field notes are key to understanding social situations and facilitate the creation of descriptive observations. The use of field notes facilitates the creation of etic knowledge as they can be used to “describe the researcher’s reflections on what is seen, heard, and how their presence may be affecting the data collection” (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011, p. 184).

3.5.1.3 The ethnographic interview.

Participant observation may be fundamental to ethnographic research. However, due to time constraints and feasibility, ethnographic interviews are also common forms of data collection in ethnographic research. Fetterman (1998) states that ethnographic interviews are often the most important type of data collection in ethnography as they can accurately capture the meaning of beliefs, values, and behaviours within cultures. Ethnographic interviews are flexible as they can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (Fetterman, 1998). However, in ethnography the most common type of interview is unstructured or takes the form of a casual conversation (Fetterman, 1998). Feminist ethnographers view interviews as an exchange where both parties shape the conversation (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001). The facilitation of creating the discussion together in feminist ethnographies creates a construction of meaning throughout the data (Atkinson et al., 2001).

An interview in ethnographic research often begins with a grand tour question. The grand tour question provides participants with the opportunity to give a verbal tour of something they know well (Leech, 2002). The types of questions commonly used in ethnographic research are descriptive, structural, and contrasting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Another common type of question asked in

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

ethnographies is attribute questions. Attribute questions seek to explore the differences between structural categories (Fetterman, 1998). Attribute questions allow for the exploration of patterns within the culture compared to those outside of the culture.

Another key component of the ethnographic interview is to ensure respect for the participant. In ethnography, the researcher takes the opportunity to learn from the interviewee, rather than criticize or judge his or her cultural practices (Fetterman, 1998). Being non-judgemental in the interview allows for the researcher to understand the unique meaning and representation of the culture.

Overall, the ethnographic interview is essential for capturing experiences and providing context to better understand a cultural group. The non-judgemental, open-ended approach of ethnographic interviews provides an opportunity to explore the unique facets of both participants and their shared culture.

3.5.2 Data analysis

In ethnographic studies, there is no general formula or technique for data analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Data analysis in ethnography is about exploring and producing a rich and thick description of the culture. In contrast to other qualitative methodologies, ethnography is not directed towards providing a theory (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Fetterman (1998) states that ethnographic analysis is iterative, constructing ideas throughout the entire study. During the data analysis process, it is key to become immersed in the data (Patton, 2015). Reviewing, reflecting, and journaling about the interviews numerous times before beginning analysis is essential (Fetterman, 1998).

3.5.3 Summary of methods

Exploring what is encapsulated in ethnographic data collection and analysis methods can provide an idea of what ethnography may look like. While not all traditional ethnographic methods of data collection were used in the current study, the next section highlights what methods were used in order to provide a rich description of this particular culture.

3.6 Current study

The next section involves a discussion of the methods used in the current study. The current study was guided by both traditional ethnographic and feminist ethnographic methodological assumptions. This section begins with a discussion of the sample of the current study. Then, the methods of data collection will be discussed. Subsequently the process of data analysis will be explored. Lastly, an overview of the trustworthiness of the study and ethics will be discussed.

3.6.1 Sample

The target population for the study was female university students, aged 18-30 who were currently studying at the University of Calgary. The criteria for the study was as follows:

- Be enrolled in a full-time university program at the University of Calgary
- Identify as female
- Be between 18-30 years old
- Have completed at least one year of full-time university prior to participation in the study
- Comfortable discussing sexuality
- Can speak to university culture

Participants needed to identify as female. The current study was not interested in the biological sex of participants. It is crucial to specify that gender is important, as it is the gendered constructions and experiences of females that were explored. Female university students are increasingly viewed as sexually vulnerable compared to males, which highlights their demographic importance (Armstrong, Hamilton & Sweeney, 2006).

Full-time enrolment was a requirement for the study due to differences in student experiences of full time and part-time students. In Canada, students enrolled in part time studies are more likely to hold full-time employment and have increased responsibilities in their homes (Tight, 1991). The commitment to work and home life that part-time students have may influence their ability to immerse themselves in

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

the cultural activities of university. Prior to participation in the study, participants must have attended one academic year of university. Having experienced a whole year immersed in the sub-culture prior to participating in the study was necessary as participants may have more insight regarding the beliefs, values, and experiences of university sub-culture.

Participants had to fall within the age range of 18-30 years. Participants had to be over the age of eighteen so they have had the opportunity to engage in all cultural activities of university such as bars, clubs, pubs, and concerts. The large, inclusive age range is due in part to shifting from standardized adulthood. In Canada, young adults are experiencing variation in the traditional sequence of young adulthood (Molgat, 2007). In addition, the shifting ideologies and social expectations have influenced young adults to prolong engaging in marriage and parenthood (Molgat, 2007). Therefore, creating a wide age range for the current research study facilitated the inclusion of participants who may be older but who are experiencing and engaging in university sub-culture.

In addition, it was required that participants be comfortable discussing multiple facets of their sexuality including: gender roles, defining sexuality, consent, and sexual expectations of self. A pre-screening in the form of a phone call was used to determine if participants were comfortable discussing sexuality. This was key to ensure participants would be comfortable discussing their sexuality during the interview. Participants were also required to be able to speak to the cultural practices of university bars and clubs. This was essential to ensure participants could comment on multiple facets of university cultural behaviours.

Convenience sampling was used to promote the study in areas where female university students intermingle. This method of convenience sampling is affordable and allows participants to be recruited where they are readily accessible (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2009). Convenience sampling has been criticized for producing research with low credibility rates (Patton, 2002). However, for the current study, convenience sampling was beneficial as the population being explored is heavily and readily

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

available in the areas recruited. The use of the criteria aided in choosing participants who could contribute knowledge to the research questions. In total, eleven participants were interviewed.

3.6.2 Data collection

The current research study diverged from traditional ethnographic data collection methods. Ethnographic research typically occurs in the field where participants live and work (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011). As a member of the culture, I was familiar with beliefs, values, and shared patterns of behaviour. I used reflexive processes such as journaling to reflect on her beliefs while trying to limit the influence of bias. The cultural immersion and familiarity with the culture of female university students provided justification for not using participant observation as a data collection method in this study.

3.6.3 Ethnographic interviews

The primary data collection method for this research study was rich, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide a guide for the interviewer to explore, probe, and ask questions that clarify the content being explored (Patton, 2002). For a novice researcher, the semi-structured approach provided a guide to the interview but allowed the freedom and movement of natural conversation. This form of interview guide created a structure for the interview but encouraged the natural flow of conversations. Some examples of questions were: What does your sexuality mean to you?; Do you think there are specific relationship roles for each gender?; How do you make your decisions on acceptable vs. unacceptable sexual behaviours?; What does consent mean to you?; and What do you think about the behaviours that occur in university bars and clubs? The interview guide used in the study is included in Appendix A.

Each in-person interview ranged in length from between one to two hours. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants' written and verbal consent was received prior to recording the interview. After each interview, extensive field notes were taken to ensure researchers' reflections were captured.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

3.6.4 Procedure

Female university students were recruited from the University of Calgary. The method of recruitment was primarily posters, which were displayed across the university in areas such as Starbucks, MacEwan Hall, the fitness centre, multiple faculty buildings, and the library. The recruitment poster asked interested individuals to contact myself via email. During this time, I answered any inquiries or questions about the research and screened interested individuals to ensure they met the criteria for participation. During the screening process, it was made clear to potential participants both through the consent form and oral conversation that participation in the study was completely voluntary.

Female university students who agreed to participate were interviewed in person. In-person interviews were conducted in a private space at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. I transcribed all the data with the goal of immersing herself in the data. All potential identifying information was removed during the transcription and analysis process.

3.6.5 Data analysis

During the data analysis process, field notes were used to reflect on the interviews and to challenge any assumptions or biases. Memoranda or memos were used during the analysis when I had a specific thought or reflection about the data. An example of a memo that was written during the analysis process was, "I wonder what the internalization process looks like when participants express limited ability to communicate sexual desires." The aim of including all data in ethnographic studies is to ensure a thick description can be produced. The process of including all data allows for both etic and emic knowledge to appear. The knowledge of both etic and emic perspectives facilitated the understanding of the workings of the cultural group (Gobo, 2008).

Attention was paid to both ethnographic and feminist ethnographic underpinnings. As described earlier, specific feminist methodological underpinnings informed the data analysis process. Specific

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

attention was paid to the findings of emotional, subjective experiences, looking for areas of potential political impact, and paying attention to how each participant constructed reality (Gobo, 2008).

For novice researchers, conceptual frameworks and research questions are recommended as a guide for beginning the coding process (Jane & Liz, 2002). This process was used, followed by developing a list of codes based on research questions, literature, and reflections from the interview and transcription process. I used electronic coding for the current study. The initial codes provided assistance when creating potential themes related to the research questions. Throughout the data analysis process, codes were combined, revised, or deleted. Subsequently, codes were linked to larger themes and categories.

Overall, the ethnographic analysis involved creating interpretations of the cultural sharing group in order to produce a rich, thick description (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Strategies were employed to ensure data analysis was trustworthy. Throughout the next section, the rigor and trustworthiness will be discussed.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Throughout this section, trustworthiness and how it was assessed throughout the study is discussed. To assess trustworthiness of the data, Patton (2015) outlines how it is key to examine how the study exemplifies credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.7.1 Credibility

Assessing credibility ensures that the probability of credible outcomes will be constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To ensure credibility, reflexive practices such as journaling and communication with a supervisor were conducted throughout the current study. The process of journaling encouraged reflection on biases and how biases influenced the research process. I would journal in general about her experiences with the data and reflect on how her biases were influencing the data. I journaled throughout both data collection and analysis. In addition, the process of journaling ensured self-awareness. The

practice of communicating with the supervisor confirmed that the interpretations and methods of the study were sound.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability to provide the reader with enough information to understand how the data relates to similar research (Patton, 2015). It is also relevant to examine the similarity between each data set to ensure transferability (2015). Throughout the study, results were verified through triangulation of participants. In ethnography, it is key to compare and contrast participant experiences in order to build upon future themes. During the data analysis, results from each individual interview were triangulated with other interviews to look for common beliefs, values, and shared patterns of behaviour among all participants.

3.7.3 Dependability

The process of dependability only occurs once credibility of the study is established (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011). The question of dependability seeks to understand how dependable results were produced (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011). Throughout the study there were two separate practices engaged to ensure dependability. Throughout the entire research process, a reflective diary was kept. This ensured the reflection of how thoughts and biases influenced the study. The other practice that ensured dependability is the function of the supervisor as an outside reviewer. This improves the interpretations of the research process to try and establish a rigorous and comprehensive analysis.

3.7.4 Confirmability

The way a researcher ensures confirmability is by documenting all findings and leaving an audit trail (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011). To ensure the study meets specific criterion, all forms of data collection were documented including interviews, transcripts, field notes, journals, and memoranda. The process of including all documents demonstrates how findings were developed from the study

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

(Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2011). Through the cohesive documentation of all forms of data, the study meets the criterion of confirmability.

Specific to ethnography, it is essential to note how a rich, thick description is produced from the data. In this study, a rich, thick description was produced by using direct quotes from participants that conveyed detailed descriptions of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and values in relation to the research questions. Producing a rich, thick description of experiences of the cultural group can provide outsiders with a contextual understanding of the culture. Providing a rich, thick description of the results aids in creating trustworthiness.

3.8 Ethics

Ethical considerations are key to any study that involves human participants. It is subsequently crucial to explore the risks/benefits analysis of participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interview. The consent form is attached in Appendix: B. During the screening process, participants were given a verbal overview of the consent form. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to read and sign the consent form. All participants were given a copy of the consent form for their own records. It was made clear during the screening process and prior to the interview that the study was voluntary.

All data that was collected was anonymous and confidential. All transcripts had all identifying factors removed during the transcription process. Electronic data was stored on my personal, password-protected computer. All hard copies of the data (transcripts, memoranda, and journals) were stored in a locked desk in my home. Once the analysis was completed, all hard copies of the data were shredded. Electronic data will be stored for five years on a hard drive or USB at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. After five years, all the electronic data will be erased.

There were minimal risks associated with participating in this study. Participants may have experienced limited feelings of distress when talking about their beliefs and attitudes around sexuality.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Specifically, participants may have felt uncomfortable or unsure if their beliefs or values were what I was looking for. If participants experienced distress, contact information for several relevant counselling agencies were included on the consent form. It was also made clear to participants that if certain questions made them uncomfortable, they did not have to answer. The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board approved this research study.

3.9 Limitations

As with any qualitative methodology, ethnography has limitations. Traditionally, ethnography involves extensive data collection, which results in a lengthy amount of time spent in the field (Creswell, 2007). The extended time spent in the field can be costly for the researcher (Creswell, 2007). The practice of observation may have been helpful in providing an additional in-depth understanding of the culture and multiple research questions. However, observation was not used due to time and resource constraints.

A specific limitation to the selection of ethnography is that traditionally, ethnography involves multiple forms of data collection (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The use of observation and extensive field notes may have created a better understanding of the practices of the culture. However, both emic and etic data were captured through the interviews, memoranda, and field notes.

Implementing a quantitative measure would have been beneficial to the study. A quantitative method such as a survey could reach a larger population of female university students. However, despite the benefits of using quantitative methods to supplement the data, the nature of using a mixed-methods approach would have created a significantly larger workload for the study.

In terms of the sample of the study, there were several limitations. Firstly, the majority of participants (7) identified as Caucasian, which leaves out the voices of other ethnicities. In addition, most participants (6) were in committed relationships. It would have been interesting to have more participants identify as single to further explore the hook-up culture. Lastly, it would have been

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

interesting to be able to capture the experiences of male university students regarding beliefs and attitudes around sexuality. However, due to time constraints and my experience as a novice researcher, males were not able to be included in the study.

CHAPTER 4: Results

The findings presented in this chapter reflect the key themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis of individual interviews with eleven female university students attending the University of Calgary. All quotes presented in the chapter are from individual participant interviews. A total of eleven women participated in the study ranging from 19-28 years old. Seven of the participants identified as Caucasian, three as Asian and one as African Canadian. The majority of participants (n=6) identified as being in a committed relationship while the rest identified as single (n=5). The majority of participants (n=6) were in their 4th year of academic studies, while the remaining five were either in their 2nd year or had been in university for five or more years. Participants ranged from a wide variety of academic programs, with the majority coming from Kinesiology, Social Work, and Health Sciences. While sexual orientation was not asked of participants, all but one participants explicitly identified as heterosexual. The remaining participant did not identify her sexual orientation but discussed past sexual relationships with women.

Chapter four is organized by research question that informed the study. First, defining features of university culture are presented from participant interviews. Then, how participants defined sexuality and the origins of their decision making regarding personal definitions. After defining sexuality, themes of gender roles and sexual relationships will be explored. Specifically, how participants understood traditional gender roles and what this may look like in relationships. In addition, participants' beliefs and attitudes regarding sexual relationships will be discussed. After discussing sexual relationships, themes regarding consent will be presented, specifically beliefs regarding the communication and role of consent in sexual relationships. Lastly, rape myths and other stereotypical relationships will be provided from the perspective of participants.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN’S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

4.1 Demographic table

Participant demographics (n=11)

Age in years	Ethnicity	Relationship status	Academic year	Academic program
19-20 (5)	Caucasian (7)	Committed relationship (6)	2 nd (3)	Kinesiology (2)
21-23 (4)	Asian (3)	Single (5)	4 th (6)	Social Work (2)
24-26 (1)	African Canadian (1)		5+ (2)	Engineering (1)
27-28 (1)				Health Sciences (2)
				Sociology (1)
				Nursing (1)
				Management (1)
				Graduate Studies (1)

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

4.2 University culture

Participants were asked what categorizes the cultural experiences of university. The questions about university culture were very broad and resulted in multiple facets of participants' views and beliefs. The following themes were discussed in relation to university culture: the freedom to experiment, the pressure to hook-up, university as a community that educates about sexuality, the unsafe environment of university, university is a party, and the goings-on of bars and clubs.

4.2.1 Freedom to experiment

Experimentation was a concept discussed by half of the participants. Four participants cited that experimenting both sexually and through alcohol was a key behavior that characterizes university experiences. Two participants cited how university exemplifies freedom from both parents and discipline.

I think freedom; I think that they are not constantly watched by their parents or they don't have teachers or principles to discipline your behaviour. I think people are trying to exercise their freedom and they have to learn for themselves and if they don't like it then they have to learn the hard way.

I think for a lot of people it is a big transition from home to something totally new and a lot of people move away to go to school and it is freedom so they just take advantage of that and go into an experimental phase.

Another participant directly cited how university is a time to experiment with yourself due to meeting new people and the expectation of engaging in new activities. In addition, the participant also discussed how it is an expectation, due to the larger population engaging in experimental activities.

I think because everyone does it (experiment) and I think people think university is a time to experiment and a time to meet all the other fish in the bowl and I think it is an experience.

Lastly, a participant explicitly stated how university is an open environment that often encourages experimentation and exploration of your sexual self.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

I think part of it, would be that it is expected that you are exploring your sexual self, it is more accepted. I think it is much more open environment, that kind of thing (experimentation) is almost encouraged.

The above quotations from participants demonstrate how university culture is portrayed as a time where freedom and experimentation is highly regarded. Whether freedom to experiment is relating to sexuality, or general involvement in partying, it is a shared behavior that participants believe is key to university culture. Furthermore, participants captured the cultural sharing behaviours of experimentation and how this overarching behaviour influenced their own understanding of cultural norms.

4.2.2 University is a party

All participants spoke of how partying and consuming large amounts of alcohol largely categorizes university culture. Some participants spoke of how engaging in partying is often more important than academic commitments. Additionally, those participants cited that to engage in the university experience, partying is a must. Other participants cited that the university often encourages and promotes partying and consuming large amounts of alcohol. Lastly, participants spoke of how partying and consuming large amounts of alcohol is a normalized experience during university and is often stereotyped as the largest defining factor of university.

Three participants discussed how partying can often take precedent for academic commitments. The participants' quotes below represent this belief, however both discussed the experiences of men and how they often come to university to be social and to find women to have sex with. Participants exemplified frustration regarding the behaviour that some men come to university solely for seeking women for sexual interaction.

I knew a guy, he changed his major because he wanted to have that university experience, living with a bunch of guys in a house, joining sports team, having house parties, being more social.

I think that is part of the university experience, I know that is bad to say but most people go to university to have freedom and drink lots, have fun and then I know someone who go to the

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

bar, just to hope to meet up with someone. Especially guys, I know guys who will go just for the women pool.

Three participants discussed how the university often promotes events that involve partying and consuming alcohol. In addition, while discussing the partying context, the participants also highlighted how hook-ups are a common behaviour during the activity of partying.

They definitely promote it to, all the clubs in all, even faculties will have social nights, wing nights or let's go to the den and dress up in togas and drink our faces off and hopefully we will hook-up with somebody.

Yeah well that is what BSD is. Yeah it is an excuse to drink but I think definitely when people are drinking, they feel more open to exercise their sexuality because they have less inhibition to.

Lastly, six participants discussed that partying while in university has been normalized and expected. Participants also cite that there is a cultural expectation to engage in partying as university is largely categorized as a time to be free and relinquish major responsibilities. Similarly to the previous theme, hooking-up is a normative practice when engaging in partying.

Yeah informed from peers and I mean on university there is a piece of it that is sort of you know, drink, party go to the bars and you know. I was that person who would go dancing and drinking and make out with guys and girls and whoever and you aren't really thinking, maybe it is just normalized, there is a pressure for some people to be or act a certain way. Especially at university, it is a time to explore.

I think it is some cultural expectations that people have it in their head that it is what you do at college and university. It is the best time of your life, go out and do stupid things and I think also just kind of they think that some of those people might think that people have to do it to be accepted. That people will think I don't know, if you go out with lots of people you are cool.

My friends who I have here on university campus, the one thing that I hear a lot about on campus is how drunk people got and what they did at parties, so at the den or at the lounge or at a concert here and who they hooked up with and they were primarily under the influence.

I think there is a lot of expectation in university culture to be wild. I think a lot of people when they first get accepted to university they are like oh all the boys and girls and all of the parties, that excitement and fun time where you can explore and experiment. I think here at the U of C the sexual life, I think it happens more so at the bars on Thursday and stuff like that. I think that is well known here and pretty much what we talked about is that there isn't a lot of awareness.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

I think it is people wanting to feel young and young adults' kind of thing. Wanting to not feel like an old, trying to get out partying before you become a professional sort of thing. I think it is people just wanting to be young while they are.

Overall, participants cite that partying and consuming large amounts of alcohol is a normalized experience of university. Participants discussed how many university students engage in partying in order to feel like an adult, while limiting responsibility outside of their student role. They also cited that there is an expectation to be wild and experiment in terms of sexuality and alcohol, which they deemed unacceptable outside of university culture. Lastly, they cited how it was essential to get the partying out of your system before entering the professional workforce.

4.2.3 The pressure to hook-up

Related to freedom to experiment, more than half of participants discussed how university culture perpetuates the pressure to engage in the hook-up culture. Hook-ups are defined as a single casual encounter, sometimes involving sexual intercourse with no expectation of commitment (Flack, Jr. et al., 2007). Some participants discussed the expectation of hook-ups while attending university and how it is a normative experience of the culture. Other participants explicitly stated they felt they were missing out on university culture because they did not participate in hook-ups. Three participants directly cited the expectation to engage in the hook-up culture during university. In addition, participants explored the lack of judgemental attitudes towards hook-ups and how the atmosphere of university culture produces a climate where hook-ups are normalized. Lastly, participants also stated the hook-up as a form of connection as university can be an isolating experience.

I think, no not really, I don't think people would be judged too much, I think it (hook-ups) is almost expected in university that it happens, so that is cool. I think so.

As far as sexual encounters or sexuality go, so many people are around, it is almost to convenient, it is kind of disgusting how convenient that is, it is just a bunch of new people who don't know anyone and there is that. I think honestly that is also where I met a lot of the good people who helped you sort through the good and bad times where you might be ok with your sexuality and times where you might not be.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

College is supposed to be crazy and lots of hooking up and this is where you try new things like maybe going to the opposite, going to the same sex if you were interested in the opposite sex or maybe the other way around and always trying out those things and partying, so those were all of the expectations that I have had.

Contrasting, two participants who were in committed relationships discussed how they felt pressured to engage in the hook-up culture and thought they might be missing out due to their relationship status.

Then I got into a relationship just as I started university and I wondered if I am missing out on that part of university life, it was just ingrained in me, kind of part of what it was about.

Yeah I think there is, a lot of people do that and I definitely don't want to do that because my boyfriend wouldn't be happy but there is pressure to do that. I have often thought I am missing out on that kind of partying and being in a relationship. Like would it be more fun to be able to go out and do that thing. I think in the end it is not worth it to do that, I think it is better to be in a relationship.

Interestingly, the three participants that discussed the normative expectation to hook-up identified as single, while the other two participants who felt they were missing out were in committed relationships. However, regardless of relationship status, participants stated that the pressure to hook-up is largely categorized in university culture. The normative practice is embedded in the culture extensively as participants who were not able to engage in hooking up often feel they are missing out on a key university experience. Lastly, the hook-up is also normalized through the human condition of wanting to connect with another person in an isolating experience, such as university.

4.2.4 It's not safe for women

Another defining characteristic of university culture discussed by participants is that being on university campus is not safe for women. Participants discussed how they have to remain cautious, how they expect to be verbally or physically assaulted, how women are often taken advantage of, and the general fear created by being on campus. All but one participant cited their feelings around safety on campus.

I have a night class and when it breaks out if there are a lot of people walking and close to me I feel ok. I have heard stories about some people on campus being attacked and I heard

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

there was a rape case by the C train and then a girl who almost got raped in residence by just some random again. You get those alerts on your phone about guys talking to you, harassing you and won't leave you alone, I think you should be cautious, I am cautious. I haven't been so much to call safe walk but yeah I definitely am aware of my surroundings at night.

I definitely don't feel safe at night and that is maybe my weird paranoia I know that is from informed from you know girl has got to protect yourself, carry your keys, I know they have safe walk programs, mount royal and u of c and security will you know send out emails once in awhile and about how you have to watch out for this guy on campus which means like come on, it instils that fear in you and I mean even and I haven't called the safe walk programs because I am like well it is probably going to be a guy that escorts me to my car, that isn't going to make me feel comfortable and it could be a girl, that could still make me feel uncomfortable.

I think that being here at night, I don't feel to safe, I get worried, I know it doesn't happen to often where there is harassment or an assault around here to much, it is relatively safe. I try not to be out late at night.

Overall, participants cited their fear of being on university campus, specifically at night. They discussed how they avoid being on campus at night and take specific measures to ensure their safety. In addition, participants cited how they perceive the Safe Walk program as ineffective, in part due to the lack of awareness about the services. Participants also found the emails sent out by campus security when there are incidents of sexual assault to be fear provoking on campus. While the information regarding sexual assaults is necessary, it could be interesting to explore a different method of information sharing that does not invoke fear.

4.3 Bars and Clubs

Within the description of university culture, participants also spoke of one particular activity that largely categorizes university experiences. Participants spoke of some of the activities, beliefs, values, and behaviours that are typical when frequenting a bar or club. The following sub-themes are what participants discussed regarding the cultural experiences of attending a bar or club frequented by university students.

4.3.1 Being groped is not a compliment

Four participants discussed how being groped, usually by the opposite sex was deemed an acceptable behaviour in the context of a bar or club. Participants discussed the expectation of being

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

groped when frequenting a bar. Other participants cited this behaviour as acceptable due to the close quarters when dancing in a bar or club. Other participants talked about how they believe women are groped because men believe women go to bars to find sex.

I think when you are younger and finding yourself yeah and then you think of all of these things. Yeah it's not ok, it is a poor sense of a compliment (being groped) that some people might like but I think no, it's not a compliment.

They (men) want to get laid, yeah or make out with you or whatever just talk to you but yeah when you are at a club and you are dancing and when someone rubs their pelvis against you, that isn't very flattering, you aren't going to get my number that way.

Yeah I think there is an unwritten rule, because if there weren't than there would be more security people saying that you can't do this and standing there guarding other people then drunk people wouldn't feel so compelled to act aggressively.

I think it is accepted, I don't particularly enjoy people getting super close just because there are some pretty greasy people out there. When people are drunk and all packed together and people randomly making out, I don't people look at that and think like oh what are they doing, I think they look at that and they are like oh yeah that is normal.

Overall, participants spoke of how being groped and pushing boundaries is not a compliment, however it is deemed as an acceptable behaviour within the bar and club atmosphere. They also discussed how being groped is often a method men employ to try and begin a sexual relationship.

4.3.2 Feeling afraid is normal

Four participants also discussed how feeling afraid is normal when frequenting a bar or club. Some participants discussed how they had to be hyper aware in bars and clubs to avoid being assaulted. Others talked about how they were afraid of being touched and groped by strangers. Other participants spoke to the specific vulnerabilities of being a woman in a bar and related it to the belief that males are entitled to women's bodies. Participants also spoke to feeling universally afraid of being drugged in a bar.

Yeah, not completely, but I am hyper aware on a dance floor and there is too many males around me that I don't know, I am out of there really quick and I don't know even where those reactions come from but they are, somehow it is ingrained in me that you need to be hyper aware in those places and situations because of the culture right. It creates it into a harder space to be in because you have to be aware all of the time which I don't think is fair that if you just want to

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

have a drink with your friends that you should need to be like concerned about your boundaries and your safety right.

It does feel like both your taught as a female that you are more vulnerable and you are more vulnerable in some situations, that is where the unfairness comes from to, when males somehow feel entitled.

Yeah, I usually say yes because free alcohol is always better than alcohol you have to pay for but I also feel worried doing it, I always, even when I am drunk I always make sure I am watching them pour it because I am worried about being drugged. It's not even being ruffed anymore, there is stuff like the fentanyl thing and that is going around.

4.3.3 Women go to bars for sex

Lastly, three participants spoke to certain beliefs about women who frequent bars and clubs.

Participants discussed how it is believed that if a woman goes out to a bar, she is looking for sex. There is an expectation that women are looking for attention and sex and that is the only reason for frequenting a bar. Participants spoke of how this creates issues because it provides men the opportunity to be aggressive when pursuing women in a bar. Participants also cited that this is a reason they do not go to bars or clubs often because they do not want to be harassed or expected to engage in sexual activity with strangers.

I think that it is the same kind of thing where it is this expectation that if you are going out to the bar that you are looking for that kind of attention or you are looking for a hook-up or whatever and that might not be the case so I think it is, I don't know kind of difficult when that is not the case and when you don't want that kind of attention.

I think it is just the stereotype of going to a club, you are going there to have fun and meet people, again alcohol is a factor, right, so I think a lot of people are inhibited by it. I also think that men, like from a hetero position, I think a lot of men think that they can just go up and grab these women because that is what they want, that is why they came to a bar, that is why they came to the club was to get hit on. Right, instead of approaching them and asking them oh why are you here, oh you are celebrating a friends' birthday, a bridal shower, like whatever it may be, or no you just had a really tough day and are just hear for a drink, like cool. No it is because you dressed up to make yourself feel better, I know you are hot, you just want to bang so you got dressed up.

Participants discussed stereotypical behaviours that go on in bars and clubs frequented by university students. A normative behaviour within the bar and club culture is to be groped and feeling afraid. Regardless that participants believed groping was not an appropriate behaviour, they

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

acknowledged it was acceptable within bars and clubs. Lastly, participants expressed the belief that women solely go to bars to hook-up, which justifies aggression towards them.

4.3.4 Community for education

Participants also discussed how the University of Calgary is a community that discusses and promotes healthy sexuality and sexual relationships. Participants cited that the University of Calgary does a good job promoting awareness around the issues of consent, specifically the influence of drugs and alcohol on consent. Participant also cited multiple spaces within the university that serve as a safe place to have conversations around sex. However, participants also discussed how many services and programs within the university do not effectively address sexual health. Specifically, participants discussed how programs are often not visible which influences their effectiveness.

Four participants spoke directly of how the University of Calgary promotes sexual health and healthy sexuality. Participants cited awareness campaigns, surveys, and programs that promote healthy sexuality.

I think they definitely promote it. I remember last year on BSD they gave out a goodie pack that was full of chocolates and condoms and stuff for people. I think it was for consent actually, it was to raise awareness on consent and had the slogan on it that if she says no or whatever one of those things. I definitely think it was a good idea and you see those posters around campus that say "just because she is asleep doesn't mean she said yes" or something. It is definitely a good way to raise awareness.

There is a real push, I have taken surveys from the university about drugs and alcohol and that kind of stuff. I think there is good awareness and advertising about that but I mean you know, no means no and you know if someone is drinking or under the influence then it is not ok.

They do, I was an orientation leader for two years and so I was able to go to the play called sexy and it isn't just about relationships and sex on campus, it is about what is available on campus and what they have for students who have disabilities and stuff and one of it was counselling for those who have experienced like sexual assault or rape. I thought that was good, there is also safe walk so they do put worth a little bit of effort, but they don't talk about it as much I find.

That's what I was going to say, like the posters in Mac Hall basement, they have this huge billboard and for the longest time there were these consent ads and in the bathrooms when you close the door they have the ads and I always read those when I am sitting on the toilet and on the busses they always have those ads.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Additionally, three participants discussed the spaces available on campus that provide information on sexual health and sexuality concerns. Places cited were the Q centre, the women's centre, the faith centre, and the wellness centre.

I think what I appreciate about being on campus is that there are more spaces for those conversations or I have knowledge that there are spaces where that is happening. When I think of it, I think more about the women's centre and there is lots of feminist talk going on there. To put it broadly I hang out at the faith and spirituality centre and there is definitely stuff there and we have safe spaces for LGBTQ and those conversations are happening and so I think that the university campus becomes a space where there are opportunities to explore those conversations if you want in a broader way in different directions but it gets pretty niche, I don't know, the people who need to hear those messages about consent aren't necessarily the ones who are going to the discussions at the women's centre.

The most place I find it is on boards, it is why I like these centres, the sexuality I don't really know what they are called thing, they will put something up, I don't know if it is every month and when it comes to the consent thing on Halloween they do the sexual consent zombie thing, it is like, if it is a zombie, it is not consenting so like the different stages of zombified, like how drunk is she and they do that and it is really cool. So I keep up with this stuff and last year they had a bunch of people come down to talk about you know sex and sexuality and what it is to them. Those were cool to, so I keep an eye out for that, which is my main resource on campus. They post a lot of things, send us a lot of things, the u of c would send you there is a sex survey, take this survey and something or they will send you like there is a meeting in this talking about this or that kind of stuff.

It is not hidden; it is not the elephant in the room that none of us want to talk about it. There is a big fair and all the clubs come out and stuff like that, we have the same thing, everyone is all out and then of course the health student centre is there and they are talking about it, warning about it, like I said there is free condoms to be had, please use them and I think honestly being in a university environment has made me more aware. I never had any STIs or sexual problems or if I did or had any I didn't know what this is, getting nervous about what this is, I would not hesitate one second to go to my student health centre and I think that is because it is a college campus. These things happen and they are well prepared and they have been out there talking about it. I might not know them personally but I know a doctor is comfortable talking about these things and since it is in the school environment I would readily go. I think the information is out there; it is not uncomfortable to talk about.

Lastly, seven participants stated that the University of Calgary comprises of an environment where it is safe to have conversations about consent, sexual health, sexual orientation and general sexuality topics. They discussed how university is a great environment for learning new perspectives and being open to new ideas around sexuality.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Yes, because you see all these things and people talk here, I didn't know anything about what sex was, or like or anything like that before I came to university. Everything I know now I have learned from other students and from posters.

Being a part of university life, it makes me feel less stuck, like I can make my own decisions because my whole life I have been told this is how you do it but now there are so many different types of people all who are willing to think. People who don't come to university because they don't want to do anything as much as annoying as it is we have to do work; we know that when we come to university we have to do work. So people are willing to think, willing to open their mind, understand new ideas, that I think is really amazing because it allows me to be willing to be open to more ideas and then it's like I am not making my decisions based on anyone else because of being in this place

However, I do find there are a lot of people who are open about homosexuality in some of my classes. I have had social work classes where people are like I am gay and this is what I have to say and then I have had sociology classes where people are like I am gay and this is what I have to say. So in terms of relationship, whether heterosexual or homosexual, I think people are quite open and there is not a lot of people who will stand up to that and say oh no you can't say that in class, teachers or students, when someone announces that they are gay.

Yeah, I think one thing about university is that even when you are in a very conservative environment, university there is so much diversity there, you can't help but be more open to things or you are going to struggle, all day every day. Maybe you don't want to believe in that but if you are going to let every little thing bother you then I don't know. That is one positive thing about having university influences, there is definitely bad influences but there are good influences, it makes you open your mind up if you want to or not.

However, while some participants cited the University of Calgary as a great place for education around sexuality, seven participants spoke of how programs are generally not effective. Participants cited the lack of visibility, lack of promotion, lack of resources, or a general sense of not wanting to talk about so-called controversial topics such as relationships and consent.

I find that they are not educating people, it is just what is available, some people don't even use those facilities, I don't even know anybody who goes to counselling. Um and safe walk I know people are scared to use it, even though it is there for their use. I don't think they do much on educating people.

One thing that I noticed the first year I came here which was last year was that at mount royal there is condoms everywhere, condom bowl here, condom bowl there, in every office, probably like machines in the hallway, anywhere you went, even if you were checking into the gym, like grab a condom. But here, I don't, I walk into the wellness centre and there is not a vase or a fish bowl in sight

So like that kind of thing, I feel the university wasn't as, they didn't want to make a stir and be like that isn't ok. So it is sort of indirectly, they support that, like we should be an

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

inclusive campus but they aren't really like huge on it. I know they had to fight for the inclusive washrooms. They are almost like dragging along with it, they could do way more than they are.

I am not sure, I feel it is not one of their priorities right now, it is very science based in university. It is all science and that is what talked about, what is going on with the engineers this week and all of this stuff, arts and stuff people are like uh art is gross so people aren't really wanting to see that which is really hard to break between arts and science, get them to like connect with each other and have influence on both sides. I feel people are separated, so more than just starting to have seminars, they almost need to break down the barrier a little more, get people more well-rounded, I feel it is very black and white.

While the majority of participants discussed the inclusive, sexuality-positive environment of the University of Calgary, they also addressed several concerns. Participants stated that the university has programs regarding sexuality, however they are not visible which influences their access. Participants discussed how sexuality is not discussed from an academic framework to ensure students are not offended. In addition, participants discussed how the university could do more in terms of sexual health and consent. Lastly, the segregation of values was discussed when specifically exploring the comparison between certain faculties. Specifically, participants cited how conversations regarding sexuality were normalized in specific faculties, but rare in other faculties.

4.4 Defining sexuality

Another question posed to participants was how they defined the term sexuality. This was a key step in the interview, as sexuality is a term that is not consistently defined. For this study sexuality was defined as “experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships” (WAS, 2014, p.1). This broad definition allows for the inclusions of conversations around gender roles, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual relationships, and general sexual beliefs.

4.4.1 Sexual orientation and gender identity

When asked how participants define sexuality, more than half identified sexual orientation and gender identity. Participants spoke of their own sexual orientation and gender identity and their perception of others on university campus. Other participants discussed how their sexual orientation and

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

gender identity was key to their sexual identity. Additionally, participants discussed how their sexual orientation and gender identity dictate their interactions in sexual situations.

I am straight, I don't know I don't really feel like it is that big of deal sort of thing, I feel like it is, that is just my preference.

I guess just how we view ourselves. Just sexuality is how you conduct yourself and there are certain expectations of whether you are female or male or identify as something else.

My first thought and I am not sure if this is from recent media thing about transgender, but that is what I think is sexuality in terms of how you think of yourself, female, male and your uh love interest I guess you would say, if you are into dudes, into girls.

I think like sexuality specifically people are probably referring to sexual orientation or who they are interested in, maybe themselves a little bit, people like to categorize themselves to. Like if someone said what is your sexuality I would be like straight, I think it goes with sexual orientation.

While participants largely discuss their individual identity when regarding how they define sexuality, they also pay attention to media influence and how larger societal expectations influence how they portray and define their sexuality. In addition, participants discussed how there are specific expectations regarding how you act in sexual relationships dependent on your sexuality,

4.4.2 Body image

Less than half of participants spoke of their body image when defining sexuality. One participant spoke of her body image and how this influences her engagement in sexual activities with her partner. Furthermore, participants discussed body image when determining their perceptions of sexuality.

Yeah, I have been influenced a lot more to work out being in Kinesiology and being around that sort of atmosphere. I didn't used to work out that much but being around the gym and everybody is so into fitness it kind of influenced me that way and I feel like, I feel like being a girl, you want to look a certain way and I think that plays into my confidence.

I can definitely say that I have seen things go the other way where all of a sudden you don't think you fit in physically and that makes you feel sexually unattractive and then things just kind of go down from there. I definitely have seen that, I would just say that wasn't the path that I have taken and I am thankful for that.

Overall, participants discuss their inner conception of body image and how it influences their sexuality. However, one participant also cites the influence her specific university program has on how she understands and portrays her own body image.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

4.4.3 Religious influence

Lastly, three participants spoke of religious influences when defining their sexuality. Some spoke of how religious views influence the availability of sexuality conversations. Others talked about how their family's religious beliefs influence their ability to talk about sex and how they conceptualized sexual orientation and relationships.

My parents don't talk about it; they have very religious views when it comes to sex and sexuality. They believe sex is for marriage and it is between a man and a woman so that is how I grew up. That is what I was told to believe, so when I hear sexuality, that is what I think of, this is the stuff and you aren't supposed to talk about it.

I am a little more on the religious side so I do have an identity with my sexuality. I am Catholic, Roman Catholic so I do see sexuality as a gift from god, you shouldn't abuse it but you also shouldn't keep it all to yourself. It is a part of your identity that is what immediately comes to my mind.

Participants cite their individual views on the religious influence of defining sexuality, however they also discuss how larger societal beliefs around religion and familial religious beliefs influence how they define their sexuality.

4.4.4 Gender roles

Participants were asked if they believed there were any prescribed gender roles in sexual relationships. As the majority of participants identified as heterosexual, they described their beliefs from a heterosexual perspective. Later, participants were asked if they believed there were gender roles in same sex relationships. Lastly, participants were asked where their beliefs on gender roles originated.

4.4.5 The struggle with gender roles

More than half of participants discussed their struggle with prescribing to traditional gender roles. Some participants discussed how they were coming to terms with taking on a traditional male role in their relationship by becoming the primary income earner. While participants acknowledged they were ok with making more money than their partners, they still struggled with the idea of delineating from traditional gender roles in relationships.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

I would like to think I am progressive but I think consciously and sub-consciously I am dating a male who identifies as heterosexual and I sort of feel like I want him to take control or sort of be a leader in that way.

My relationship is the opposite of that, my boyfriend doesn't go to university so I am kind of furthering my career and he is taking a different path and that kind of plays into it. It is something I kind of struggled with, but I am becoming more accepting of it like realizing that it doesn't have to be the way I grew up. I can be the one who makes more money and I can be the one who knows more things. I think that was something I had to accept.

It is yeah; it is something that I tend to worry a lot, I will be up a lot at night worrying if he doesn't find a really good job and stuff. I don't want to be the only one supporting the family but I mean then I think about it and I am like he doesn't have to be the one supporting the family.

Well for me I wouldn't be opposed to being a stay at home mom. I wouldn't see the problem of the guy going out and working and looking after the wife kind of thing but it isn't like that because both of us work and provide and like do the cooking and cleaning and work together.

Some participants discussed how Alberta was particularly traditional and they saw many women attending university for the sole purposes of finding a romantic partner.

I don't believe that there are roles but I think a lot of people would see it as that. What really bugs me about, I don't know, I am from a big city and what bugs me coming to Calgary is that Calgary is still pretty big. But the downside is that people had different life goals. I have met a lot of women and all they want to do is get married and have babies and I am thinking, I just want to have a career and have lots of money and they are like well how can you think like that, don't you want someone and offspring and then I think no.

Some discussed that if they were to date a man who did not exemplify masculinity, their family, peers, and themselves would be uncomfortable with the relationship.

If my sex or sexuality were to change in any way, I don't know what my family would look like because it would be hard for them to understand. If I were to get married to a man who was much less, who was much less whatever and I was the stronger personality in the relationship, it would be odd for them but I think overtime they could get used to it. But if I decided I was gay, or something that would not be ok.

I wouldn't personally pick a man who was more feminine and definitely growing up with outdoors and things like that, I like a big burly man and it does make you feel very small and feminine and it is not something that I have to have, but I guess it is a feeling that I enjoy.

Overall, participants discussed how they did not prescribe to traditional dichotomies of gender roles in their relationships. Participants did discuss their inner struggle with delineating from the

traditional male-dominated and controlling type of relationship. All participants acknowledged that delineating from traditional relationships scripts caused internal confusion and familial stress.

4.4.6 The mystery of gender roles in same-sex relationships

Participants were asked if they believed there were any gender roles in same sex relationships. Participants were posed this question to try and ignite critical thinking regarding the prescription of gender roles in our society and how those who are not in heterosexual relationships may not fit into this belief. All but one participant identified as completely heterosexual, therefore their beliefs were mainly perceptions. While participants believed there were societal and prescribed roles for heterosexual relationships, they were unsure about same sex relationships. Some participants believed that individuals in same sex relationships were free from prescribed gender roles and were able to create their own relationship scripts. However, other participants believed that in same sex relationships, one individual had to identify as masculine and the other feminine.

I think so, I know that when I was younger I used to think like who is the man in the relationship or who is the women with same sex relationships but my Aunt is a lesbian and she has a partner and everything and I used to be like who is the man in the relationship, I would try to figure it out and it's like, wait I think in those relationships no one really is, well typically I think no one is. With them they have the same, they both split the kind of traditional man and women roles.

I think it might almost be better because there wouldn't be expected roles because they would have the same expected roles so they might share. If you had two males, they couldn't both be, fill that male position, so they both do parts of each, same with females.

I think there might be certain expectations at least on the outside of same sex relationships because people are always like who is the dude and I am always like well if there are two girls then there is no dude, right. That is the concept, they otherwise would date a dude, so I don't think there is technically supposed to be a dude but on the outside people see it, they think there is a dominant and a submissive. I think that even though when people are getting used to the idea of same sex together, they still assume, the normal expectations of a relationship, where one person is stronger than the other one.

I think people still have the idea that someone is supposed to be a certain way; I don't know if that comes from western culture. I have been in a same sex relationship and the person identified as trans gender and I felt as if the person still felt that they had to and they identified as male, female to male and it still was like they had to see themselves as a male, do masculine things and do stuff like that even though, that spectrum, that I have to act this way and no you don't have to be that way actually

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

I think, well for the ones that I have seen, I don't know if I interpret it wrong or anything because I am not super close with them but the people that I know that are in same sex relationships, there is always a man version and a female version, although they are the same sex. I guess in my home country, there is always like lesbian relationships, there is always a girl that is a tomboy and then there is a girl that is super feminine. I assume that would be the same, the guy, the tomboy would be the one who would be the guy gender role and wanting to do that.

Overall, participants discussed their initial perceptions that there would be traditional gender roles in same-sex relationships. However, after further exploration, it was clear participants were able to shift some of their understandings that traditional gender roles are a social construct, rather than inherent in the foundations of a person.

4.4.7 Origins of gender roles

Participants cited multiple origins for their conception of gender roles. Participants discussed how religion, family values, and how the media have influenced their beliefs on gender roles.

I was baptized, my parents tried to grow me up catholic and I definitely think that as a catholic woman, even now my parents are always like when are you getting married, when are you going to have babies and definitely has like. Well not even Catholicism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, marriage is a really big thing and with marriage comes playing your role and doing your part.

I think a lot of the pressure starts from just more when you are young and how you are, not so much how you are told but you are supposed to act in a relationship but just how you are told you are supposed to act because of your gender I think and so yeah, it is just this kind of build of pressure of more just who you are supposed to be.

That is where I see it the most, you see a relationship on TV and in a TV show and the woman kind of doesn't seem, unless she is some supernatural creature or she is a police officer and which she still has to fight for people to see her than it is like she isn't that important to the story or not this or she is the less one, somehow and then I know people, it is probably something that we have grown up with and it has become embedded in peoples thoughts and they don't realize it when they are putting it into stuff but it is there and it is there for the younger ones and they see it to and the grow up believing that and it just, it becomes a cycle.

Questions about beliefs and attitudes regarding gender roles caused confusion and inner turmoil for participants. Participants were able to acknowledge that traditional dichotomous gender roles were not necessary in relationships, however they expressed turmoil from delineating from these roles. It was interesting that participants could not form a consensus on whether individuals in same-sex relationships

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

experience prescribed gender roles. Overall, participants discussed how their relationships, friends, families and peer groups influence their understanding of gender roles in sexual relationships.

4.5 Sexual relationships

After the discussion of gender roles, participants discussed acceptable sexual behaviours, unacceptable sexual behaviour and the origins of their decision-making regarding these behaviours. This discussion was key to explore what sexual relationships look like from the perspective and experiences of female university students.

4.5.1 Acceptable sexual behaviours

To begin the conversation around sexual relationships, participants were asked if they believed there was any standard acceptable behaviour in sexual relationships. Participants cited consent as an acceptable behaviour and that it should be communicated throughout all types of relationships.

I have only ever been in one relationship and I am still in that relationship and we have been together for two years. The whole consent thing has been pretty prevalent through our whole relationship and my boyfriend will make sure I am ok; he doesn't expect anything from me or pressure me even though we have been together for so long.

Interestingly, when exploring the importance of consent, this participant conveyed that it was the male's responsibility to ensure consent which leaves room for beliefs that men do not need to provide consent.

Oh yeah, I definitely agree that there should be consent before you get sexual, that is just rape and then it scares whoever involved.

One of the larger conversations was around the importance of communicating in a sexual relationship. More than half of participants cited how it was important to talk about birth control, sexual needs in a relationship, and STIs'. Some participants expressed that having open communication in relationships is key to a healthy relationship. Some participants also cited that if you are not willing to have open communication in a sexual relationship, you should not be engaging in sexual activity.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

That is important before sex to. Especially if you both, if you have to ask the person if they have STD's, it is a really important conversation. So having the conversation before and having an agreement on things.

I do have a boyfriend and in our intimate relationship you know talking about sexuality and consent and those are things that we bring up and are pretty open as well.

I like to see things like that, if I am saying I want to protect myself, I am also wanting to protect you, I am trying to protect anyone, if we don't work out, which we might not, that is the truth around the world, if we don't work out, I want to make sure you aren't passing something from me or I am not passing something from you to someone else. I am trying to protect everyone involved, everyone who could ever be involved, that kind of stuff. I think that it is really, one of the things I would be super comfortable talking about

I guess overall theme for the both of them, it needs to be open communication, if you know them or not, you need to be able to talk about it, or else you have no business having sex with someone.

4.5.2 Unacceptable sexual behaviours

Interestingly, while communication was discussed as key to healthy relationships, participant also cited issues with communicating in sexual relationships. More than half of participants discussed how it was common to have people lie about STI's, relationship statuses and sexual expectations of the relationships. Some participants discussed how many people would not communicate about the status of their relationship. Participants also cited how they would be uncomfortable talking about what they desired sexually. Overall, some participants spoke that while discussing sex is important, it is not normative practice in relationships.

I don't think it is normal, sadly I have met so many people and they kind of don't say anything and sort of expect it to go that way or they have their own expectations and then they are like oh we are exclusive without actually talking to each other and be like hey we are exclusive, they are just like we are dating, therefore we are exclusive, it seems kind of like a hidden sub text more than anything which might get people in trouble.

It is just awkward right I think; even more so then like sex or anything. I totally find more people are willing to have sex versus like talk about it, which is interesting you know. I am not sure what the whole talking thing is.

I think even in my relationship I feel awkward to be like oh this is what I want to do, specifically, are you ok with that. So I don't think there is as much conversations as there should be. In general, not just in my relationship, I feel like in other peoples relationships, they wouldn't just be sitting there having a cup of coffee being like this is what I want to do. So usually when

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

you get into that like, in the moment of doing it, you wouldn't stop to be like oh lets do this, it just kind of happens. I think people would just force it on and then if it is not comfortable then they would stop it but they wouldn't talk about it before hand, that is how I see it anyway.

I think I don't know how to approach it, how to bring it up without it being like weird, but I am sure if there is an easier way to bring it up, an easier way to talk about it, we are pretty open with each other but it isn't just something you spring on to someone, I guess if the time comes I would say it but not right now, I don't know have any chance to, I don't know maybe that is why I am uncomfortable.

More than half of participants also discussed that if they communicated their sexual desires and wants, they would receive judgements from their partners. Some participants talked about how it is smart to keep their mouths shut in relationships if they wanted the relationship to continue. Regarding STIs', participants spoke of how their sexual partners would judge them if they brought up STI testing. Overall, participants spoke of how they limited communicating their sexual desires and needs to escape judgement from their partner.

Yeah because you don't want them to think poorly of you or and it is also between both of you and you don't want them to be harmful in that relationship.

Um it is probably like related to fear or just not being good communicators, you also hear communication is key in a relationship and then you know you think about oh I am doing this or that in your day but you know, sex which I think is a very intimate.

I actually had one friend who had HPV and even just bringing that up to her boyfriend like, there is a lot of shame and what are they going to think of me, now that they know or even after you have been in the relationship long enough, I don't know if they would get it or how that works, this has been going on and you didn't tell me, it is sort of withholding it from the relationship to which is kind of scary.

That is a good question, again I think it takes the right person, because a lot of people I find are scared to ask what they want or they are more like the amiable people who want to please their partner and they would sacrifice their happiness to do so.

There is definitely a negative connotation, if I were to spring that up to him he would be like why do you want me to get that, assuming that you maybe, they will it will kind of change things in our relationship, we may be saying that we had done it with other people because if it just have always been him and I, where would that come from, there would be a chance for other people to come in so then, I guess that will question us and I guess that is why it would not be a good thing to bring up to someone, especially if you know it has always been you two.

I feel it is almost like you are asking to be pleased or something and people don't ask for that because they feel it is a burden you know. Rather than like an obligation. Because I guess it

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

isn't as accepted in society that you put each other's, you put the other persons pleasure above your own, I don't think that is as common so that people feel awkward asking.

4.5.3 Origins of decision making

Participants were asked where their beliefs regarding sexual behaviours originated. Participants cited personal experiences and social media, as ways to learn what they believe is acceptable and unacceptable in sexual relationships.

I guess it is based on how I would feel; I would feel really unsafe if a boyfriend was always pressuring me to have sex and was not ok when I said no and stuff like that. I wouldn't be happy in a relationship because it would just be based on how I feel.

I think that has come through life experience of realizing, like I have been disrespectful and I regret it later and feel bad about it and I have been disrespected and I don't want to be around that person, they make you feel bad. Yeah I think it is through life experience that you learn and that is a big thing for me

I think how I have learned how I feel in a relationship and then also media and stuff like that. There have always been ads around school and on the Internet about consent and stuff like that. Like there is YouTube Channels, like Laci Green. Yeah I used to watch a lot of her videos, so stuff like that with education.

The conversations around sexual relationships with participants revealed several interesting findings. While participants highlighted the importance of communicated, they also discussed severe judgement they felt when they communicated their sexual needs. The judgements experienced by participants regarding communication influenced their ability to express their needs and often resulted in them limiting communication in sexual relationships.

4.6 Consent

Following the conversation of sexual relationships, consent was discussed with participants. A major part of sexual relationships is the concept of consent. Consent was discussed regarding how consent should be communicated and how drugs and alcohol influences consent in sexual relationships. Participants discussed consent regarding both their perceptions and experiences within sexual relationships. Additionally, participants discussed their individual beliefs and how larger societal factors influence how they understand consent.

4.6.1 Communicating consent

The largest conversation regarding consent was how consent should be communicated, both in casual relationships and committed relationships. Participants stated consent should be committed verbally in casual relationships, however there were differing beliefs regarding committed relationships.

If you want to be safe have verbal consent but I think nowadays no one says hey do you want to have sex it is more just happens.

I only know the really basic but it is asking and put like asking all the way along right, it is not like that there is, at all points and no would be respected in any point during sex or any point in a relationship. I think it is having those clear conversations not just in the moment either right and before or after being like I crossed a line and we need to talk about this or we went further and are you comfortable right.

The basic premise doesn't change but I think in a one-night stand you have to be more, almost more careful if you don't know the person and you don't know their signs and signals, you almost have to be more explicit in my opinion to be correct. You are not going to have those follow up conversations.

4.6.2 The complications of consent in committed relationships

More than half of participants expressed that in committed relationships, each partner should know each other well enough to understand non-verbal consent. They also stated that partners should know what is ok and not ok in their relationships, so consent may not be necessary. Some participants explicitly stated that if you are married, consent is not needed, even in circumstances such as intoxication. Furthermore, some participants stated that sexual assault does not occur in relationships, which is why consent is not needed.

I guess as it gets more serious it gets less necessary, maybe if it is something different you need consent maybe if you haven't done it before. But just as things get more serious and the relationship goes on it isn't important to get that verbal (consent). You kind of get to know each other and you know what is ok and what is not.

So you mean if you have consent for sex one time does it mean you will have consent again? No, it could be personal boundaries where the person isn't feeling well or it could be like no, I don't think you are a good person and might depend on the person individually, unless you are married or in a committed relationship.

Regardless of that I think that because we have been in a relationship for so long that like asking for consent before sex it is not a formal thing that happens, it is not like, if I did this,

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

would you say yes, if I did this would you say yes, it doesn't happen because we know each other really well

Definitely verbal consent in a one-night stand is super important but I think as you get more in a committed relationship, non-verbal consent is much more common. Because then you are used to each other and you think you can read each other. Like rape still happens in committed relationships but I think generally not as much, maybe.

That is what I am grey on to, if you are in a committed relationship and especially like a long term committed relationship and you are drinking together and you are both into it, then I think it is more acceptable with higher intoxication, though definitely the other person can still say no kind of thing or even afterwards they can be like I wasn't ok with that, I don't know where that line is.

Overall, participants express that in committed relationships, verbal consent is not as necessary compared to casual relationships. Participants also expressed that due to sexual scripts in committed relationships, each partner should be able to understand body language and want to engage in sexual activity on a regular basis. Lastly, participants believed that sexual assault is less likely to happen in committed relationships, compared to casual relationships.

4.6.3 Women as gatekeepers of consent

Additionally, some participants stated that it should be women's responsibility to provide consent. Participants stated that since men always want sex, women must provide consent. Others stated that women have to advocate for themselves in regards to consent. Overall, participants thought that since men are usually the ones who want sex, women have to provide consent.

I am not sure to be honest, I would say if, this might sound bad but I think women should be the one to always give consent, I think men are known to want to have sex because they are constantly thinking about it. I think if a girl is really drunk and she is slobbering some all over their face, I assume she wants it and that there is consent there, but if a girl is passed out then obviously she doesn't want to have sex with you.

I always thought that it was the female who has to give consent and I know that is wrong, I want to say it should be mutual. But it is presented and unconsciously, yeah it is usually about the female.

I think it is usually the expectation is that the male is the initiator and the female is the one to give consent but I think it needs to be a mutual consent. I know there are situations where it is kind of like the other way so I think it is mutual.

4.6.4 The influence of alcohol and drugs

All but one participant stated that drugs and alcohol decrease ones' ability to provide consent. Others discussed how some people misinterpret consent when they are intoxicated. Some participants explicitly stated that men could use drugs and alcohol to avoid receiving consent. Some talked about how if you are conscious when intoxicated you are still able to consent. Others said that after a few drinks, you are unable to give consent. Some said that if you regret it the next day, it might not have been consensual. Some said it is up to the person who is soberer to understand if consent is given. Overall, participants could not provide a clear explanation if consent can be given when intoxicated.

Yeah, I think now if people are out partying and they find someone they want to hook up with, because they are drunk and they assume oh yeah, let's just put it as I think alcohol and drugs reduce consent given

I feel like and maybe it is my belief, but alcohol would decrease that and drugs I don't know much about but you know that is something that just alters your state of mind and no excuses but I think there is something about alcohol and drugs and that whole scene like its dark and your friends desert you like certain aspects of that it is like I don't want to say breeding ground but there are factors that enhance and influence like those behaviours, which is not acceptable either.

How do you determine when someone is capable of (consent) and I think people would have differing moral grounds on that basically because theoretically as long as they are still awake and conscious and aware of what is going on, you could say that yes that is consent and then other people would say no not if you are under the influence at all.

It comes back to partially the next day when they are sober, would they say yeah that is fine and that was consent or would they be like no, that wasn't. That is very individual. Some people think it is expected that if you are drinking and partying then you give consent which is not right but there is, it is more likely that people who are into that scene are, with one drink that would be fine maybe, but I don't know.

I don't know how to answer that one, I am not sure. I don't know, because that is the grey area, I am not sure because some people will say if you verbally had someone say yes at the time and then the next day they were like no then it is like oh no. That is why people make the whole blanket, just because they are drinking doesn't mean yes is real, because that is hard to distinguish right.

I think it definitely impairs the ability, I think that it is sometimes used as a way to avoid having to get consent sometimes, you know just like I am drunk and it just kind of happened and um it is kind of hard because I guess when you are under an influence you know you might not think straight so I think that I don't know it is kind of hard to get proper consent when you are under the influence.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Anything that inhibits your ability to say yes, I don't care if you feel sober or if you have a buzz or if you are blacked out, same shit. If it is in your body I don't care, right, and if you know that you are going to get drunk, maybe have a conversation with your partner by saying hey I really only want to have three drinks, if I go past that, don't touch me.

Overall, conversations with participants regarding consent resulted in several differing beliefs and attitudes around consent. It is interesting that while participants found it necessary to verbalize consent in casual relationships, there was not a conclusive response regarding committed relationships. Moreover, participants largely cited specific influences on consent, whether it is their sexual partner, friends, or family members.

4.7 Rape myths and stereotypical beliefs about women

The last theme presented by participants was regarding rape myths and subsequent stereotypical beliefs about women. While I did not ask questions about stereotypical beliefs about women, participants brought up specific themes when discussing rape myths. The following sub-themes are presented as follows: sex is for men, ways to own women, and women should keep their legs closed.

4.7.1 Sex is for men

One of the larger societal beliefs participants stated was the belief that sex is solely for men. More than half of participants stated that they believed sex is primarily for men because women do not experience sexual pleasure. This belief then justified their limited conversations about sexual pleasure with their partners. Furthermore, the conversations discussed how women are not allowed to discuss their sexual pleasure because they believe that they are not supposed to experience any.

I think that a man is more of the who is like let's have sex and the girl kind of just like, of course I would want to do it if it was with my boyfriend but it isn't something I would bring up myself. The sex is more for the guy, rather than the girl.

I am aware that even in myself, I don't know how it was built up but when you are told and learn that males are more visual and sex oriented right that then it feels like they are the one that feel pushed more, basically I think and I have struggled with that in terms of thinking about, somehow it has been construed in my mind that sex is male dominated and I know that it isn't correct but it is hard to get out of and hard to not see the oppression.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Yeah definitely, I think women are judged if they have condoms and I think that is all rooted by religion to. I think it is the belief that men should be the one initiating it and not the woman, well if she is going to initiate sexual activity with someone, what a skank.

In regards to sexual pleasure, participants cited how societal beliefs are ingrained to ensure they believe they are unworthy of pleasure. Additionally, participants also cited factors such as relationships, friends, the media, and religion as influences of why they believe sex is primarily for men, as women don't experience pleasure.

4.7.2 Rape myths and ways to own women

It is crucial to distinguish rape myths as a separate sub-theme because as it is one of the sub-questions. Rape myths are the belief that by engaging in certain behaviours, women provoke their own sexual assault. Rape myths as a sub- theme was categorized when participants identified them and spoke of their influence regarding sexuality. All participants identified specific ways to own women which fits within rape mythology.

This particular theme addresses ways participants expressed how they felt owned by men in specific circumstances. Participants discussed how they felt owned by men by providing examples such as: by dancing with men in bars, accepting a drink from a man, and limiting the way they dress to ensure they did not provoke specific attention. Participants also cited how they felt owned by men when referring to denying a request from a man in a bar for a drink or dance. Participants said they often used having a boyfriend as an excuse to not accept a drink or dance from a man at a bar. Interestingly, these behaviours frustrated participants as they understood that them saying no for personal reasons outside of a man was usually not enough to deter men who was pursuing them.

It might not necessarily be the what one of the people is going there for, it could be just to dance for fun and not wanting that type of attention I guess. It is just kind of expected that they are and they assume that they are out there so they are looking for it (sex).

I know a lot of women use men for free drinks and I think men expect something like maybe you will just hang out with me and we will talk or maybe I can get you drunk enough and then we can go home together.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

I feel there is an expectation well, what do I have to do for you and just speaking for myself and from the female perspective. Why do I feel that there is this unwritten rule that if I get you a drink and maybe that is in a way the person says it or I don't know? But yeah I do always feel there is this unwritten rule and I shouldn't, if I want to I should be able to say just bye.

You can gauge it I think, but I don't think it is fair that there is pressure to turn down a drink just because you are worried about you are not clear on what connotations are attached and expectations so that just becomes like no.

Yeah I think, it is the same, it is definitely seen as well if you are dressing like that then you are inviting attention, I don't think it should be that way but I think that is how it is seen for sure.

Yeah for sure, if they are more out there and more open about the way they dress it is expected that you know that they are looking for something for a hook-up or whatever.

When I go out I definitely, I try to, I don't want to dress to much like that because it draws attention and I don't want to draw attention because of my boyfriend but I also don't want to dress down and stand out as someone who is purposely trying to dress up for that sort of thing.

Yeah, I don't know. I think the thing that really bugs me but at bars just more that it is usually a lot easier to pretend or say that you have a boyfriend, either way, that is valued a lot more that your no is not valued as much as I can't because the fact that another guy somehow owns you. Not that I haven't used it but I try not to, anyways I am aware that I try not to automatically say no and not have a reason for it but my no should be enough but then there are some situations where it easier for my random friend to wrap his arm around me and then done, like no problem right, there is no issues anymore, which yeah.

Yeah it comes from the sense of ownership and power, I don't know somehow in guy code you don't steal another guys woman and somehow that is because of the power, another guy is valued more than a woman's voice. Not always given a voice as much.

Overall, participants expressed mindfulness of how they dance, accepted drinks, and how they dress in order to avoid the societal belief that these behaviours dictate how they are to be treated by men. Moreover, these behaviours expressed by participants justify the belief that certain actions by women influence their ability to say no to an unwanted sexual encounter.

4.8 Women should keep their mouths closed

Throughout conversations with participants, more than half identified beliefs that are largely categorized as stereotypical beliefs about women. One of the major conversations was around the belief that women have to hold back their voice regarding their sexuality. One participant discussed how she

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

feels and believes that it is not ok for her to talk about her sexuality because of her gender. She explicitly stated that women have to close their mouths regarding their sexuality because no one wants to hear it.

Another participant spoke of the limited avenues women have to talk about sexuality and the shame they face if they do.

I find that I am very sexual as a person and I think I am really open with my sexuality but I think a lot of other people I talk to aren't open about sexuality so I have to hold back a little bit.

Absolutely, if I were to talk to colleagues of mine who were also in the social work faculty, we were to talk about sex right at work lets say, lets put that into context, that would not fly, we would not have that. But if my partner, who is a male, who works in a construction zone right with all of his guy friends, if he were to talk about it they would be all rowdy and be like tell us more right. So I don't know if it would be the location but also I think just because women shouldn't be talking like that because we are women, the society says we should keep our legs closed and our mouths apparently.

There are no avenues to talk about it. I talk about it with my friends, not everything, and I feel comfortable talking about it with my partner to but there is still a general sense of like you know, it is not about me or something. Maybe that is just me.

The dichotomies to, if you are more sexual and I sort of see it as the how you present yourself right, it is not seen as good either, if women were to talk about it, we would be put down as well.

Another large belief that was communicated during the interviews was the belief that sex is solely for men. Some participants stated that they believed that sex is primarily for men because women do not experience pleasure. This then justifies their limited conversations about sexual pleasure with their partners. The conversations discussed how women are not allowed to discuss their sexual pleasure because they believe that they are not supposed to experience any.

Ok, I think that a man is more of the who is like lets have sex and the girl kind of just like, of course I would want to do it if it was with my boyfriend but it isn't something I would bring up myself like I would do it when he brings it up, so I guess that is a role. The sex is more for the guy, rather than the girl.

I am aware that even in myself, I don't know how it was built up but when you are told and learn that which isn't one hundred percent correct but that males are more visual and sex oriented right that then it feels like they are the one that feel pushed more, basically I think and I have struggled with that in terms of thinking about, somehow it has been construed in my mind that sex is male dominated and I know that it isn't correct but it is hard to get out of and hard to not see the oppression in that for sure.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

They were like it is something that I remember someone saying it is something I do for my boyfriend, I do it not always because I feel like it or not always because I enjoy it but because it is something that I do when he feels like it. I heard that and I was like I understand giving back but that can't be all that is.

4.9 Summary

To summarize, major factors and influences such as gender roles, sexual relationships, and consent are key beliefs and attitudes expressed by the participants of this study. Participants struggle to discern from traditional gender roles was a major part of the discussion and influenced how they saw themselves as both female and a sexual partner. Interestingly, some participants believed that in same-sex relationships, there are no prescribed gender roles, while other participants believe that each partner takes on either a male or female traditional gender role. In regards to sexual relationships, participants were able to highlight the importance of communicating with a sexual partner. However, many of the participants discussed several issues with communication such as experiencing judgement from a partner for communicating sexual needs. All participants spoke of the importance of consent in sexual relationships, however there was a difference in opinion of the necessity of communicating consent in committed relationships. Lastly, participants spoke of stereotypical beliefs and rape myths that influence how they see themselves as sexual beings and their ability to communicate their needs and wants to a sexual partner.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

5.1 A creative synthesis

Dear big sis,

I wanted to provide you with an update of what university is like so far, mostly so you aren't freaking out constantly because you know what it is like here. Living in residence has been very interesting so far; it has definitely helped me make more friends. There is a lot of partying, like a lot. There is almost this kind of pressure that because we are university students we should be drinking all the time and to be really blunt, having sex with lots of different people. I am glad I entered university single because I can imagine girls in relationships feel like they are missing out on hooking up with different people. I really like the freedom I have to experiment sexually and to be able to drink (even when it may be at 10am, don't tell our parents)! I also find that if I have questions about sex or sexual health, I am able to find a safe place to talk about it. My favourite places are the women's centre and the Q centre. While university has been super great so far, there is some stuff on campus that bugs me. I really don't feel that safe at night. Sometimes I wish there were more security guards, especially when I am walking home from a night class, but I don't really know if that would fix this feeling I have. Bars and clubs are great too, but I always feel scared and that I can't say no to men who ask to buy me a drink or dance. I always leave feeling like I don't have a right to say no to them.

One thing my girlfriends and I love to talk about is sexuality, mainly because we have some awesome women's studies classes. I have found it hard to define my sexuality. I am not sure if it is wrapped up in whom I want to have sex with or how I see myself as a woman. I think our family and religious background really influenced this because I feel like I have to be strictly female all the time and that men are the only people I should be attracted to. I have started to date a couple of guys and I really struggle with if I want them to be dominant, you know that stereotype that men have the power and women don't. I get really frustrated because I am going to university to further my career and I shouldn't care if someone who I am dating is going to make more money than me, but it is always on my mind. One of my closest friends identifies as bisexual and I ask her sometimes about this struggle because she dates girls too. Why should we have to feel submissive in girl-boy relationships but it doesn't exist in same sex relationships? I really struggle with this and I think it goes back to our family and what the media says. You can't have a man in your life if he isn't masculine and taking care of you, what crap that is!

One thing I have really been struggling with the guys I have been dating is how do we talk about sex? I know talking about consent, STIs, and past sexual partners is so important, but it scares me! I feel they will think less of me if I bring this up, but I want to be safe and have fun. It seems like if I want to communicate all of this, they will think less of me. I don't know what to do about this and it really frustrates me because I feel like I lose either way.

I'm sure you know that consent is a huge topic here. I think it is great because you said when you were at university, consent wasn't talked about it. I find that it is super important to be really up front with consent, especially if you don't know the person. This is what I usually do because I don't want to assume. But I have this one friend who has a long-term boyfriend and she says they don't communicate consent ever! I both get this and don't. Like you know each other super well and can read each other's body language, but what if you don't want to have sex one time or you misinterpret some signs of nonverbal consent? I think it can get super messy with people in committed relationships. I also feel like I am always the one who should communicate consent. I don't think it is fair to assume guys always want to have sex, but I don't know what to do with this. I think it should be both and we should stop assuming guys always want it. Another thing that kind of bugs me is that sometimes we hook up after

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

drinking. Like are we assaulting each other if we are both drunk and having sex? Where is this fine line between consent and not? No one seems to know the answer and I don't know what to do with it.

Sometimes I feel there is a bigger belief on campus that I am less of a person compared to men. I don't feel like my voice is respected when I go out to bars. I feel like I have to justify why I don't want to accept a drink or dance with a guy. I shouldn't have to justify; I am to say no. While I can talk about hooking up with my friends, on a larger scale I feel like I shouldn't have any pleasure hooking up. I constantly worry that I will be called a slut for enjoying sex but then I am a prude if I don't. I feel like I can't win sometimes. I sometimes get scared here and feel that my voice isn't heard.

Anyways, not to end on a concerning note but I just wanted to give you an idea of what my life has been like since I got here. Lots of great stuff but also some stuff that needs to be changed.

Love you lots

-C

5.2 Introduction

The aim of the current study was to understand the beliefs and attitudes of female university students regarding their sexuality. The main and sub-questions were used to understand the encompassing beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality and how the cultural experience of being a female university student influences sexuality. Understanding beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality is important for several reasons. Specifically, the beliefs and attitudes of female university students provides an understanding of the complexity of consent, gender roles, and relationship norms which all influence the sexual self. Throughout this chapter, the importance of understanding these areas and their connection to sexual assault prevention will be discussed.

These key areas are determining factors when understanding the labelling and reporting process of sexual assault. Specifically, traditional endorsements of gender roles and rape myths predict the likelihood that a sexual assault will go unreported. These implications extend to both the realm of relevant literature and the practice of social work. There is a dearth of qualitative literature that explores consent, gender roles, and rape myths in relation to female university students, specifically from a Canadian context. By understanding the complexity of beliefs and attitudes of female university students regarding sexuality, social work practitioners can begin to understand the complexity of sexuality in this population. Social workers who advocate for policy change and implementation can benefit from understanding the unique cultural experience of female university students. Subsequently, social work clinicians can gain additional knowledge regarding the unique structurally endorsed beliefs on university campuses that influence individual beliefs and attitudes.

Eleven participants were interviewed for this study. Participants came from a wide variety of academic backgrounds and spanned a variety of ages. In terms of ethnicity, participants identified as Caucasian, Asian, or African Canadian. While not listed as criterion or a question asked to participants,

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

all but one participant explicitly identified as heterosexual, which leaves out the voice of the LGBTQ population. Interestingly, most participants identified as being in committed relationships.

Throughout this chapter, the findings of the study are summarized in the context of the research questions and relevant literature. Findings will be discussed in the context of relevant literature, regardless of the fact that the majority of the literature is outside of a Canadian context. Findings will be presented by major theme in the order of: university culture, defining sexuality, gender roles and sexual relationships, consent, rape myths, and stereotypical beliefs about women. Lastly, implications for social work practice and participant recommendations will be discussed.

5.3 University Culture

Research Question 1- What are the defining features of university culture?

Exploring participants' experiences of university culture was pertinent to the study, as feminist ethnography seeks to understand the workings of a cultural group. When asked to describe the defining features of university culture, all participants discussed several facets that are consistent with the relevant literature. Themes of sexual experimentation, hooking-up, partying (including bars and clubs), and the unsafe atmosphere university creates for women are consistent with the findings of relevant literature (Boswell & Spade, 1996; Deming et al, 2013; Flack Jr. et al., 2007; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; Harned, 2005; Littleton et al., 2009; Lorant et al., 2013; Scribner et al., 2007). In addition using the hook-up and committed relationships as a means to feel connected during an isolated time such as university is also consistent with the relevant literature (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). When asked about the cultural experiences of bars and clubs, participants provided specific behavioural examples that exemplified this environment. Specifically, participants spoke of behaviour such as being groped, feeling afraid, and not being able to express themselves sexually without being labelled a "slut," as being key to the culture of bars and clubs. This finding suggests that university women often live in fear and isolation of their sexuality due to behaviours that are perpetrated if women express their sexual

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

identity. Future research could explore the aspect of women limiting their sexual expression and how this may internalize their sexual assault reporting behaviours and how they view themselves sexually.

While the above themes were consistent with the relevant literature, there was one unique sub-theme that stood out; the belief that the University of Calgary is a community that educates about sexuality and sexual health. Relevant literature often explores how university campuses do not offer environments where conversations around sexuality and sexual health are normalized. Specifically, Deming et al. (2013) highlights how values of self-blame and stereotypical views of women are often embedded in university campuses. Participants of the current study exemplified the belief that the University of Calgary has created a community that promotes awareness around consent and the effects of alcohol and drugs in regards to sex. It may be crucial for future studies that explore university culture to understand if and how universities create communities that educate about sexual health and sexuality. Specifically, research could study universities that have taken initiatives regarding sexuality and explore whether these initiatives have shifted some of the stereotypical beliefs regarding consent and sexual assault. Subsequently, research could examine if stereotypical beliefs are deconstructed and how this relates to the incidence of sexual assaults and sexual assault reporting behaviour.

5.4 Defining sexuality

Research Question 2- How do female university students define sexuality?

As the study explored beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality, it was key for participants to define sexuality. The first research question posed to participants was how they defined their own sexuality. For this study sexuality was defined as, “experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships” (WAS, 2014, p.1). This broad definition allowed for the inclusion of research that explores sexual scripts, perceptions of sexual encounters, gender roles, and consent. Throughout the exploration of literature, there was a lack of consensus when defining sexuality. While there is a plethora of literature that explores sexuality, it is

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

often not defined. When participants were asked about their definitions of sexuality they cited definitions of sexual orientation, gender identity, body image and how this interacts with their sexual encounters. Additionally, participants spoke of the influence of religion they experience when defining sexuality. Interestingly, many participants focused on sexual orientation and gender identity as the defining aspects of sexuality. Participants also discussed how sexuality was key to their identity as women.

Throughout an exploration of literature, there is a paucity of literature that defines sexuality from a university student perspective, specifically a female university student perspective. A search was conducted to find relevant definitions, however while several articles discuss sexuality (Aras, Orcin, Ozan, & Semin, 2007; England & Bearak, 2014; Salameh et al., 2016), it is not defined. Future research both on advanced education and on the general population may explore the process of defining sexuality. Specifically, future research could investigate whether defining sexuality can extend beyond sexual orientation and sexual health and instead explore how individuals understand their sexual interactions.

5.5 Gender roles and sexual relationships

Research Question 3- What are female university students' beliefs regarding gender roles and sexual relationships?

The third research question of the study concerned participants' beliefs and attitudes about gender roles in sexual relationships. Furthermore, participants explored some of the acceptable and unacceptable behaviours within sexual relationships. Exploring how participants view gender roles in sexual relationships was a key factor when exploring their overall beliefs and attitudes of sexuality. Participants were asked if they believed in traditional heteronormative gender roles in sexual relationships and where their beliefs on these roles originated.

5.5.1 Accepting traditional gender roles

The majority of participants discussed their internal struggle of accepting traditional gender roles. They spoke of wanting to defer from the traditional heteronormative views of gender roles, where the male is the decision maker and income earner, and the female is the caretaker with limited decision making. These findings are consistent with several studies from the literature (Adana, et al., 2011; Sevim, 2006). Like the beliefs of participants, these studies explored the beliefs of university students which stated that women must maintain traditional caretaker roles and men the role of income earner. From a feminist perspective, it is key to look at the result of traditional gender roles and how they may influence sexual assault reporting behaviours. Specifically, if individuals endorse women as the less powerful gender, it is important to understand how this influences key aspects of sexuality and sexual assault reporting behaviours. Several studies have found that if participants endorse traditional gender roles, they are more likely to believe in male dominance and rape myth acceptance (Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012; King & Roberts, 2011; Swank, Fahs, & Haywood, 2011). Subsequently, endorsing male dominance and rape myth acceptance correlates with behaviours of not reporting sexual assaults. Future research regarding gender roles and rape myth acceptance could explore ways to deconstruct the sexist ideology that views females as less and males as dominant and aggressive. Research could explore how deconstructing these norms may result in the likelihood to label and report sexual assaults on university campuses, specifically the affect of introducing these concepts during first year orientation.

5.5.2 Origins of beliefs of gender roles

Participants cited their religion and family when discussing their understanding of their beliefs regarding gender roles, which were also mentioned during the discussion of origins of their definitions of sexuality. The majority of participants discussed how their parents modeled specific behaviours, which influenced their beliefs on gender roles. Similarly, some participants discussed religious denominations that influenced their understanding of traditional male/female gender roles. These

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

findings are consistent with relevant literature that explores the origins of gender roles from a university student perspective. The religious, cultural, and familial influence on gender roles has been documented in the relevant literature, which provides context and understanding to these beliefs (Adana et al., 2011; Sevim, 2006). However, these findings were from research conducted outside of North America. Future studies are needed in North America, specifically in Canada, to understand the unique cultural influence on gender roles.

5.5.3 Rejecting gender roles

One interesting finding from the study that is not consistent with the relevant literature is that half of the participants rejected the idea of traditional gender roles. While participants discussed wanting to endorse traditional heteronormative roles in relationships, they also rejected those ideals. Participants discussed how they rejected traditional roles by embracing their careers and power in their relationships, which differs from the studies that explore gender roles in a university context (Adana et al., 2011; Sevim, 2006). The shifting patterns of accepting traditional gender roles in sexual relationships is a phenomenon that could be explored in future research. Specifically, it would be interesting to explore if those who reject traditional gender roles are more likely to reject rape myths and the ideas of male dominance and aggression. Research produced from this lens could further explore cultural beliefs and values that perpetuate the idea that women are responsible for their own sexual assault and present new beliefs and values that combat this ideology. Lastly, it could be interesting to explore how familial relationships influence the rejection of traditional gender roles as the family unit is most often cited for influencing gender roles.

5.5.4 Same sex relationships and gender roles

One key aspect of the discussion that was missing from discussions with the participants was the beliefs and attitudes of those in same sex relationships and gender roles. All but one participant identified as explicitly heterosexual, therefore the beliefs about same-sex relationships and gender roles

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

were based on perceptions, rather than experiences. There was a lack of consensus between participants if individuals in same-sex relationship prescribed to traditional gender roles or not. Future research could investigate individuals in same-sex relationships and capture their beliefs and attitudes on the influence of traditional heteronormative gender roles. Furthermore, how individuals in same-sex relationships or non-heteronormative relationships are sexually influenced by traditional heteronormative gender roles could be explored.

5.5.5 The complication of communication in sexual relationships

Another aspect of the third research question was sexual relationships. After discussing gender roles in sexual relationships, it was key to move on to the broader discussion of sexual relationships. One of the main questions focused on acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in sexual relationships. Participants were asked to discuss some of the defining behaviours that were deemed acceptable or unacceptable. The practice of open communication was discussed by participants as both an acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Participants discussed that in healthy adult relationships it is essential to have open communication regarding, STIs, consent, and condom use. It was clear that participants believed that if the lines of communication were not open, individuals were not mature enough to be in a sexual relationship. However, participants discussed how it might be taboo to discuss exclusivity, sexual intercourse, sexual preferences, sexual desires, and STIs with a sexual partner. From the contrast of views, it is evident that participants experienced a double bind in terms of communication in sexual relationships. From the words of participants, beliefs still exist that if women communicate their sexual needs, there will be consequences such as shame from their partner. From the perspective of participants, the result in communicating sexual desires, needs, and wants will result in judgement from their sexual partner.

In the context of relevant literature, while the sample was not female university students, a study conducted by Noland (2008) found that communication between heterosexual partners in terms of STIs,

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

past sexual partners, and condom use was not common. Another study conducted by Noland (2006) found three factors that limited communication in heterosexual relationships: masculinity, the role of virginity, and silencing of both sexual partners. These two studies provide information regarding the influence of communication on sexual relationships. However, the studies were not conducted in a North American context or within the university environment. As there is a paucity of qualitative research that explores communication regarding the sexual relationships of university students, specifically in Canada, future research could explore this phenomenon. It would be interesting to explore how the stigma and judgement around communication influences how university students perceive their own voice in terms of sexual relationships. Similarly, it would be interesting to explore how open and honest communication influences the sexual relationships of university students and if this may decrease sexual assaults on campus as much of sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone the victim knows.

5.6 Understanding the complexity of consent

Research Question 4- What are female university students' beliefs regarding communicating consent in sexual relationships?

The fourth research question explored the definitions and key aspects of consent in sexual relationships. After the discussion of sexual relationships, participants were asked their beliefs on consent. When exploring the beliefs regarding consent in sexual relationships, participants came up with several sub-themes including: communicating consent, the complications of consent in committed relationships, women are the gatekeepers of consent, and the influence of alcohol and drugs on consent.

5.6.1 Communicating consent

When asked about consent, the majority of participants stated the belief that consent should be communicated verbally, specifically in casual relationships. Communicating consent outside of casual relationships was also explored but will be discussed below. Exploring the communication of consent in committed relationships will be discussed in the following paragraph. The need for university students

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

to communicate consent verbally in casual relationships is consistent with the relevant literature (Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski et al., 2014). The need to communicate consent in casual relationships originates from the belief that the unfamiliarity with a sexual partner leaves room for miscommunication, specifically if relied on as the only means of consent (Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski et al, 2014).

5.6.2 Consent in committed relationships vs. casual relationships

One of the more unique findings from participants was the belief that there is a difference in communicating consent depending on the status in the relationships. While participants stressed the importance of communicating consent verbally in casual relationships, students' beliefs regarding communicating consent in committed relationships deferred from this practice.

Participants explicitly stated that communicating consent in committed relationships could rely more on non-verbal cues than direct verbal consent. These beliefs stem from the idea that when you know a person longer, you are more likely to read their body language and understand if they want to engage in sexual intercourse. Furthermore, some participants held the attitude that rape and sexual assault is less likely to occur in committed relationships, therefore verbal consent is not necessary. This finding is consistent with relevant literature that found that university students found ambiguous consent more acceptable if the relationship was of a more serious nature (Humphreys, 2006; Jozkowski et al., 2014).

The phenomenon of communicating consent in committed relationships, specifically on university campuses, could be further explored. Coupling the binge drinking and hook-up culture on university campuses with the lack of verbal communication of consent, illuminates a reason for the amount of sexual assaults that occur on campus. Additionally, the overarching belief regarding consent in committed relationships reinforces the belief that since outward consent is not required, rape or sexual assault cannot occur. Research could also explore how beliefs regarding consent in committed

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

relationships influence rape and sexual assault reporting behaviours. Furthermore, education is continuously needed that addresses the need for explicit consent in all types of relationships.

5.6.3 Women are the gatekeepers of consent

When participants were asked if specific genders were responsible for communicating consent, the majority explicitly stated that women are responsible. Several reasons were given such as the belief that men are always interested in sexual intercourse, therefore they should naturally be the initiator. This belief that men are sexually aggressive and always interested in sexual intercourse, leaving women the gatekeepers of consent is consistent with relevant literature concerning university students (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski & Wiersma, 2015; and Littleton & Axsom, 2003). Furthermore, this belief perpetuates the idea that since men are sexually aggressive, they are unsusceptible to rape or sexual assault.

5.6.4 The influence of alcohol and drugs on consent

As binge drinking and partying are key behaviours of university culture, they are crucial to exploring how participants understood the influence of drugs and alcohol on consent. All but one participant explicitly stated that alcohol and drugs decrease one's ability to provide clear and affirmative consent. Additionally, participants believed that consent is often misinterpreted when an individual is intoxicated. These findings are consistent with relevant literature that states that alcohol and drug use can lead to misinterpretation of consent and that alcohol decreases the feelings of safety and the negotiation of consent (Fantasia et al., 2015; Jozkowski et al., 2015). Specifically concerning female university students, it has also been noted that if women put themselves at risk (i.e. consuming alcohol and drugs), they are solely responsible for consent (Gray, 2015).

5.7 Rape myths and stereotypical beliefs about women

Research Question 5-How is female university students' sexuality influenced by rape myths?

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

The final research question that was asked of participants was how the idea of rape myths influenced their sexuality. When discussing rape myths with participants, other stereotypical beliefs about women arose. It was important to categorize rape myths and stereotypical beliefs about women as one larger theme as the findings relay the importance of how these beliefs influenced participants. Participants identified three themes including: keep our legs and mouth shut, sex is for men, and the ownership of women.

5.7.1 Women should keep their mouths closed

When asked about rape myths and stereotypical beliefs, one of the major conversations participants focused on was the belief that women must hold back their opinions regarding their sexuality. One participant was very vocal about how she feels trapped when discussing her sexuality due to her gender identity as a female. She explicitly stated that she keeps her mouth and consequently her legs shut due to her fear of shame. Other participants discussed in a more general sense that as females, they are unable to discuss their sexuality openly without feeling shame. This in turn resulted in participants restricting their own beliefs and understandings of their sexuality. Furthermore, this could be explored as one of the reasons communication in sexual relationships was a double bind with participants. It is important to understand from a theoretical perspective how sexual communication or lack thereof explains sexual interactions and outcomes of feelings after a sexual encounter (Babin, 2012).

5.7.2 Sex is for men

Another stereotypical belief regarding women that more than half the participants spoke of was that the belief that the act of sexual intercourse is solely for the benefit of men. Furthermore, participants discussed how men are the only ones who enjoy sex, while women do not enjoy the practice. This belief perpetuates the idea that males are continually dominant and are always aroused and ready for sex, which is permeated through stereotypical beliefs regarding the gendered constructions of sexual

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

satisfaction (Stephenson, Ahronld, & Meston 2011). Subsequently, this perpetuates the belief that men do not experience sexual assault, as they are continually consenting for sex by always wanting sex. Participants also discussed how this belief facilitates their personal experiences of not feeling that they can enjoy sexual intercourse.

5.7.3 Rape myths and ways to own women

The theme of owning women resulted from participants discussing ways in which they felt owned by the male gender. This particular theme addresses the ways participants expressed how they felt owned by men in specific circumstances. Participants spoke of how they felt owned by men by dancing with men in bars, accepting a drink from a man, and limiting the way they dress to ensure they did not provoke specific attention. Participants also cited how they felt owned by men when referring to denying a request from a man in a bar for a drink or a dance. Participants said they often used having a boyfriend as an excuse to not accept a drink or a dance from a man at a bar. Interestingly, this frustrated the participants, as they understood that them saying no for personal reasons outside of being attached romantically to a man was not enough to deter someone who was pursuing them sexually.

The findings of stereotypical beliefs and rape myths were all consistent with the relevant literature regarding the implications for endorsing these beliefs. Specifically limiting the voices of women, the belief that sex is for men, and the overall ownership of women is consistent with the relevant literature (Allen, 2002; Egan & Wilson, 2012; Feldman-Summer & Norris, 1984; Hammond, Berry & Rodriguez, 2011; and Williams, 1984) which states that by endorsing these beliefs, individuals are less likely to report a sexual assault, whether witnessed or experienced. While these specific beliefs regarding owning women and limiting women's voices are not captured within the relevant literature, the endorsement of stereotypical beliefs and rape myths are important to note regarding their influence of sexual assault reporting behaviours. Future research could explore how these beliefs and values influence all sexual behaviours, not just sexual assault reporting behaviours. It is important to

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

understand if these beliefs influence how females negotiate consent in their sexual relationships and how this influences their ability to have a voice in sexual relationships. While this study is not quantitative in nature, which limits the generalizability of results, it could be said that from the view of participants, these beliefs and endorsement of rape myths limit participants' ability to communicate consent and other pertinent sexuality concerns to their sexual partners. Additionally, future research could explore how deconstructing these beliefs on campuses may decrease the amount of sexual assaults. Knowing that these beliefs influence reporting behaviours is key to deconstructing these values to both limit sexual assaults and increase the ability of one to report a sexual assault.

5.8 Implications for social work practice

The hope for these findings is that they will contribute to the knowledge and practice areas of social work. The findings have the potential to create change on three different levels. At the micro level, the findings can give social workers and practitioners who work with female university students insight into their complex sexual experiences and how university culture may influence their sexual identities. The theme of university culture may be able to offer insight into specific expectations of female university students. In addition, the binge drinking and partying atmosphere can offer micro social work practitioners an understanding of the environment universities can create that perpetuate the lack of sexual assault labelling and reporting behaviours. It is essential for social work practitioners to understand factors that influence the communication of sexual needs but also how they influence requests to fulfill sexual needs (Babin, 2012), which can be understood from themes that discuss sexual relationships and issues of communication.

Additionally, the findings have the potential to inform students of social work. In recent years, the intersection between social inequality and sexuality has become increasingly discussed both by academics and social work practitioners (Galarza & Anthony, 2015). In addition, studies have shown that social work students are engaged in learning about topics related to sexuality, yet there are limited

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

avenues that provide this knowledge (Galarza & Anthony, 2015). Social work programs may begin to explore implementing diverse topics about sexuality such as consent, gender roles, and their influence on social inequality. By disseminating the findings such as consent and gender roles to social work classes and social work research symposiums, social work students can become more familiar with the complexity of beliefs on university campuses. Becoming more comfortable discussing consent, sexual relationships, and gender roles will directly influence their practice with populations, specifically around topics of sexuality.

On a mezzo level, the findings regarding the complexity of communicating and negotiating consent can provide additional knowledge to advocate for introducing consent and sexual relationships into primary and secondary sexual health education. In Alberta, school boards are advocating for the introduction of consent into the sex-education curriculum (CBC News, 2015). However, Alberta Education must create a clear mandate and timeline to see the addition of consent in the sex-education curriculum (CBC News, 2015).

Additionally, there is potential to close the gaps in sexual assault prevention by understanding the influence of consent, gender roles, and rape myths when labelling and reporting sexual assault. The Alberta government recently created the I Believe You campaign to show sexual violence survivors that they are heard when they disclose their abuse (Alberta Government, 2016). The goal of the I Believe You campaign is to encourage survivors to receive support and to create safe communities regarding sexual violence (Alberta Government, 2016). The findings of this study could provide meaningful voices to the I Believe You Campaign as university populations are often the most vulnerable to sexual assault (Harned, 2005).

On a macro-level, the findings have the potential to create a small change in the way sexuality is understood from a feminist perspective. The current labels placed on women (prude or slut) influence

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

the process of understanding what constitutes a sexual assault. Hopefully, the findings can contribute in a small way to deconstructing the belief that women are responsible for their own sexual assault.

In addition, the findings can contribute to the current paucity of feminist social work research. As Gringeri, Wahab, and Anderson-Nathe (2010) highlight, despite the existence of feminist social work practice, there is a dearth of courses and specific academic journals that focus on feminist social work research and research methods. The findings of this study can contribute to the existing knowledge and discussion within the literature regarding feminist social work research. In addition, this study may inform future social work scholars to take up feminist research methods and broaden the discussion of using this approach.

5.9 Recommendations from participants

The last and final section of this chapter explores specific recommendations from the participants. The recommendations discussed arose organically as participants discussed what they thought could change and what they would like to see happen. These recommendations range from what university institutions, primary and secondary schooling, and families can do to create a better culture of consent and sexuality in the general population.

5.9.1 Social media tools for sex education

Several participants discussed how they would like to see a shift in university-driven sex education programming. Two participants discussed how they would like to see the university implement social media tools such as blogs, vlogs, and general videos in order to educate about sex. Participants specifically discussed how formal seminars regarding sex education topics were not an appropriate means for communication and something they would not likely attend, regardless of whether or not they were interested in the topics.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

5.9.2 Increase security on university campuses

Several participants also communicated the need for increased security on university campuses, specifically the University of Calgary. Participants stated that they would feel much safer if they saw an increase in security guards on campus, specifically at night. While the majority of literature does not comment on what specific measures work to increase safety on campuses, they do address the importance of understanding the needs of students. Chekwa, Thomas, Jr., and Jones emphasize the importance of listening to students' concerns regarding security and trying to implement their suggestions (2013). It is suggested that by integrating student opinions and thoughts on security measures, campuses can directly become safer institutions.

5.9.3 Providing sex education that does not involve alcohol

Another interesting recommendation that came from several participants was the need to provide comprehensive sex education on campus that does not involve alcohol. Participants cited that the only time they heard about any sex-education was during Bermuda Shorts Day, which is the annual party at the end of the semester in April of each school year. During this event, condoms are given out, consent is discussed, and there are large amounts of alcohol. Participants cited that this is not an appropriate time to discuss condom use and consent as the majority of students are intoxicated, which decreases the effectiveness of the education.

5.9.4 Deconstructing unhealthy masculinities

Another interesting recommendation that participants spoke of was the need for society as a whole to deconstruct the typical aggressive and dominating ideals of masculinity. Participants spoke of how these ideals influence men to be sexually aggressive which perpetuates sexual assault. Participants spoke of how this shift in cultural values needs to change, specifically with family values and in the teachings of primary and secondary education systems. Participants stated that they believed that the amount of sexual assaults would not occur if the unhealthy ideals of masculinities were deconstructed.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

While not explicitly discussing the deconstruction of masculinity as a sexual assault prevention technique, Keddie (2006) explores how the deconstruction of unhealthy masculinity decreases the likelihood of male dominance. As dominance and aggression are often signs of one's likeliness to perpetuate sexual assault, the deconstructing of the norm that perpetuates this standard is crucial for limiting sexual violence on campuses.

5.9.5 Implementing consent into primary and secondary education

Lastly, many participants advocated for the need to introduce consent into primary and secondary sexual education in schools. Participants cited that while university campuses have good intentions for consent programming, these beliefs and values regarding consent and sexual relationships are instilled at a young age. Participants stated that it is necessary to incorporate consent education into primary and secondary education to reach individuals when they are forming their beliefs and values regarding sexual relationships and consent (i.e. sexual scripts). While universities are beginning to implement both sexual violence strategies and sexual health campaigns, shifting beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality and sexual assault need to occur prior to beginning university.

5.10 Conclusion

This thesis began with an introduction of the research topic of female university students and sexuality. An overview of my worldview and interest in this topic was discussed as were the inceptions of this study. Next, an overview of the literature that informed the research questions was discussed. Specifically, exploring definitions of sexuality, university culture, consent, rape myths, and gender roles were discussed. These topics were discussed as they both guided the formulation of the research questions and serve as beliefs and values that can predict sexual assault reporting behaviours. Then ethnography and feminist ethnography were discussed as the methodology that informed the study. An overview of methods was discussed, as were the ways in which the study met the criteria for trustworthiness. Lastly in Chapter Three, ethical considerations were discussed. Once the methodology

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

and methods were discussed, the findings of the thesis were provided. Themes and sub-themes were summarized in relation to the research questions. Direct quotes from participants were provided to capture the rich in-depth description of beliefs and attitudes regarding sexuality. Finally, Chapter Five began with the findings summarized within the relevant literature. There was a discussion of the themes that were consistent with the relevant literature and those that were not. In addition, recommendations were provided if there was a paucity of literature on a specific topic. Chapter Five ended with implications for social work practice on multiple levels and the recommendations from participants summarized within the literature.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Welcome

- Introduce interviewer

Hello and welcome to the interview. Thanks for taking the time to join me to about sexuality and issues on university campuses. My name is Carly-Ann Haney and I am an MSW student from the University of Calgary currently completing my thesis around female university student's beliefs and attitudes around sexuality.

Introduce Topic and Purpose

- Topic

Our discussion topic is around sexuality. I am interested in exploring your specific beliefs and attitudes around sexuality and how university culture has influenced those.

- Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine female university students understanding of sexuality. Specifically, how are female university student's sexuality influenced by university culture. Do university cultures and values influence beliefs on relationships, sexual feelings, sexual thoughts, and consent? University culture comprises of a unique setting where sexualized behaviour is accepted and women increasingly face sexual oppression and discrimination. The information gained from this study has the potential to inform future sexual health and healthy sexuality education and other social work interventions.

- Recording

I will be audio-recording this session. I am doing so because I don't want to miss any important points of the conversation. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and I can't write fast enough to get them all down. We will be on a first name basis today, but I will not use first names in any of our reports.

- Confidentiality

First and last names will not be included in reports that arise from this interview.

- Informed Consent

Thank for signing the consent form. Even though you have provided consent, you may withdraw your participation at any time. If you choose to withdraw, I will remove your contributions from the analysis.

Questions

Grand Tour Question: What I am studying is female university student's beliefs and attitudes around their sexuality? Is there anything that comes up for you when I say this?

Themes: Defining Sexuality

How do you define your sexuality, what does your sexuality mean to you?

Prompts

- different aspects of sexuality: image, sexual feelings, sexual thoughts, sexual acts, sexual orientation, relationships, personal expectations of self as sexual being
- what are common things you hear about sexuality?

Gender Roles and relationships

Do you think there are any specific relationships roles for each gender?

Prompts

- do you think that would change comparing a same sex relationship to a heterosexual one?
- Where do you think these roles come from? Are they taught from your family, peers, school or societal?

In a sexual relationship, what are some acceptable behaviors?

Prompts

- Examples of sexual behaviors: getting consent before having sex, communicating about condom use, having open communication about sex, being open about other sexual partners, safe boundaries

In a sexual relationship, what do you think are unacceptable behaviors?

Prompts

- limited communication during sex, dishonesty about number of partners, sexual manipulation, not respecting sexual boundaries

How do you make your decisions on acceptable sexual behavior?

- Where did your beliefs originate?
- Has university influenced your beliefs?
- What has the university done to talk about acceptable sexual behavior?

How comfortable do you feel voicing your concerns regarding your sexuality with a sexual partner?

Prompts

- Are there are certain aspects that you are more comfortable with than others?
- Are you comfortable talking about condom use, consent, sexual pleasure, STI testing

Consent

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

What do you think about consent? What does it mean to you?

Prompts

- Talk about different aspects of consent, verbal, non-verbal, timing of consent- when do you get it, how long does consent last?
- If you get consent for one sexual activity does that give consent for all further sexual activities?

How do you think alcohol/drugs influence the ability to consent?

Prompts

- is there an acceptable level of intoxication where someone can still give verbal consent? One drink, two drinks, four drinks, blackout?

How do you communicate your sexual boundaries with a sexual partner?

Prompts

- how do you verbally communicate with your partner?
- Do you use any non-verbal communication with your partner?
- When do you think it is best to communicate to your boundaries; before sex, during sex, after sex?

University sexual culture

What do you think are the sexual expectations of the university culture?

Prompts

- Define university culture- what do they think it is?
- How does being involved in university life (define university life) influence your own sexuality and own experiences?
- Did you have any expectations of sexual behavior prior to university?
- Where do you find the most information about sexuality on campus?
- How do you see sexual culture exhibited on campus?
- Are there aspects of the expectations of sexual culture on campus that has been beneficial? Have they helped you explore your sexuality further?
- Are there aspects of the expectations that you do not like or that you feel have hindered your sexuality?

Do you feel safe in terms of your sexuality on campus compared to when you were not in university?

What do you think about the behavior that goes on in bars and clubs that are attended by university students?

Prompts

- being harassed or approached by intoxicated individuals?
- Being groped?
- Feelings of pressure to dance with strangers?
- Buying drinks for strangers or accepting them, does it have any meaning?
- The dress-code of bars? The Pressure to wear certain clothing, short dresses, skirts, low tops? Does it mean anything if you wear those clothes and is there expectations around that?

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Is there any sexual behavior that occurs on university campuses and university events that would not be acceptable elsewhere?

Prompts

- give example of binge drinking as an example
- multiple sexual partners

Concluding demographic Questions

- What is your age?
- How would you describe your ethnicity?
- How would you describe your current relationship status?
- Are you working?
- What program are you enrolled in?

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM



Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Carly-Ann Haney, Faculty of Social Work, 403-330-8129, camhaney@ucalgary.ca

Supervisor: Jessica Ayala, PhD, Faculty of Social Work, 403-220-6676, jayala@ucalgary.ca

Title of Project: A feminist ethnographic examination of female university students' beliefs and attitudes around sexuality

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

The purpose of this study is to explore all aspects of female university students' sexuality and how contextual influences of university shape sexual scripts. This research has the potential to inform future peer oriented sexual health education. Additionally, it has the potential to fill the gap in the literature as sexual scripts of female university students are rarely explored from a Canadian, feminist, qualitative lens. Lastly, this research has the potential to inform a wide variety of social work interventions.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

Your participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate in the study you will be asked to attend a one to two hour interview with the researcher. The interview will be held a confidential location at the University of Calgary. Questions will be asked about your perspectives and personal experiences on sexuality, sexual relationships, gender roles, university sexual culture, and consent. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. The interview will be audio recorded and you must agree to this in order to participate. This will make sure I include all responses in the analysis. You can withdraw your participation at any time during the study and you will still be compensated with the \$25.00 gift card to Starbucks. If you choose to withdraw, your contributions will be removed from the analysis.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

You will be asked your age, ethnicity, relationship status, employment status and academic program at the end of the interview. The purpose of these questions is for the researcher to be able to look back at who participated in the study. The information will not be included in the data analysis and the researcher will keep your participation confidential and your responses to questions anonymous.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

This study will provide the opportunity for you to express your perspectives on your own sexuality. This information has the potential to benefit and inform social work practitioners on the unique experiences of female university students.

There is minimal emotional/psychological risk associated with your participation in the interview. Participants may feel uncomfortable discussing certain topics around sexuality. Participants are not required to answer questions that they are uncomfortable with. Additionally, participants may withdraw at any time during the interview without explanation.

If any questions trigger something that you would like to discuss further with a counsellor or health professional, please contact either the **University of Calgary Wellness Center at 403-210-9355** or for **immediate response please contact the Calgary Distress Center at 403-226-1601**

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

The interview digital recording will be transcribed and any notes from the session will be stored on password protected USB's and computers. The recording on the digital recorder, notes, and any paper copies will be deleted/shredded once analysis is complete. Upon completion of the project, electronic data will be stored on an external hard drive or USB in a locked office at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary for five years and then all files will be deleted.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

The researcher will analyze the transcript to identify themes, perspectives, and suggestions. Information you share will be summarized with other participant's responses so that it will be anonymous. The findings may be shared in reports, journal articles and presentations.

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact

Carly-Ann Haney, 403-330-8129, camhaney@ucalgary.ca

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Supervisor: Jessica Ayala, 403, 220, 6676, jayala@ucalgary.ca

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUALITY