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Exploring Activism: A Journey With Women-Identified Student Activists at Laurier Brantford and How Activism Can Have a Positive Impact on Campus Culture

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Sarah Cifani

**Exploring Activism: A Journey With Women-Identified Student
Activists at Laurier Brantford and How Activism Can Have a Positive
Impact on Campus Culture**

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COMPLETED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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Dr. Jennifer Root, Dr. Marcia Oliver and Dr. Rebecca Godderis

Abstract

Feminist student activism at Wilfrid Laurier University Brantford campus has changed and progressed over the last decade. Currently, woman-identified feminist students are actively fighting to end rape culture on campus by educating students on feminism, consent, and the negative impacts of a rape culture. This research study highlights the challenges and barriers faced by activists as they work within an institution that presents patriarchal, heteronormative, and racist ideals. This research study utilized qualitative research methods to interview seven woman-identified feminist student activists from Laurier Brantford, consisting of current, graduating and graduated students. Each participant was interviewed about their experience as a self-identified woman feminist activist at Laurier Brantford, as well as their own feminist journeys. The results of this research present the importance of feminist student activism at Laurier Brantford and how it is able to shape campus culture through cultivating a strong community, and educating students on campus. In addition, this research illustrates the challenges of feminist student activism that resulted from working within a patriarchal bureaucratic institution. Additionally, this research explores the impact systemic barriers had on participants. However, regardless of struggles all seven participants agreed that feminist activism is important to Laurier Brantford as it helps to provide students with a positive campus culture.

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Introduction

Western patriarchal societies sustain a culture that normalizes violence against women (VAW). This gendered violence is a form of control placed on women that keeps men in dominant positions, while women remain, whether survivors of violence or not, in a constant state of fear (Bohner et al, 2009, p.17). While I have not always self-identified as a feminist, I have experienced these forms of control and fear, as a woman.

Growing up, I always found myself resenting being labelled a ‘tomboy’ simply because I did not fit into the box of femininity that I had been placed in, since my gender was announced a girl. Through the years this box has positioned me as emotional, weak, and submissive in comparison to my male peers. I often remember getting angry that because I was a girl, I was treated differently than my older brother; for example I was not allowed out alone late at night, and I had an earlier curfew. I have come to understand these experiences as microaggressions that have shaped and molded me into the person I am today: the woman who still fears walking alone in the dark. Microaggressions refer to “everyday prejudice, bias, and discrimination upon marginalized groups”(Sue, 2010, pg. xv). Micro-aggressions refer to the small, and often considered subtle challenges members of marginalized communities face. These experiences are not exclusive to me, but rather are ubiquitous to many women’s experiences within the world. These experiences are also shaped by other systemic inequalities, such as race, class and sexual orientation. In particular, women of colour experience much higher rates of subordination, marginalization, violence, and re-victimization over white women (Glenn, 1992). Therefore it is impossible for me to ever truly understand the experiences of other women, but it is through this research that I sought to gain further insight into the

experiences of self-identified feminist students at Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford campus.

Scope of the Research

The purpose of this project is to highlight and share the journey of women identified feminist student activists at Laurier Brantford. This research will illustrate how 1) university spaces can be a birthing place for feminism, 2) working within a university can present many challenges due to its bureaucratic nature, and 3) the important role that community building plays within activism. However, the main purpose of this research is to provide an understanding of how feminist activism can create a positive campus culture at Laurier Brantford. In discussing the findings, I will show how feminist activism can not only build a community amongst activists but also this research will also validate the hard work that many women put in in order to eliminate rape culture on campus (i.e. culture that normalizes violence against women).

Before proceeding with a discussion of the relevant literature, methodology, and theoretical influences framing this research, as well as my analysis, I will clarify what I mean by feminism, patriarchy, the gender binary and rape culture. Although feminism has multiple meanings, for the purposes of this research I draw on the idea that feminism is a recognition that men hold more power within society than women (Hannam, 2007, p. 4; Freedman, 2013; hooks, 2000). Feminism is a political way of viewing the world that recognizes the many sites of power that exist between and among men and women. These power dynamics or sites of power within society shape women's (and men's) experiences within the world. As bell hooks explains, the phrase "the personal is political" (2000, p. 26) is an important reminder that our personal agency is constrained by the political and

societal structures that are in place, which favour certain individuals over others.

Furthermore, patriarchy can be defined as a male-dominated society that is oppressive to women (Hunnicut, 2009). Pease's (2010) definition of a male-dominated society refers to, "men's authority and control over the major social, political, economic, religious, legal, and military institutions" (pg. 94). Patriarchy ultimately refers to the complex relations of domination and power that exists between men and women in society, as consequently men hold more power than women (Hannam, 2007).

Additionally, the gender binary reflects the idea that there are only two ways for identifying gender: male or female. This binary becomes problematic as it attempts to isolate individuals into identifying as either male or female depending only on their biological sex assigned at birth and therefore assigning specific roles and expectations to each gender (Keener, 2015). As a result the gender binary does not reflect diversity of gender identity and expression as it attempts to force individuals to maintain ideas around masculinity and femininity.

Lastly, rape culture can be identified as a term that highlights the current culture in which we live in that justifies and normalizes violence against women, such as rape and sexual assault. (Rentschler, 2014; Brownmiller, 1966). As a result of rape culture, many rape myths are also formed and can be identified as false beliefs around survivors of rape as well as perpetrators. These rape myths usually result in others blaming the survivor and forgiving the perpetrator (Bohner, 2009; Swigger, 2015). While rape culture is a culture that condones sexual violence against women, rape myths refer to specific myths associated with rape and/or sexual assault. As a result of rape culture and rape myths, a violent culture that normalizes sexual violence against women exists, and therefore

understands assault as a normal expected behaviour by men. While rates of sexual assault are consistently high, there is an elevated rate of sexual assault that is experienced amongst university and college women, as the rate for being a survivor of sexual assault is four times higher for women-identified university and college students (Statistics Canada, 2009; Canadian Student Federation-Ontario, 2013). These statistics are as a result of colleges and universities having a rape culture that promotes particular attitudes and beliefs that place a woman's safety at risk (Government of Ontario, 2013). Several reports suggest that less than 20% of sexual assaults on college campuses are reported (Bohner et al 2009; Burnett et al, 2009). It can be argued that many women fear the outcomes of the police and the court system, with a perpetual fear of being re-victimized. Similarly, due to increase of stigma that is placed around sexual violence women are afraid of the humiliation that may come with sharing their experience (Canadian Student Federation-Ontario, 2013). Therefore, rape culture is a large concern for student activists, and many of the participants share with me their own personal experiences of witnessing rape culture on campus and their desires to eliminate it.

This research draws upon an intersectional feminist framework that has allowed me to better understand how different identities and intersections shape a woman's experience within the world. In addition, intersectional theory was used when developing the themes as a way to not homogenize participant's experiences but rather bring attention to the fact that one's identity can help shape one's experiences. Therefore, while participants did have similar stories, they were all unique and reflective of their own identities. Through this research, I have been able to gain further insight into feminist student activism within Laurier Brantford, and an increased understanding of the struggles that feminist students

face in their fight to eradicate the hierarchal structures that exist within the campus. In addition, it has helped gain a better understanding of how positive feminist activism can be for not only the activists, but the broader school community as well. This qualitative study highlights feminist activism on campus, while simultaneously serving as a source of evidence to show the importance of feminist activism on shaping Laurier Brantford's campus. Additionally, I am hoping this research offers as a reminder that in order for meaningful change to occur individuals need to work together towards a collective liberation.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to explore scholarship surrounding feminist activism and provide an explanation of how this literature has informed the following research and analysis. This literature review has four sections. The first section will define feminist activism in a university context. The second section will explore key aspects of feminist activism, paying attention to the role that gender and intersectionality play within such activism, which includes how the gender binary positions women as less valuable than men, as well as discuss society's constant need to objectify and police women's bodies. In addition, this section will explore how people's intersectional identities play a key role in their feminism and activism, as well as the importance of being self-reflective while participating in intersectional work. The third section includes literatures illustrating how university has become a birthing place for feminist activism as it provides students with new knowledge, experiences and opportunities that they may not have had prior to entering university. In this section, I will examine that while

university is a birthing place for feminism there are also many systemic barriers that exist within an institutional setting that create numerous challenges for feminist activism. In the final section, I will discuss the importance of community within feminist activism and its role in creating a support system for activists.

Feminist Activism Definition

Firstly, I want to present how feminist activism is defined within literature, including the goals and aims of feminist activism as this will be an important theme throughout the project. I also want to draw attention to how these goals are reproduced within a university context as well, which will also be explored throughout this literature review. In the literature on women as feminist activists, feminist activism is defined as women collectively organizing together as a result of systemic disadvantages and inequality that women experience within society (Roth, 2004; hooks, 2000). Feminist activism is rooted in the recognition of oppressions that women experience as a consequence of systemic inequalities and results in women collectively organizing against these oppressions. Collective organization amongst women is a key aspect of this activism as it ultimately allows women to realize they are not alone in their struggles (Baines, 2011). Collective action not only aims to bring awareness to social inequalities but, according to Hercus (1999) points at legitimizing the anger women feel while directing it at the source of the social injustice (p. 36). Some definitions of feminist resistance or activism can include passive forms of resistance, such as refusing to participate or objecting to sexist content in conversations or patriarchal culture (Higginbotham, 1996).

However, for the purpose of this research, I will be focusing on the more active

forms of collective mobilization that comprise feminist activism that address the social structures that value women less than men and ultimately create a culture that justifies rape and violence towards women. Specifically, I want to focus on what feminist organizing looks like for woman-identified students in the context of a university. It is important to note that I understand feminist student activism as a broad extension of feminist activism, as it is reflective of the larger social struggles that exist (Adrangi, 2013; Staggenborg, 2008; Hart, 2003; Roth, 2004). The goal of student feminist activism is to raise awareness and challenge gender inequalities that are both pervasive in society and reproduced within university institutions and culture. In the 21st century, student activists often use technology as a social tool within activism such as social media to engage an audience rather than traditional forms of resistance such as sit-ins, and marches (Broadhurst, 2014). As previously stated, an example of inequality that exists that has continued to elicit activism from feminists is the disproportionately high rates of sexual assault experienced by women as compared to men (Statistics Canada, 2010). In terms of feminist student activism, while it is specific to students, it is not separate from feminist activism, as they are interconnected with one another. However for the purpose of this research, this paper will focus specifically on feminist activism by woman-identified students on Laurier Brantford's campus.

Feminist Activism

Gender.

A key aspect of feminist activism is the role it plays in addressing the social construction of gender and gender roles and how they affect women's experiences (Beckman, 2014). There are many expectations placed on women as a result of the social

construction of gender, and feminist activists attempt to break down these societal barriers by bringing attention to gender inequality. Examples of this include when feminist student activists organize on university campuses to address the role of gender in pay inequity amongst professors, the lack of women's studies programs, and the need for services for women (Staggenborg, 2008). Many feminist activists can actually be credited for helping to implement women's studies programs within universities (hooks, 2003). When discussing how gender inequality affects women's experiences it is important to make clear that these experiences are not the same for all women. For example, women of colour experience much higher rates of subordination, marginalization, violence, and re-victimization than do white women (Glenn, 1992). As a result, women of colour also have less access to basic social and economic needs such as housing and employment security, proper health services, and overall they become more vulnerable than white women (McGibbon, 2012, p.145).

One effect of the gender binary is that it positions women as feminine, quiet and submissive. As Karimi (2015) states, "Patriarchal societies throughout history ignored the thoughts, ideas, and opinions of women— the subaltern sex— subjugating and overpowering them into silence or what I call a 'state of marginalized introversion' " (p.58). Due to this subordination, men often hold more powerful positions within society (hooks, 2000). However, feminist activism often requires women to be loud, to take up space, and to share their opinions. As a result, this can bring up feelings of guilt in women as they struggle to be loud in a male dominated society (Hercus, 1999). Due to this double standard that exists, women are often required to employ what are known as particularly male characteristics if they hope to have occupational success (Fordham,

1993). For women this means that they are constantly feeling pressure to meet the correct gender expectations that assume them to remain submissive, quiet, and feminine.

Another important effect of gender that is often addressed within activism is the hyper-sexualization of a woman's body and the impact this can have on women in society. Due to the gender binary that presently exists, women are often being sexually objectified by men (Cologero, 2004; Dubinsky, 1993). As Lee (1994) suggests, women are taught that their bodies are meant to be sexual objects for the heterosexual male. Objectification theory studies the effects sexual objectification can have on women suggesting that: "that learned cultural practices of sexual objectification lead girls and women...to adopt a view of themselves as objects whose value is based on appearance" (Grabe, Hyde, and Lindberg, 2007). In addition, as a result of this hyper-sexualization, women's bodies have become policed in very serious and specific ways. An example of this is when a woman and victim of sexual assault is blamed for dressing in a sexualized way, as society does not expect men to control their own sexual arousal and blames the woman for the way she is dressed (Reger, 2014). Another example is how Muslim women experience enormous amounts of policing and discrimination when it comes to wearing a veil. This discrimination highlights not only Islamophobia, but it also intersects with gender as it reflects the stereotype that the veil is representation of Muslim women oppression (Allen, 2015). In addition, the policing of women's bodies can also be seen in the way that women are also exploited when it comes to reproductive choices/laws. Currently, women's rights to reproduction are not valued. However, there is a pervasive lack of access to contraception, in addition harsh abortion laws contributing to the current gender inequality as women are being punished for choosing abortion (Flavin, 2009; Swigger,

2015).

Intersectionality.

Another key aspect of feminist activism that is important to discuss is intersectionality. As described by Davis (2008), intersectionality refers to “interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” (p.68). Nayak (2015) argues that these identity categories, such as race and gender, are socially constructed, and therefore intersectionality exposes the negative consequences of these social constructions and how they affect individuals’ experiences within the world. A key focus of feminist scholarship is how race, class, sexuality, and gender are interconnected and constitutive of an individual’s identity within the world.

In her analysis of violence against women, Crenshaw (1991) argues that the violence women experience is interconnected with the other identities they hold, such as race and class. Intersectionality allows feminists to challenge essentialism by recognizing that “complex relations of power and subordination are such that no one member can ‘represent’ the scope and context of the named subordination for all those caught in its grasp” (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 8). Therefore, when feminist scholarship does not represent an intersectional approach, the writer is ultimately forcing particular issues to be battling against one another, rather than supporting each other, and in effect is providing continuous power to those who already hold it (hooks, 2000).

Similarly, the same recognition must inform feminist activism in order to create allyship amongst activists. It is important for feminist activists to be able to understand

the specific political needs that pertain to women who are marginalized in other ways. For example, as Crenshaw (1991) makes evident, “the political interests of women of color are obscured and sometimes jeopardized by political strategies that ignore or suppress intersectional issues” (p. 1252). Therefore, it is important that activists continue to be self-reflective in their activism. As hooks (2000) reflects on how at the times she has had white activists say to her, “ ‘we wanted black women and other non-white women to join the movement,’ [they are] totally unaware of their perception that they somehow ‘own’ the movement” (p.55). While it can be difficult to attempt to understand the intersectional categories that contribute to each woman’s experiences within the world it is crucial that feminist work be led by diverse groups of women with different experiences. As will be explored later, many of the activists interviewed noted that their own identities, privileges, and experiences were very crucial in shaping their own activism.

Universities Role Within Activism

Feminist activism on university campuses is not a new concept, as activism has been taking place over the last several decades as women began fighting against gender inequality (Taylor and Laat, 2013; Taylor and Rupp, 1993). Universities have become a place where students are able to come and have new experiences, learn new concepts, and be immersed in a different culture to which they may not have been previously exposed. As discussed by Cohen and Jackson (2016), students who are in gender studies, ethnic studies, or race studies courses are leading the current activism, and they are doing this because the institution has been able to challenge previous ideas they have had through such courses (p.780). This idea is also supported by Shircliffe (2000), who accredits

women's studies courses to challenging students' views on sexism. Thorne suggests that activism initiating in universities can be credited to students being, "young, impressionable, energetic, and ready to forge their identity. They have the time and willingness to help people who ask" (p.213). Additionally, Broadhurst (2014) suggests that educational institutions provide the proper environment for student activism due to numerous factors such as universities encourage critical thinking, diversity on campuses provides students with different and challenging viewpoints, as well as providing funds and space for activism. Therefore, university in itself not only provides students with the new knowledge and concepts through courses and diversity but also provides students with the appropriate space and funding that they may not have had access to prior to beginning school.

However, while universities may provide students with new knowledge and experience of activism, the university as a bureaucratic institution continues to be a systemic barrier that activists often have to fight against. As previously mentioned, gender binaries are an important aspect of feminist activism, and therefore gender inequality exists within universities as well (Staggenborg, 2010). In addition to a heightened level of rape culture, universities also have either a lack of or poor institutional policies that harm survivors of sexual violence within the institution itself (Harris, 2013). It can be suggested that rape culture and institutional policies that disadvantage women are due to the fact that universities reinforce ideas of patriarchy, heteronormativity, and racism within the classroom (Henry 2011; Cummins, 2005). Currently, classrooms within educational institutions are sites where one can witness "domination (on the basis of race, class, gender, nationality, sexual preference, religion)"

(hooks, 2003, p. xiii). Further, hooks addresses how this dominant culture is represented within the classroom as marginalized individuals have a more difficult time due to continued oppression. Cohen and Jackson (2016) write that, “for women of colour, there is an understanding that you may never be fully embraced in the academy” (p.779). As mentioned earlier, institutions represent ideas of patriarchy, heteronormativity, and racism and when looking at physical space and visibility, it is no shock that white males are more likely to hold authoritative positions within universities (hooks, 2003). Therefore, when referring to the university as a site that reinforces ideas of patriarchy, racism and heteronormativity, I am referring to this being a direct result of white, cis-gender, male having majority of the authority within these institutions and therefore being responsible for how they are organized and maintained.

Further, as a result of bureaucratic ideologies which exist within universities, women’s studies is often a program the university invests little funding into, and often experiences enormous cuts each year (Shircliffe, 2000). Roth (2004) refers to this as “feminist fading”(p.152) as a result of institutions purposefully using their efforts to drain feminist life on campus. In turn, professors in women’s studies are feeling incredible burnout by the effort it takes to maintain a viable women’s studies program within a university that is able to address the needs of a diverse group of racial and ethnic students (Shircliffe, 2000), particularly since much of the teaching is done by white men and women (hooks, 2003). Additionally, many of the black studies and women’s studies programs are frequently devalued as programs for students’ choice of major (hooks, 2003). Due to lack of funding and university support, as well additional systemic oppressions that place women and in particular racialized women in disadvantaged

positions within society, programs that hope to highlight these oppressions are not truly valued amongst society as adequate majors for students. As a result universities continue to perpetuate an oppressive, patriarchal, racist culture that results in higher levels of rape culture, and sexist policies on campus that do not support survivors of sexual assault.

When discussing the societal barriers that women often face within in an institution it is important to address the way that neoliberalism has profoundly affected feminist activism. As described by Harvey (2005), *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, neoliberalism refers to “deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision”(p. 3). One key aspect of neoliberalism is the effect it has had on activism as a result of privatization that has created a reduction in state involvement with social services (Hawsworth, 2006, p. 18). Furthermore, due to privatization feminist community agencies feel the pressures to restrain from activism for fear of losing their funding (Fay, 2011). Additionally, feminist researchers experience a lack of funding available and pressures from organizations to eliminate feminist methodologies (Langan and Morton, 2009).

Similarly, these neoliberal barriers are experienced within the institutional setting, as feminist activists become forced to follow a particular institutional agenda. Messer-Davidow (2002) argues that institutions control activism, as institutions remain driven by “socio-economic forces” (p.127). As previously mentioned, universities continue to make cuts to women’s studies programs in universities, maintaining a dominant culture that places administration in control. Within the confines of the university, feminist activism is forced to uphold a neoliberal agenda, ultimately constraining the activism itself, and what can be achieved. As a result, these issues are placed more in the hands of the

corporate elite, and this has even greater impacts on women of colour, and poor women, as continuous cuts are made to programs and support for women on campus.

Building Community Within Activism

Lastly, I want to explore the role feminist activism has in building community and support amongst activists. Feminist activism is not merely about fighting oppressions but also allows for activists to create mutual support for one another through their activism by sharing stories and experiences (Staggenborg, 2008), and in creating community with one another (Shircliffe, 2000). In *The Revolution Starts at Home* one of the authors Ching-In Cheng (2011) provides her definition of community writing:

What it meant for me to be in community was to not have to feel alone and isolated, to be able to feel hopeful about the possibilities that there could be ways to figure out how to feel protected in whatever, whichever ways we needed to (p.9)

Cheng's definition of community is an extension of Staggenborg's in saying that community within activist work is about relationship building and supporting one another.

However, while community building is about building support and relationships amongst activists, the text *The Revolution Starts at Home* (2011) brings to light the fact that inter-partner violence can occur even amongst community members and activists (Piepzna-Samarasinha, p.90). Even though activists may appear as though they are fighting against systemic barriers, activists may still be perpetuating these oppressions as well. Even feminist women who are part of the liberation participate in sexist behaviour through "abusive trashing, and total disregard and lack of concern or interest in women who have not joined the feminist movement" (hooks, 2000,49). Although this behaviour

is possible, feminist activism at its core should be about eliminating gender inequality and eliminating the oppression of all women in a way that creates stronger communities amongst diverse groups of women.

Although community building can be seen as an unimportant aspect of activism, it is a crucial aspect in creating change. hooks (2000) emphasizes how sexism essentially creates an environment where it is acceptable for women hating to exist (p.48). While hook agrees that feminist activism can provide an opportunity for women to build community together she also believes that women must work harder to build solidarity amongst women because it is difficult to continue to participate in activist work without support (hooks, 2000; hooks, 2003). Liss and Erchull (2010) indicate that feminists as a whole believe that in order for collective liberation to occur women need to work together to achieve goals. Stall and Stoecker (1998) also suggest that a strong community amongst activists will help sustain the movement itself (p.730). Therefore, while it is not completely unlikely that activists can elicit the exact behaviours they are hoping to break, community building is still a crucial aspect of feminist activism as it can create stronger support with activists and when true solidarity is achieved activists can start to break down structural barriers.

Methodology

Anchored in the interpretative paradigm, this project relied on feminist research methods to explore experiences of activism among woman-identified students at Laurier's Brantford campus. By using an interpretive approach I was able to better understand women's individual experiences (and the meanings that women give to their

experiences), rather than quantify their experience using numbers. Feminist methodologies are often invested in qualitative narratives accounts that are “contextual, performative, [and] constructed in social interaction” (Sutton, 2011, p. 183). Feminist scholarship aims at being a reflection of a woman’s personal experiences that is shaped by the structures and intersections that exist in her own life (Brown and Strega, 2005) and the role positionality and reflexivity plays within analysis.

Theoretical Framework

As identified by bell hooks (2000), one of the central problems within feminist theories is the lack of consensus around the definition of feminism amongst scholars and women (hooks, 2000). However, while a universal definition of feminism is undesirable and impossible, most feminists would agree that feminism is derived from the struggle to end gender oppression and does not value any specific group of women over another regardless of race or class (hooks, 2000; Beckman, 2014). Given that the purpose of this research is to gain insight into feminist student activism at Wilfrid Laurier Brantford, my conceptual and methodological approach was informed by feminist interpretive and intersectional approaches.

I used intersectional theory to look beyond gender as a form of oppression and to focus on how different intersections of race, class, and sexual identity play an important role in shaping women’s experiences. Originally conceptualized by Kimberle Crenshaw, intersectionality brings to light the ways that women of colour have different experiences than white women, and how often experiences of racial oppression are seen as separate for women of colour. Crenshaw (2011) defines intersectionality as a theory that “draws attention to the ways that structural dimensions of racism, patriarchy and other forms of

domination constitute complex patterns of disadvantage and power”(p. 228; Davis, 2008, p. 68). Similarly, Davis (2008) deems intersectionality as one of the most significant contributions made to feminist theory. While Crenshaw’s original intention was to highlight the ways that race and gender intersect, feminists have built on this insight to focus on the many ways that social structures shape our experiences and identities. Sharp and Weaver (2015) argue that it is important for feminist scholars to be aware that “intersectionality acknowledges that identity (subjectivity) is formed by the interconnected structures of gender, race, class, sexuality, etc., and cannot be analyzed separately” (p. 308).

I was able to interview a diverse group of participants in order to have a better understanding of the way one’s identities and experiences has shaped their activism, as it was often in very clear and definite ways. My goal was to employ a feminist intersectional and interpretive framework as a way to better understand women’s experiences on campus, with particular attention placed on how these experiences are shaped by intersections of gender, race and class.

Recruitment Strategy

In order to recruit participants, I used both snowball and convincing sampling. I reached out to six self-identified feminist faculty on campus through email, explaining the purpose of this project and the characteristics of the participants I was interested in interviewing. I asked each for a list of names, this was a snowball sampling. Many of the professors I emailed are part of feminist organizing initiatives on campus. From the faculty emailed, I received two responses with lists of names. Within these lists however there were some similarities in suggestions. In discussion with my advisor we chose a list

of seven names of current, graduating, and former students to solicit participation in the research, this is referred to as a convenience sampling due to the fact that each participant was specifically selected. I invited students who had engaged in activism for more than a year, and who actively worked with feminist initiatives on campus. After creating a list of potential participants, I sent an email (see Appendix A) to each participant outlining the details of the project, and their potential role in the research. Luckily, all participants emailed were excited to participate and within the following month I completed all interviews.

Informed Consent Process

Each participant received a copy of the informed consent statement (Appendix B) approximately one week prior to the interview. The purpose of this was to provide participants with an opportunity to review the consent form in order to ensure they understood and agreed to participation in the study; at this time, participants were encouraged to mention any concerns. No participants offered any concerns regarding the consent form. Prior to each interview, I went over the consent form with participants and reminded them that they could remove themselves from the study at any time. As part of the member checking process (additional check- in to verify consent to participate), participants received a copy of the transcript and were offered the opportunity to change, edit, or remove anything they did not want used in the final written paper. Two participants made adjustments at this time, and those edits were used in this paper. In addition, after completing the paper in its entirety, participants were provided an opportunity to review the whole written piece and to see the data used. After completion of the paper, it was evident that while participants were provided an opportunity to use

pseudonyms there is a potential that participants may still be identifiable, and I wanted to make this clear to the participants. Participants were emailed and provided with further explanation of these risks (Appendix D). At this time participants were asked to review the consent form in order to understand that this paper will be made publicly accessible to members within the Laurier Brantford community and understand the potential risks associated with this. Participants were given two weeks to review the paper and had an opportunity to either provide continued consent or to withdraw at this time. In addition, participants were able to offer any changes or omissions they wished to make to the paper as a condition of their ongoing consent. Two participants made adjustments at this time, and those edits were used in this paper.

Interviews

Within feminist methodology and research, interviews can be seen as a process that allows women, “to address the questions that matter most in their lives in a manner that respects their values, knowledge, and subjectivity” (O’Shaughnessy and Krogman, 2011, p. 495). For this research I conducted six in depth interviews lasting between 40 minutes to one hour in length. For five of the six interviews, I interviewed one individual at a time, while one of the interviews was a paired interview. Therefore while I had six total interviews, seven participants provided responses to the interview questions. For each interview I prepared a list of questions that I used as a guide (Appendix C), however the interviews were set up to be open-ended conversations. The participants were able to choose a location of their choice, however due to participant schedules and locations, two participants chose to conduct the interview over Skype, and one interview was conducted over the phone. The remaining interviews were conducted on campus. The participants

were not offered any incentive.

Prior to beginning each interview I reviewed the consent form with each participant, explaining the goals of the research, and the options they had. For example, each participant had the ability to choose whether or not they wanted their name used in the paper; if they preferred not to have their name used they chose their own pseudonym (false name). All participants chose to use a pseudonym. Once interviews were transcribed, all participants were given the opportunity to review the transcript and edit, change, or eliminate anything they did not want used within the written paper.

Additionally, participants were also be given a copy of the final paper to ensure their experiences were represented in a way that they feel comfortable with, and if not, as previously discussed they had the opportunity to eliminate, change and make suggestions on the way their experiences (quotes) are used within this paper.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. During each interview, although I took notes, I tried to engage with each participant, sharing in the conversation and sharing my own experiences. Because I was asking participants to share personal stories and experiences, I felt as though it was important for me to also share my own experiences as a way to build a stronger relationship with the participants and create a safer space. Melissa Gilbert (1994) identifies the importance of fostering a safer space during an interview especially when interviewing individuals who are in a position of less privilege than the researcher. Gilbert (1994) identifies that it is not just about the interview process itself but it is also important for researchers to create a relationship with the people they interview. For her, it was important to foster “a supportive, trusting, empathetic relationship” in the process of conducting interviews (p. 93). I felt that by

sharing my own experiences it would allow the participants to feel more comfortable about sharing their personal stories and create a more conversational environment where answers would feel less forced and rehearsed.

Sample Characteristics

All sample characteristics were collected through the interview process and all participants identified that they were women-identified feminists, and were alumnus, current student, or recently graduated student of Wilfrid Laurier Brantford. Participants were both undergraduate and graduate students. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 37. All students were actively involved on campus activism, with all of them being involved in feminist groups on campus as well as actively participating in specific feminist-based initiatives on campus. An example of an initiative some participants were involved with was the opening and running of the LBWC on the Laurier Brantford campus. Because some participants chose to, disclose their cultures, races, and sexualities there is a level of diversity present within the sample. However, while few discussed class, one participant did address growing up in a lower income family. Participants shared their identities through open-ended questioning during the interview process. For example, some participants shared identities about race and sexuality during the interview. Anytime a participant's identity was shared and used within analysis, it was always the result of self-identification by the participants themselves during the interview, and was not assumed by myself the researcher.

Analysis Strategy

After each interview I created a list of themes that were heavily focused on during each interview; I wrote down examples of what was discussed, or connections I could

make to other interviews. In addition, I also wrote detailed memos, including 1) my personal feelings and thoughts after each interview, 2) things I thought went well, 3) things I wish I had discussed more, and 4) my own positionality within the interview and how it may have affected the conversation. After each interview was complete I went through the memos and created a list of themes that appeared to be present across all or most interviews. After transcribing each interview I completed a member check in order to improve the accuracy and credibility of each participant's words and thoughts. As part of the member checking process, each participant received a copy of their transcript and was given two weeks to review their transcript to confirm the accuracy of our conversation. If any adjustments or alternative explanation was provided during the member checking process, these adjustments were included in the final product if needed in the results.

Each transcript was uploaded on NVivo, a computer program that allowed me to code each interview by highlighting particular themes and organizing them together in one file. Through this software I was able to develop major themes and subthemes and code lines from the interviews that I felt were relevant to the topic. For the purpose of analysis I went through each interview line by line several times. This process aided me in narrowing down the themes, as I was able to easily see emergent themes most common in interviews.

Once the key themes were identified I created a rough outline of how I wanted to position these findings to address the initial research question of whether or not campus activism can create positive change to campus culture at Laurier Brantford.

Reflexivity and Role of the Researcher

An important aspect of feminist methodology is the practice of reflexivity (Sharp and Weaver, 2015). Reflexivity as a practice requires researchers to be self-critical and accountable in their work. However, as noted by Sharp and Weaver (2015), this practice is not always a comfortable one. Engaging in critical reflexivity often requires the researcher to deal with feelings of discomfort and to reflect on their personal privilege in relation to those they intend to interview (p. 299; Pillow, 2013). As a white, middle-class, heterosexual, cis-gendered, educated woman, these privileges impacted the interviews. Recognizing these privileges, I attempted to mitigate some of power as the researcher by sharing my own identities with participants prior to asking them how their identity shaped their activism. While being able to acknowledge my privilege did make me feel vulnerable, this vulnerability is not comparable to how vulnerable it was for the participants to share with me their experiences of marginalization. But I wasn't prepared to ask participants to be vulnerable if I wasn't willing to do that same.

By sharing my own identity and privileges I hoped to signal to participants that I acknowledge my own privilege and that checking myself is essential to my activism, while also allowing the participant to feel more at ease in sharing their own identity and experience. During each interview I shared with participants my identity, and how my identity has created and resulted in me experiencing many forms of privilege and power. It is my hope that the participants were able to understand that by acknowledging my privilege, and sharing my experiences, I was/am attempting to be accountable and avoiding complacency. However, it is important to acknowledge the role that my positionality played within the conducting of the research as it is inevitable personal bias and assumptions play a role in the data collected. For example, Banks (1994) addresses

how a researcher's positionality influences the research in terms of questions that are asked, as well as in analysis. I cannot deny that my own positionality as previously identified, provided me with not only the opportunity to explore this work but also provided me with the curiosity as to whether one's identity can shape their experiences with activism. In addition, because I worked alongside many of the participants in activism, and also had close relationships this influenced the conversations we had and what experiences the participants were willing to share. In addition, this also had me enter each interview with assumptions about what I thought the participant would want to address or share with me during the interview and this could have influenced the questions I chose to ask.

Prior to exploring the results, I want to share a piece of my own feminist journey, because as previously discussed reflectivity is an important role of the feminist researcher. While conducting my analysis and research, it became very evident to me that I was on a very similar journey as many of the participants I interviewed, and that my own personal experience can add value to this research and therefore my experiences will also be weaved through the analysis portion of this paper. In order to conduct this research I felt it was very crucial that I take time to reflect upon my own journey as a girl and as a woman, and my own experiences, and what lead me to feminism. Although I have already expressed remembering feelings of frustration, anger and fear, some of the most vibrant experiences did not take place until high school and university. I can remember numerous experiences of being objectified in such a way that I began to normalize and suppress violent behaviours. These behaviours were also obvious in heterosexual relationships I was witnessing. For example, women experiencing abusive

behaviours and having them become so normalized within society. A specific example of this was being in a relationship where I had lost control of my body, it was no longer my own but rather the property of my partner. I was no longer allowed to make my own decisions about piercing my body, getting a tattoo, or even the way I cut my hair; I suddenly needed permission. It wasn't until this relationship ended that I was finally able to see how much I lost of myself, and how I would never allow that to happen again. If he hadn't ended it, I am not sure I ever would have had the courage to break it off; I had become attached to the control. It was from this moment that I vowed myself that I would never be in a relationship where I couldn't control my own body and mind. And that's when I found feminism.

Individuals who may not understand the concept and ideas surrounding feminism often consider feminism as a dirty word. Although it took me a long time to begin to self-identify as a feminist, I strongly stood behind many feminist values. The value that always sticks with me the most and I feel most connected to is the right to choose: the right to choose what to wear, who to sleep with, what to do with my body and with my life regardless of gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, or culture. Earlier this year during the completion of my Graduate Studies Social Justice Community Engagement (SJCE), for the first time I was asked directly "Do you identify as a feminist?" until this point I had stood up for feminist values but I had yet to self-identify as a feminist. Truthfully, I was terrified that by identifying as a feminist people would assume that I know everything there is to know about feminism and feminist theory, and I didn't want to be just another 'white feminist' who claims feminism but does nothing to actually prove it, or support it. It was from this moment that I decided that if I did become just

another 'white feminist' than that would be on me. It was my turn to finally take action, and rather than just supporting feminist values it was time to actively support feminism and educate not only myself but others around me as well, and this is how I began the research.

In early October I began working with a feminist-identified group on campus who worked to strengthen access to safer spaces on campus for women-identified students and to create a new Women's Centre on campus. When the group held their first meeting in the space, it was quickly realized that although an extensive amount of work had already been accomplished, there was still a lot more to do. It seemed like an appropriate fit for me to complete my 120-hour community placement (a required component of the SJCE program) at the Women's Centre in order to help with the administrative work that needed to be completed before the Centre could open.

My role at the Centre involved facilitating meetings, gathering more volunteers, organizing trainings and events, and helping to decorate and organize the space itself. Additionally, there were numerous emails that needed to be sent, paperwork to complete, and a handbook to be written that outlined the Centre's mandate and operating procedures. As a result of my placement and experiences in the Centre, I was able to not only participate in feminist activism happening on campus, but also was able to meet many other women who were also working toward similar goals of breaking gender inequality on campus. It is a result of this placement that I realized the importance and value of feminist student activists on campus and most notably the impact that feminist students can have on campus culture and creating positive support for other women on campus.

Results

The following section will explore the results and themes produced from six interviews. For the purpose of this paper I have identified six common themes across each of the interviews: (1) The effect of gender roles, including how they affect personal experiences, activism, and the policing of women's bodies and how this influences activism; (2) The role one's identity plays in activist work; (3) Universities as an initial starting place for activism; (4) Systemic barriers experienced in feminist activism produced by institutional barriers and the impact these had on the individual participants; (5) The positive impact feminist student activism has on present and future students, and (6) Community building as an important part of activism.

Gender Roles and Impacts on Activism

This section will discuss the direct impact of gender roles and their effects experienced by the participants. The following section explores the social construction of gender, the effects of policing women's bodies and the role activism plays in requiring women- identified feminist activists to break down gender expectations.

Personal experiences as women.

All participants shared a piece of their story as a woman. Many of them shared common experiences and similar definitions of feminism. One participant, Bibi, shared that above all feminism for her meant being able to have the same freedom and opportunity as men. Bibi shared with me about her culture and how it often created additional barriers due to traditional ways of thinking. This traditional way of thinking resulted in her parents wanting her to be married before a certain age, otherwise she would be considered ineligible for marriage, and she explained how only women experienced these pressures:

I am kinda going through this so its like as girls if you pass a certain age “no one’s going to want to marry you” ...and in our culture that’s like a huge thing and that’s just been getting to me.

Bibi goes on to add that women also experience further pressures after marriage to be the main caregiver of the children and how this can affect their careers.

Girls are to take care of the house and it’s their responsibility to take care of and teach their children and even if the girl is working, she is still to come home and cook... because this is not a mans job... But jobs [are] not so common because they don't have enough time, and are expected to look after, teach and take care of their children. And if the child misbehaves or does something inappropriate, it is automatically blamed on the mother

Here, Bibi addresses the numerous layers of responsibilities felt by women in her culture, sharing that often women do not have careers because their other responsibilities often make it difficult to handle an additional job. Bibi explained the cultural barriers she faces as a woman, outlining the limitations and pressures she feels from family to meet expectations about marriage and family, expectations she is not sure she wants to live up to.

Additionally, another student, Marie, discussed the problematic language around women’s rights. Marie brought attention to the fact that although in Canada women have the same legal rights as men, this does not mean equality actually exists; she stated “we know that in reality and on the ground, women actually...if you don’t know how to exercise those rights or you don’t have to the same opportunity as other people then what are those rights?” Marie goes on to say that, “I can vote, and I have the right to not be

sexually assaulted but women get sexually assaulted all the time.” Marie also suggests that the reason this inequality exists is a direct result of a system created by white men.

Another student, Eleanor, also spoke about the challenges with women’s rights:

It’s a lot more about the subtle challenges of being a female, so obviously we have a lot of the same equal rights that are typically given to us, but at the same time there’s a lot of smaller battles that we have to fight and continue fighting for.

Eleanor addresses that while women have equal rights, women still experience numerous micro-aggressions. Some examples she discussed in the interview were the way gender roles are reproduced in Disney movies and Barbie, the popular children’s toy. She also addressed how women experience micro-aggressions through the normalization of sexist jokes. For Eleanor, feminist activism was really about trying to break down sexist representations and teaching people how to respond to sexist jokes and behaviours. She also spoke about the importance of having conversations about sexism in a way that hopefully would teach students the negative impacts of these behaviours and sexist representations can have.

While many participants spoke about how gender inequality can affect a woman’s experience, two participants spoke about how the social construction of gender also affects men. One student felt that feminism was not just about discussing women’s experiences but also addressing how the social construction of gender affects men as well. She felt that feminists need to be including men more in these discussions of gender, “if we include men in the conversation and if we help them understand what it is we are looking for, and what it is we are asking for, and why its important to us and it’s important that they understand too.”

Marie also had similar ideas and wanted to address how feminism for her meant breaking down the social barriers that exist that require men to be masculine and women to be feminine. Marie goes on to say that, “[feminism is] about making it okay for people to be who they are, instead of what society deems them to need to be.” While the focus of this project is about the experiences of woman-identified feminists and their journeys, the discussion of men is also important as feminism is not just about women’s experiences in the world, but it is also about breaking down the social construction of gender that can negatively affect both men and women.

The role activism plays in breaking down gender roles.

As previously explored both in the literature and through narratives, gender inequality and gender roles can have lasting impacts on both men and women. One outcome of feminist activism is that it requires women activists to be loud and disruptive in what are normally considered male dominated spaces. However, four participants shared with me their experiences and thoughts about how women are constantly made to feel like they have to be quiet.

Accordingly, a few participants also shared with me how their activism created a platform for them to share not only their voice but other women’s voices as well. Louise shared that she felt a lack of support from the institution after her own experience of sexual violence on campus, one of her main hopes is to be able to provide survivors with a platform to have their voices heard. Louise shares that her experience taught her that “[she] need[ed] to make a change for anyone who’s coming up against the institution and make up space for them to feel empowered and have a voice and have a say and be supported.” Louise expressed that currently, survivors of sexual assault lack a voice and support on campus and consequently, as literature suggests, this can create higher rates of

unreported assaults. However, Louise goes on to say that it is not just the voices of survivors being silenced on campus, but also the voices of feminists as she shares that being a feminist woman on campus essentially feels like you are being told: “quiet down you are just a loud women with all your lady problems.”

Another participant, spoke of similar frustrations as she brought to light that in many situations or in conversations she had feelings of being: “completely dismissed, or people don’t even consider me, or people talk over me.” Bibi also addressed that particularly when with her entire family she feels as though she can’t fully speak her mind, “I feel like if I was a guy I’d be able to say more shit.” However, Bibi also goes on to share that activism has provided her the opportunity to speak her mind and be able to have a lot of say and gain voice through active participation in different student groups on campus.

While activism may provide feminist activists with an outlet for their voice, one participant also discusses the consequences of this as a result of gender roles. Due to gender roles requiring women to remain quiet and submissive, when women actively fight against gender expectations, they are often met with push back, as she that: “There’s always this thing where if women have any kind of opinion or thoughts on how something could be, or smarts then they’re a bitch.” She addresses that identifying as a feminist has resulted in people making assumptions that she is a “man-hater.” Evelyn also addressed that being a feminist has resulted in people assuming she is just, “a lesbian who hates men, you’re a man hater, you’re extreme, you’re radical, you yell at people.” Consequently, because the participants deviate from particular gender expectations, others negatively label them.

Policing of women's bodies.

One result of gender inequality that was discussed by three participants is the frustration felt about the constant policing of their bodies. As previously discussed, hyper-sexualization of women is due to the gender binary that exists that wants women to meet specific expectations regarding appearance, marriage, and childbearing. Two participants spoke directly about how their bodies are policed. Kimmy, for example, discussed how from a young age women's bodies are policed as they are constantly told what clothes they can and cannot wear. She explains how a woman's outfit may be considered too revealing because of the way women's bodies have become sexualized and objectified. Kimmy shared with me that even at a young age she was often told she could not wear particular clothing because of her large chest. For her, this has now made her more cautious when she overhears particular conversations that are shaming women because of their clothing: "you hear things like 'oh well she's asking for it if she wears that', 'she's a totally slut if she wears that,' really none of their business what somebody should be choosing to put on their body." Kimmy explained how women are constantly shamed for clothing choices and how this can become a factor in rape cases, as she shared a story that had a police officer blaming a woman for being assaulted because of the way she was dressed. Kimmy also describes how this form of policing can affect a child's self-esteem, explaining how she always wanted to know why she wasn't allowed to wear particular outfits that other girls her age were wearing, for Kimmy it brought to light the way her body was viewed and sexualized.

One participant, Alyssa, spoke of her personal experiences of being made to feel embarrassed about her decision to not shave. Alyssa openly speaks to the fact that she does not shave and has had experiences where friends have made her feel uncomfortable

because they think it is unusual for a woman. For Alyssa, this was one of the personal struggles she has faced since identifying as a feminist activist as she felt many of her friends were not supportive of her beliefs, and consequently she has withdrawn herself from many of those friendships.

Lastly, one of the participants also shared her personal experience with her family and how she feels her choices around marriage and parenthood are constrained. Bibi explains that regardless of her own desires she is often reminded that she is supposed to be married by a specific age, she must have children and will be responsible for the domestic duties. Bibi addresses how these expectations and limitations placed on her have become a huge frustration because she is being told what to do with her life, rather than her family allowing her the right to choose for herself. Additionally, Bibi also spoke of her experiences of wearing her hijab, and how since entering university she no longer wears it. Although Bibi admits that nobody made comments about her scarf or pressured her to take it off, she did have feelings of wanting to fit in. However, Bibi also admits that she may put it back on again once she feels like she is ready, because she wants to do it for the right reasons. Yet, it is important to address that regardless of these frustrations, Bibi still remains a proud Muslim woman, proud of her culture and religion: “ I am not wearing a scarf and I am still Muslim and I am like articulating that and I am showing”

While many of the participant’s experiences of policing were different, they all address a common theme of the social construction of gender and femininity. These unique experiences reinforce the fact that while women as a whole experience constrained agency in terms of choices- for example, about their dress, body, childbearing, and marriage – their experiences with this may be different. These

differences can be attributed to many factors, as the next section will explore the role that intersectionality can play in a woman's experiences and activism.

The Role One's Identities Play in Activist Work

The following section will explore the way participants' identities played a large role in their own activism. When discussing identity, five out of six participants shared with me their various identities and how these identities inform their activism. It is important to note that identities are not static, but rather can be fluid and constantly changing. Participants Alyssa and Evelyn, both discussed how they used to identify as heterosexual, but now the way they describe their sexual orientation has shifted. Due to these changes (one participant now self-identifies as bi-sexual, another does not have a label) has resulted in them experiencing different forms of sexual oppression(s). When reflecting on her own sexual identity Evelyn discusses the challenges with labeling peoples' sexuality:

So a lot of the times I am experiencing a tremendous amount of privilege because I am with a cis-hetero man, and then sometimes experiencing a lot of oppression because I am with someone who is two-spirit or gender non-conforming, or a woman; so I just feel like I am always in the fucking middle, it's really annoying. However, Alyssa mentions that because her sexual identity has shifted it has allowed her the opportunity to think a lot more about intersectionality:

What I mean is that issues that are about Indigeneity, even if they don't mention women or feminism at all, are still relevant to women because the issues affect women. In essence, all issues are women's issues...its brought intersectionality to life for me I think so it's [her bisexuality] changed my interactions with my work,

with my volunteering and even in my day to day life I really don't make assumptions as much as I did before... I always assumed I was heterosexual too. For Alyssa, identifying as a bisexual has caused her to open her eyes to the ways that identities intersect, as she really began to understand that feminism is not about one singular issue. Additionally, Alyssa's experiences speaks to issues around heteronormativity as she even admits she assumed she was heterosexual, now that she identifies as a bisexual she realizes the importance of not making assumptions about peoples identities.

Another participant Marie, who self-identifies as a white, cisgender, lesbian explained how these identities shaped her activism as she says understanding her identity as a white, cisgender, educated lesbian showed: "responsibility as somebody with privilege really got me going in terms of activism, like it got me really participating and creating what I could in the community." Marie specifically addressed how her identities have influenced her activist work: "I frequently get asked to attend events that no one would invite community members to, and they invite me as like the token...I think that happens because I am white, because I am cisgender, because I am educated." It is important to address the role that whiteness plays in activism, and how this provides activists with an extreme amount of privilege. As Marie goes on to further explain she realizes being white, cisgender and educated has provided her with a lot of privilege in activism, and she is constantly reflecting upon this:

Like I've been told many times through working on research that I need to not be so apologetic because my position is actually a benefit to my community, but you just don't want to lose sight of that. It's important to remember that your position

affects everything.

Other participants also shared how their race, culture, economic status and survivor identity influenced their activism. Eleanor spoke about how her race influenced her feminism as she felt they were “interconnected” with one another and in order for her to really understand her feminism she also had to understand her family’s history and experience with immigration. Similarly, Evelyn, a student who identifies as a both white and Indigenous, reflects on how her Indigenous identity is not separate from her feminist activism, but similar to Eleanor they are interconnected with each other. Evelyn explains that her activism is rooted in identifying as an Indigenous Woman and advocating for traditional Indigenous beliefs and values. Evelyn also goes on to mention how her identity as a white passing Indigenous woman, who was not brought up in her Indigenous community, has resulted in her experiencing both privilege and oppressions, which change and fluctuate depending on the room she is in, and this can affect her role and position with her activism. Evelyn expresses that when in a room with Indigenous people she recognizes that she has a lot of privilege and her role there is to only provide support, expressing that her activism is very reflective of, “what position I am holding in that particular moment.”

Bibi also shared that her feminist activism is heavily influenced by her culture and identity as a Muslim woman. For Bibi, her activism was really rooted in breaking down barriers she experienced personally from her culture and her family. Bibi used her voice at school through different clubs to educate students as she expressed that,

The stuff I say at school and how I am at school I can’t be like that at home so it pushes my activism more, and I want to do more here because there are only so

many places I got to do it.

Echoing ideas about identity, Louise shared that her identity as a survivor was one reason she began identifying as a feminist and participating in activism. Louise's goal with her activism is to create better resources and supports on campus for other survivors.

Universities as an Initial Starting Place for Activism

Six out of seven participants admitted that they did not begin participating in activism until they went to university. Six participants identified that it was university that provided them with the opportunity to learn more about feminism. Kimmy shares her experience with becoming a feminist, "I never really understood the meaning of the word until I went to university...once I understood more what it means and what the movement was, I was like okay, I agree with that and I want those things for myself and for other people." Kimmy's experience is repeated in the narratives of five other participants as they share that it was not until they were in an environment where they learned about feminism that they actually felt comfortable identifying as a feminist.

Specifically, one participant discusses learning about feminism through courses offered at Laurier Brantford. She shared that it wasn't until she had to take mandatory Contemporary Studies courses she mentions being challenged about ideas around oppression and feminism. For her, this sparked her interest and she began to read more and feel more comfortable identifying as a feminist. Bibi also shares that for her, university was life-changing as joining groups on campus really allowed her activism to grow, where, she initially joined the groups for just, "another cool place to be." Once she learned more and connected with other people with similar experiences, she found that she learned a lot not only about feminism, but herself as well.

Both Evelyn and Louise shared that it was not through courses where they first learned about feminism but rather through friend groups, as they became friends with other individuals who identified as feminists, teaching them more about it, and making them feel more comfortable to identify as feminists as well. While Evelyn and Louise attribute to learning about feminism from peer groups, four other participants attribute to learning about feminism specifically because of courses, professors and through activist groups on campus. However, Louise also shared that identifying as a survivor has also allowed her to be more strongly connected to the feminist movement.

Systemic Barriers Experienced by Woman-Identified Feminist Student Activists

As previously explored through literature, universities as a bureaucratic institution reinforce ideas of patriarchy, heteronormativity, and racism. This section will explore how these oppressive systems are present in student feminist activism at Laurier Brantford. Their stories will reflect a common theme of frustration and anger amongst the participants as many spoke about struggles they had to deal with working within an institution. Additionally, this section will explore how systemic barriers create an impact on individuals.

Institutional barriers.

Six out of seven of the participants I spoke with were members the LBWC, a space that provides woman-identified students with a safer space on campus, as well as supports and resources. Also mentioned was how the LBWC was created after a group of students formally known as the Women's Safety Action Group (WSAG), worked tirelessly to obtain a safer space on campus. Of those six participants, each of them shared with me their own frustrations of not only the length of time it took to get the

space, but five participants also shared current frustrations they had as they felt as though the administration truly did not care about the importance of the space and the work of LBWC. One concern addressed how every member of the LBWC is a volunteer and the centre was established with no paid positions. While other centres on campus such as the Writing Centre and the Athletics and Recreation's Centre (Wilkes) provides paid employment opportunities for students, the participants addressed the frustration that the LBWC is run solely by volunteers, with the exception of the Diversity and Equity Coordinator who oversees all Diversity and Equity (DEO) Groups (all of which are volunteer-run) on campus. Marie shared her fears with me about what she thought a lack of paid positions meant for the LBWC stating:

I feel like they've given us the bare minimum of what they felt like they had to give us so they didn't look bad. And I feel very worried that the [LBWC] is going to fail because there is not a paid person.

However, another participant suggests that the reason the LBWC and other DEO groups do not have paid positions is reflective of systemic oppressions that exist. She states, "These [DEO groups] are not being funded because the school doesn't give a shit, and put that on the backs of the most marginalized...but they see priorities in their head, and a Women's Centre is not one of those priorities." Here she addresses her feelings that the institution as a whole does not provide paid positions, not because they are financially unable to, but rather that the Women's Centre is a low priority for them and one they do not care to put funding into.

Another participant also addresses how the LBWC is a low priority, however she offers an idea that the reason the university agreed to a Women's Centre in the first place

is to provide good press. She explains her belief that the university wants to establish a positive image so therefore the school will look better in the eyes of parents, students and the Council of Ontario Universities. She states:

I think like one side is the media and I think there has been a lot of coverage on the university especially with sexual violence, so I think part of it is just ‘lets have the Women’s Centre, lets have the Gendered Violence Task Force, lets have a policy’ just so like we can tell the media that we are. And then parents, and students and like the Council of Ontario Universities is just going to think we are fabulous, that’s part of it.

Here she addresses her thoughts about the institution and their desires to look good in the media. Here, she not only addresses the LBWC but other feminist initiatives on campus as well, that are also working towards similar goals. She addresses that the school does not support these initiatives because they want to support women on campus, but rather a desire to look good in the eyes of the media, parents and the Council of Ontario Universities.

Five participants also addressed how even though the university did eventually provide a space they were frustrated with the process it took to obtain the space, and that it was inaccessible. Bibi shares her thoughts: “at first I was like “oh wow they gave us a space” and I was happy over that and then when we saw it, I was like literally at the end of campus and we can’t even access it.” Bibi went on to explain that the space that was acquired by the students for the Women’s Centre had no wheel chair access, and the doors to the building were locked from the outside, not allowing easy access for students wanting to use the space.

However, Bibi suggested that while the space wasn't ideal she was happy with the progress they had made collectively. Extending Bibi's thoughts, Kimmy also shared that she wasn't sure why the process to obtain the space took so long, suggesting it may be credited to the hierarchal structures within an institution, but also happy with the progress WSAG was able to make in obtaining a space. Reflecting on the struggles faced one participant shares: "we were advocating we also wanted to educate...and maybe also one day pressure because we didn't think we would get The Women's Centre for this year, we honestly didn't. It was an uphill battle the entire way." However, another participant Evelyn admits that the work WSAG has accomplished is something to be proud of:

We had this dream when we started school and we were not the ones who started this, this was CFAR [a faculty run feminist group], this was students from before us and I can only imagine how frustrated they were to not see the end result right? But we saw the end, but were living the end, not the end but were living what we wanted right now and yes there are a lot of changes that need to be had...but it's a step in a direction.

However, while Kimmy, Bibi and Evelyn were happy with the process made by WSAG, other participants also spoke about the worries they have that the university may take it away, creating similar feelings of walking on eggshells, afraid to push back against the university for fear of losing the space altogether. As one participant states, "that speaks to feminist activism right there, you have this and you might fight for it, but if you don't do it in the way deemed "right" they can take it away." She refers specifically here to the LBWC obtaining a new space for the centre, and while the space is now accessible to students and in a more central location, she mentions how the school moved the centre

without full disclosure to the volunteers about what the space would look like, providing a much smaller space than they had initially discussed. She goes on to say that, “they’ll tell you it’s because space is an issue on this campus, but there’s lots of space, it’s that they don’t want to invest.” Adding to this participants point, Marie also addressed the university’s use of “delay tactics” as a form of control over feminist activism: “in hopes to make the outcome what they want it to be, instead of what the students have advocated for, which is problematic.” Marie is not the only one to share this view as other participants, also expressed views of feeling that the Women’s Centre was a very low priority for the university, as one participant expressed, “we’re like on the bottom, of the bottom, like we weren’t even on the priority list, we were just put on a shelf... it was just like ‘oh yeah we’ll get to it.’ It was just very nonchalant”

Reflecting on why they felt feminism and feminist activism was a low a priority, the same participants all spoke of it being directly connected to the university being a patriarchal institution. Two participants reflect on activist work and an initiative they are apart of they reflect on the idea that if they were to ever become emotional during a meeting, a gendered stereotype associated with women, they would be deemed no longer able or suitable to participate in their work by the university, because being emotional has been labeled a flaw. Marie, feeling comfortable expressing her frustration, shares her thoughts on being a woman within the institution:

It’s a hard world and it’s really difficult, within the university you might have female faculty but you’re in a system created for men by men, for white men by white men, and it makes it difficult for you to challenge anything that you’re learning.

One participant shares a specific example of when she discovered sexist tweets on Twitter, directed from a Laurier Brantford specific program page. Marie explained how the tweets were shared after the Jian Gimeshi trial and shared problematic articles. She elaborates further:

So if he's posting tweets that are saying "Women need to stop lying about rape" and "Justice was served, or justice got it right this time" how do you as a young women entering university which is this whole new world, how do you stand up for what you believe in, and for what you know is right when that guy has the power

Accordingly, she connects these tweets to the current rape culture that exists within society and how these tweets are examples of a culture that normalizes violence against women (VAW) to the point that even survivors of sexual assault can begin to blame themselves as a result of rape culture.

Impact of systemic barriers on individuals.

While participants shared with me feelings of frustration towards the university, three participants shared with me how systemic barriers impacted them personally in both life and activism. For both Louise and Evelyn feminist activism was very challenging emotionally. As a result of systemic inequality Louise spoke specifically to feelings of exhaustion and frustration resulting from participating in activism within the institution: "Are we made to feel what we're doing is important, validated, or supported, or is the institution, like cheering us on? No. We're in battle mode, it is like we are constantly fighting and it's draining" Louise goes on to describe this frustration:

When I first came to Laurier, I took like World History in first year and we talked about the suffragette movement and the one who threw herself onto a racetrack and like died. And I remember sitting in that class and thinking "wow that's absurd,

who would do that that..." But then having people for so long be like, "no, no, no were not listening to you" like man there are days when I would jump on racetrack. Another participant also spoke about personal barriers she faced during activism, speaking about how difficult activism can be, as the stress of it all resulted in fighting amongst the activists she was working with:

We did end up fighting...I think that was just because we were under so much pressure with school work and trying to get this done and feeling frustrated that we weren't being heard and it wasn't getting anywhere and I think that just created a lot of tension amongst ourselves because we were so frustrated and so tired so that was, it was a struggle. Activism is always a struggle but that was very real.

Both participants spoke about how difficult activism was for them, how the stress of not being heard, or listened to was really difficult and draining and often affected them in very personal ways. Louise shared that regardless of the emotional challenges activism is worth the battle. Evelyn too shares this positive mindset: "it might be frustrating, it might be time consuming but like reminding yourself that you're doing this for a really important reason, and even if you can't see tangible results...just know that something will come out of it."

Unexpectedly, when discussing challenges in activism with Bibi, she spoke about how she often is unable to see systemic barriers occurring, she spoke about how often she considers particular barriers as individual problems rather than systemic ones. However, Bibi also spoke that her biggest personal challenge with activism was: "a lot of shutdowns, like 'You can't do that' or 'you're not allowed to do that.' When discussing

where these shutdowns came from, they were often as a result of her culture and family as she stated, “I’ve been brought up, or structured to believe, just ‘oh don’t say too much’...a lot of people will say that to you, so don’t take that. If you believe you can do something I think you should do it.” Bibi did admit that she did have times she felt as though if she were white she might be able to feel more comfortable doing certain things, but this was still a struggle she felt she experienced personally and not systemically, and while she understood, it was hard for her to really admit these impacts were as a result of systemic violence. For example, as mentioned earlier, Bibi shared how she stopped wearing her hijab shortly after entering university. While she admits no one told her to take it off or ever made her feel uncomfortable it was a decision she made when she went to university: “because I came here and took it off but like I think I just wanted to fit in.” Although at first hard for Bibi to admit, through articulating her thoughts and ideas by the end of the interview Bibi was able to admit these feelings of not fitting in if she wore her hijab are a result of system inequality.

The Positive Impact of Feminist Activism

As I will present all seven participants interviewed suggested that feminist activism has a positive impact on students and the university as a whole, as it works towards ending rape culture. Feminist activism on campus is constantly changing and shifting as each year brings new students, and new ways of looking and viewing oppressions.

Eleanor, alumnus to Laurier Brantford, mentions that during her years at Laurier Brantford feminist activism was about “de-stigmatizing” feminism:

I think, perhaps my class’s generation of conversations were about de-stigmatizing feminism. Now, I would hope the conversations and concerns have progressed.

Hopefully, incoming students are not scared of the idea of feminism anymore. At the time she felt feminism was a lot more intimidating to students than it is now; current activism now likely reflects students' present views and ideas. When sharing with Eleanor the details of the new LWBC, she shared how this highlights the importance of feminist activism: "in just a couple years since I graduated you guys have the Women's Centre now right, and I feel like you guys have progressed so much." Bibi echoes Eleanor's thoughts expressing how even in her few years at Laurier, she has noticed a progression in activism bringing attention to new activist groups that have formed on campus that advocate to end systemic oppression at Laurier Brantford, such as the Muslim Student Association.

Marie provides a clear example of why she believes feminist activism can have a positive impact on both men and women:

It takes the pressure off men, they don't have to be the masculine, tough guy...for women it makes it less socially acceptable to be sexually assaulted, it makes it more inclusive, and for women to see women...in positions where they can speak up and out, and create change, I think it makes it easier for other women to do the same.

Kimmy also addresses how feminist activism can have a positive impact on providing students with what they need in order to create change: "feminist activism is creating the platform and the space for students to actually understand what [rape culture] is and why it is such an issue...because nobody really talks about it, its just there in the corner."

Alyssa, Evelyn and Bibi all address that having Laurier Brantford being a small campus has allowed feminist activism to have a stronger and more positive impact than a larger campus. Evelyn explains:

Educating students on campus about rape culture, that trickles out, especially since this is a very small campus...while not everyone went to the [LBWC event about rape on college campuses] all it takes is one person telling their friend in passing... “Yeah, there are supports available.”

Both Bibi and Alyssa also addressed the benefits of a smaller campus. Alyssa addresses how she can already see the culture changing on campus and credits that to Laurier Brantford being a smaller campus, as she states, “the culture is slowly changing and I think it is small enough that it can have a really great impact.” Bibi also credits Laurier’s small campus for also helping her with her journey with feminism:

I wanted to go to Toronto, and I feel like I would not be who I am if I had been in Toronto. I feel like I am really getting to know me as a person I feel like I can actually do something, as much as I don’t say it, it’s this campus, its because of this place that I feel that way.

Here, Bibi speaks about Laurier Brantford specifically, crediting the campus for making a big impact on her and her journey and participation in activism as she goes on to say: “I feel like it helped, at first I was like ‘I like being around a bigger campus’, but I feel like this campus really helped me as person, like it really grew into who I am.”

Another topic that was discussed is that feminist activism can create positive change because it provides students with more knowledge about feminist issues and how they are relevant to the student population. Every participant I spoke with felt that education was an important aspect of feminist activism and was very influential in order to create change on campus. Marie provides a specific example of how educating students about being a bystander can interrupt particular behaviours: “if you’re a guy and

you notice your buddy doing something your buddy shouldn't be doing, you might not know what to do." Similar to Marie, all participants shared with me their thoughts about education and the key role it plays in feminist activism and how the particular activism they were/are involved in has focused on educating students about feminism, rape culture, and consent. As Bibi stated: "but if you start educating people about [feminism], watch this university go so far."

Community Building and its Role Within Activism

The role community plays within activism was an intriguing finding. Six out of seven participants spoke about the importance that community support played within their activism in different ways. Three participants Alyssa, Evelyn and Kimmy spoke about the role a feminist faculty group (the Collective For Feminist Action) played in helping students. CFAR provided support and help for LWBC by helping them to reach administration with their issues. In fact, attributing much of their activist success to the work of the faculty on CFAR. As Evelyn explains "our partnership with CFAR was so strong, and with the Gendered Violence Task Force...it was everyone advocating together and they actually listened to us." As Evelyn, Alyssa, and Kimmy all mention the activism that CFAR was also participating in was not separate from that of students, but rather the two groups worked together collectively in order to influence change within the university.

Additionally, Alyssa also addresses how particular faculty also became a support system for her. Alyssa addresses how important it was for her to have faculty support in the initiatives she was working so hard towards: "hearing them validate and say 'wow this is so important you're achieving so much, we're winning, we're fighting...' If I

didn't have any of that I probably wouldn't think that anything I was doing was valuable."

Similarly, five participants shared the importance of community building amongst activists and how this provides them with a much-needed support system. As Louise mentioned, because activist work can be so difficult it is important to have a strong support system, whom you can share your feelings of frustration: "having people you can vent too that's super important, because the internalized feelings can be harmful sometimes, and you can have really bad days. And I just like knowing your anger is authentic and okay." Louise discusses how important it is for activists and survivors to support in one another as she goes on to mention how important it is to validate each other's feeling of sadness, anger, or frustration and to remind each other that feelings and experiences are important. Marie, reiterates this idea as well, emphasizing the importance of having people you can share your stories and frustrations with: "Lean on your people, because if you're feeling like its too hard...it's violence...talk to other feminists because they're probably feeling it too, and if you're not alone it makes it easier to go through." For Eleanor, community meant being able to have people to open up to and share ideas with, a safer space where people are respectful of these ideas and really listen.

Accordingly, Evelyn, Alyssa, and Louise also discussed how building a community can also have a positive influence on the Laurier Brantford campus as a whole. As a self-identified survivor, Louise provides a specific example of how community building has impacted her: "I have found that the Women's Centre has been extremely helpful with things [The Sexual Violence Counsellor and Advocate] runs that are just like craft based, painting a picture frame, you would never think that that is the best de-stresser but it

totally is.” Louise discusses how these community-building activities (that the Women’s Centre has organized for survivors) have really provided her with a caring environment, while also introducing her to other students who can share in her experiences. Evelyn suggests a reason for this being, “[activism] just brings people closer together and creates more of a community, especially when different groups are working together. It just creates a better university environment and it takes us out of the classroom and doing things that are on the ground.” Moreover, Alyssa also spoke about the importance of finding allies within activist work, and how this can create a stronger campus community, and rather than having people working separately, you work towards a collective goal of oppressive liberation on campus.

Conclusion

As presented the participants experienced many challenges and barriers throughout their activism at Laurier Brantford. During the interviews I also had the opportunity to ask four of the participants what advice they would like to give future feminist activists entering Laurier Brantford. Although each participant had something different to share, each had a positive and motivating message about feminist activism. Both Bibi and Eleanor address the fact that feminist activism isn’t easy, especially if it is something new for a student, but want to make clear how important it is to not be afraid and push yourself to do more things, and ask more questions. Two participants also address the importance of working with everyone on campus who has similar goals. They emphasized that activism is not easy, and it can be tiring and challenging, but to never give up, because it makes a difference and it’s important.

While participants addressed the effects that gender inequality had on their

experiences in the world, they also addressed the role that gender inequality and systemic barriers played in their activist work. It is important to note that even while activist work was difficult and frustrating for some participants, all participants agreed that feminist activism is valuable and important to Laurier Brantford as it allows students to work collectively in order to generate effective change on campus, specifically through ending rape culture on campus.

Discussion

The discussion section provides an analysis of the results of this research. It is divided into the following eight sections: 1) The impact of gender inequality on a women's experiences; 2) How one's identity can influence activist work; 3) University as birthing place for activism; 4) Systemic barriers within an institution and how they can affect feminist activism as well as the activists themselves; 5) How feminist student activism is a positive aspect of a campus' culture; 6) The significance of community building within feminist activist work on campus; 7) Important advice for future women feminist activists at Laurier Brantford; and, 8) My own personal reflection on the results and discussion.

The Role Gender Inequality Plays in a Women's Experience

Although gender inequality does not affect every woman in the same way, it negatively impacts how women experience the world. While participants shared unique stories, many of their experiences illustrated what it is like to be a woman in a patriarchal society. This section analyzes the personal experiences of the participants and how they are reflective of a patriarchal society, as well as demonstrate consequences of policing a

woman's body.

As explored previously through literature, women are often positioned to be quiet and submissive. Karimi (2015) demonstrates how women have been forced into roles of submission and describes how “men effectively silenced their voices” (p.58). Three of the participants shared experiences of having their voices silenced or not heard, as findings from this study indicate women often feel silenced and punished for using their voice. One participant, a woman who does speak her mind and share her opinion, mentioned she is often then viewed as a “bitch.” This can be attributed to the effects of a patriarchal society whereby women are continuously made to feel as though they are not allowed to take up space and be loud, because if they do, they are negatively labelled as a way to force women back into submission. One study conducted by Watson and Grotewiel (2016) reveals that women who have recent experiences with sexism are likely to “self-silence” (p.147), referring to how women, “may internalize such experiences, feel disempowered, and silence themselves when in relation with others” (p.140). While their study suggests that even women who participate in activism are also likely to be self-silencing, this research paper provides new insight into the possibility that activism can provide women with a voice to fight back against inequality.

The impact of the hyper-sexualization of women was discussed through the literature as a consequence of the gender binary that sexually objectifies a woman's body (Calogero, 2004; Dubinsky, 1993). Three participants spoke about different ways their bodies have been objectified and policed, and while each experience was different and unique to each woman, all of them outlined experiences of being made to feel as though they did not have control over their own bodies. Kimmy shared how her experience has

now caused her to be more critical and self aware of sexist behaviours and has allowed her to be able to address them in appropriate ways. Both Kimmy and Bibi's experiences brought to light the normalization of the objectification of a woman's body through family members expectations of appearance or childbearing. Additionally, Alyssa's experience with her friend commenting on her decision to stop shaving, also speaks to the notion that women must be clean shaven, a belief derived from the idea that a woman's body is intended for the heterosexual male gaze as discussed by Lee (1994). Yet it is still important to mention the connection between these experiences and the participant's identity. For example, Bibi's experience of pressure to get married and have children by a certain age was a reflection of her culture. While there is a lack of scholarship surrounding the connection to how policing a woman's body can affect one's feminist identity, research does suggest that further exposure to sexist behaviour does play a role in shaping one's identity as a feminist (Guest, 2016; Leaper and Arias, 2011).

Identity and Activist Work

Intersectionality is an important concept within feminist thinking and practice as it explores the intersections of one's identities and how they affect one's experiences in the world (Davis, 2008). Six participants explained the ways a particular identity not only shaped their experiences, but how identities inform their activism. For example, Evelyn shared how important her Indigenous identity is to her activism, as she does not view them as separate issues but explicitly interconnected ones. Moreover, Alyssa also explained how identifying as bisexual really brought intersectionality to life for her, as she began to understand that there is no one singular issue but rather that many other issues surrounding LGBTQ or Indigenous individuals are just as important to feminism

as patriarchy.

While Davis (2008) explores how intersectionality allows for researchers to incorporate their own intersectional identities as a way to be self-critical within their research, this research project highlights how one's identity is not only valuable to research, but to activism as well. An example of this is provided when both Evelyn and Eleanor share with me how their racial identities intersect with their feminist identity. Specifically Evelyn addressed how her identity as an Indigenous Woman was connected to her activism as her activism was entrenched in advocating for Indigenous traditional values and beliefs. Additionally, Eleanor explained how her race was interconnected with her feminism, and that a part of her feminist journey was to find out more about her racial identity and immigration story.

Additionally, as explored by Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality brings to light the difference in experiences of violence for non-white women. Three participants self-identified as white, and one participant self-identified as a both white and an Indigenous woman (yet white passing), addressed the privileges they had with being white, and how important that was to their positionality within activist work. In contrast, Bibi brought up the discussion of her culture and religion and how those were very big intersecting factors that influenced why she participated in activist work, as her activism was rooted in breaking down culture barriers for women in her cultural community.

University as Birthing Place For Activism

As presented, most participants did not identify as a feminist or begin participating in feminist activism until university. This commonality may be a reflection of different perspectives and ideas participants were not truly familiar with prior to university. The

findings are consistent with research that presents that courses such as women studies and race studies challenge students' learned discourses about racism and sexism (Cohen and Jackson, 2016; Shircliffe, 2000). It was evident within the research that these types of courses that challenge these learned discourses and teach students about oppressive systems, contributed to them later identifying as a feminist. Six participants shared that it was not until university that they identified as feminists and began participating in feminist activism. Two participants attributed learning about feminism through courses they had taken at Laurier Brantford. One participant named the Contemporary Studies program (now Society, Culture and Environment), which offers courses such as "Gender Theories and Culture" and "Race and Oppression" (Wilfrid Laurier University, 2016). Furthermore, two participants also shared that their activism began at university after entering student clubs and attending school events. Findings from Guest's (2016) research suggest academic engagement "represents a point in a process of 'becoming feminist' which enabled them to articulate, and to refine their pre-existing 'feminist instincts' and 'feminist feelings' as political concerns" (p.475). Therefore, while students may be aware of the term feminism and feminist issues prior to university, for a lot of feminist activists, university is a place that sparks their interest and provides them with further knowledge that creates a desire to participate in activism. Specifically, six of the participants explained that it was not until university that they began identifying with feminism. However, feminism for each participant was sparked in very specific spaces. For example, participants credited both specific programs on campus, such as Contemporary Studies, as well as student groups and events on campus as a place they initially began to hear ideas about feminism, and feminist beliefs. For the participants

these spaces within the university provided them with new knowledge and experiences they did not have prior to coming to Laurier Brantford, and played a key role in their start to claiming a feminist identity.

One participant Louise also addressed that identifying as a survivor of campus sexual assault was also something that drove her to participate in feminist activism. However this is not the first time that being sexually assaulted on campus has sparked activism. In the early 1990's, after being frustrated with the way the schools handled sexual assaults on campus, women at Brown University comprised a list of male rapists on campus and wrote each name in a bathroom, rewriting the names even as janitors repeatedly erased them (Bohmer and Parrot, 1993; Celis, 1990). As previously mentioned, sexual assaults are extremely prevalent on campus, and therefore spark a lot of concern amongst feminist activists on university campuses. Louise identified that one goal within her activism is to create better resources and support for students on campus who have experienced sexual assault due to the fact that the school lacked these supports at the time she reported her assault.

Systemic Barriers

Institutional barriers.

As discussed, within the literature review, institutions such as universities reinforce ideas of patriarchy, racism and heteronormativity (hooks, 2003). These ideas are represented through white men being more likely to hold authoritative position, and a lack of support for women on campus (hooks, 2003; Shircliffe, 2000). Five participants addressed how they often had feelings of frustration, often feeling like the university had placed the LBWC, a centre offering support for women, on the bottom of its priority list.

The participants' frustrations speak to the systemic issues surrounding feminist activism or feminism within an institution as not valued, as a result of the university being operated by white males. Accordingly, three participants addressed specific examples reflecting the university's patriarchal structure. These narratives are consistent with the literature that demonstrates that universities reflect notions of patriarchy (Henry, 2011; Cummins, 2005).

Additionally, the five participants that discussed the LBWC within their interviews shared frustrations about how the university took so long to provide the space, with one participant even sharing her fears that the LBWC would fail due to lack of funding from the school to provide a paid position to the centre. These views reflect the literature that universities are nothing more than a corporation concerned only with profit gains, and due to the fact that the university structure is patriarchal and racist, there is often little funding provided to services and courses directed at women.

Staggenborg (2008) identifies how these institutional barriers create an opportunity for feminist activists within an institution to make adjustments to their strategies. As Staggenborg (2008) documents the historical challenges and struggles faced by feminist activists at McGill University, she reflects that while activists faced many institutional challenges, through hard work they would present ideas to the university in a way that made them appear as beneficial to the university as well as down-playing personal interest. Similar to the participants I interviewed, Staggenborg (2008) addresses how activism within an institution is constrained, yet the power feminist activists have in using the system to instill change. Specifically, the participants I spoke with addressed how they often felt they were a low priority to the university, with one

participant, Marie, even attributing the university to participating in delay tactics as a form of control of feminist activism. However, regardless of the efforts of the university to restrain feminist activism, three participants addressed how proud they are of the accomplishments that have resulted from feminist activism on campus, specifically the accomplishments of the LBWC on campus, as those involved worked strenuously within the institution to obtain a space for women on campus. These efforts will be discussed further as I explore the positive effects of campus woman-identified student feminist activism.

Impact of systemic barriers on individuals.

Shircliffe (2000) discussed how professors working in women's studies courses often experience burnout as a result of lack of funding and extraneous efforts to maintain the program within the university. Two participants shared similar feelings of burnout and frustration while participating in feminist activism initiatives on campus. Both discuss moments of struggle and frustration, with Louise even referencing days where she felt like she wanted to jump on a racetrack to be heard, mimicking an activist during the suffragette movement. These participants' feelings however are not unique, as Kennelly (2014) shares narratives of how activism for her woman-identified participants worsened "experiences of depression, stress, anxiety, or burn-out"(pg.249). The narratives and experiences in Kennelly's (2014) study merely add to the narratives shared in the research as all seven participants shared with me moments of frustration or anger they felt while participating in activist work.

Interestingly, Bibi also shared with me that often she does not notice experiences of racism and sexism, as she often internalizes these as individual problems. hooks (2000) addresses that although one may feel that certain experiences of violence are

individualized, often these experiences of violence reflect greater systemic barriers. Even though Bibi shared she did have moments when she felt like an experience would be easier if she was white, it was hard for her to admit that this was an effect of systemic inequality. However I think through further discussion in the interview she was able to say that even though she internalized a lot of barriers, they were not a result of individual fault but rather in fact of system inequality, an example of this is her taking off her hijab shortly after entering university because she had a desire to fit in, speaking to the further systemic oppression that Muslim women face.

How Feminist Student Activism is a Positive Aspect of a Campus' Culture

All seven participants interviewed discussed the importance of feminist activism on a university campus, and specifically at Laurier Brantford's campus, and how it can create a positive campus culture. Specifically, Bibi and Eleanor addressed concrete changes that have already happened on campus in just the past few years regarding the formation of the LBWC, and other campus clubs. Staggenborg (2008) addresses that feminist activism plays a large role in creating change on campus whilst migrating around institutional barriers. Staggenborg (2008) addresses how feminist activism at McGill can be credited for creating change on the campus, and helping to, "change the climate of the university for women" (p.105). While Staggenborg (2008) speaks specifically about McGill, her ideas can be connected to Laurier Brantford in a broader context addressing the important role that feminist activism plays in changing the campus culture for women. As the participants suggested this change can be witnessed through the implementation of the LBWC that offers support services for women on campus that Laurier previously did not have. Additionally, Marie addresses how feminist activism

changes campus culture by creating a space that makes it less socially acceptable for women to be sexually assaulted, and overall a more inclusive campus for men and women.

While Staggenborg (2008) does not mention the specific role that education plays in this activism, it was a key theme in the interviews, as every participant I spoke with, discussed the importance of educating the students and community at Laurier Brantford about feminism, rape culture, and/or consent. The participants suggested that through providing education to other students about these topics they may be unfamiliar with, you are able to teach students about how to acknowledge sexism, and ultimately be better bystanders if they are witnessing or hearing sexist behaviours.

The Significance of Community Within Feminist Activist Work on Campus

A theme I had not originally anticipated was the role that community building plays within activism. Six of the participants specifically addressed how important community building was in creating a support system for activists. Three of the participants specifically addressed a group called CFAR, made up of both faculty on campus as well as community partners. Five participants addressed how important it is to have a support system while participating in activism as way to not only share thoughts, and feelings with like-minded people, but as one participant pointed out, it also provides you with a stronger sense of allyship as you work alongside others to create collective change. Liss and Erchull (2010) presented similar results that concluded that young feminists often believe that women need to work together in order to create collective change. The role of community building is also addressed within the literature as various texts support the idea that community building provides support for activists (hooks, 2000; Staggenborg,

2008; Shircliffe, 2000).

Advice For Future Women-Identified Feminist Activists at Laurier Brantford

The advice shared by the activists in the conclusion portion mimics ideas already explored about gender roles and community. The literature identifies that, as a result of traditional gender roles, women are not expected to be assertive and loud (Staggenborg, 2008), yet two participants shared that their advice would be to not be afraid to ask questions and share your ideas. This advice supports the notion that the goals of feminist activism are to break down the gender binary that tries to position women in a certain way in order to control them through silencing them. The participants' advice to speak one's mind and share opinions can help other women activists by providing them with the reassurance that being loud in male dominated spaces may be difficult, but it is really important in activism as a way to break down gender expectations. Evelyn, also adds to this reminding activists that activism is challenging, but to not give up. Additionally the participants advice about being loud, asking questions, never giving up, and sharing your opinion will help future activists to get the most out of their activist experience on campus.

Personal Reflections on Results and Discussion

The initial purpose of this research was to explore feminist activism at Laurier Brantford as a way to highlight whether or not it can have a positive effect on campus culture. As I previously discussed, this past year I have also been very involved in feminist activism on campus and have worked alongside many other amazing activists as well. It was through this research that I really wanted to explore the challenges of feminist activism on campus and whether these challenges were specific to Laurier

Brantford, or consistent with scholarship surrounding the topic. I have found that while consistent with the literature the participants also addressed barriers not thoroughly discussed in the literature. While the theme of frustration and anger was common amongst participants and outlined in literature, the participants also spoke that while they had these feelings of burnout and frustration, that feminist activism was still incredibly important and worth the challenges. The participants spoke endlessly about the importance of building community and support amongst activists as a way to overcome struggles and challenges. Additionally, Bibi sharing with me her feelings of internalized racism were very interesting to me, because as a white woman, I have never had these similar experiences of racism. While the literature explored inequality that exists, and the importance of intersectionality, all the interviews really opened my eyes to how oppressive this system is, and how difficult the process of unlearning can be, something not thoroughly addressed in the literature as an important aspect of activism.

Feminist activism is continuously changing and developing at Laurier Brantford as even next year the LBWC, will be renamed as a Gender Equity Centre; the purpose of this name change is to address current and new views around feminism, and gender inequality as a way to work towards the goal of activism and breaking down gender roles and the gender binary. This name change also reinforces the ideas that participants shared about the progression of feminist activism on the campus. As alumnus Eleanor shared, even since her graduation a few years ago, Laurier Brantford has expanded in its feminist activism through the implementation of groups and feminist initiatives on campus. This progression shows that Laurier Brantford, while still has a long way to go, through the help of feminist activists, is working towards creating a better and more positive campus

culture for all students.

Ultimately, what I hope has resulted from this research is the formal documentation and crediting of the amazing, passionate, and hardworking feminist activists that have gone to school at Laurier Brantford. While, the scope of this project limited me to only a small sample size of participants, the selected participants shared their views on why feminist activism is important to Laurier Brantford, while also sharing tangible examples of ways they have positively affected the campus, with one of those accomplishments being the LBWC. While participants shared with me other initiatives as well, for the purpose of confidentiality I was not able to share those in explicit details within this paper, however I hoped to capture the importance of feminist activism on the campus as a whole rather than exploring specific results of activism.

This past year brought forth my first experiences of feminist activism, and in an effort to share my own experiences and feminist journey, I can say this past year has been a completely transformative one. For myself, activism has shown me the power of working together with others towards a collective goal, neglecting hierarchal structures in favour of working alongside one another. Above all, feminist activism has allowed me to become more of myself, refusing to be defined by the binary. I am both feminine and masculine, I am both loud and quiet, I have days where I want to wear make-up, and others I don't. There are moments I want to wear a dress and others when I don't want to leave my sweat pants. None of those things are defined by my identity as a women, but rather a product of my own personality, I do not need to be anything other than myself.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to conduct a qualitative research study with

women-identified feminist activists at Laurier Brantford in order to gain further insight into this form of activism on campus. One goal of this research was to discuss with activists the challenges and barriers experienced in activism. Additionally, I wanted to explore whether or not feminist activist was important to Laurier Brantford, and whether it has a positive impact on campus culture.

Through interviewing current, graduating, and graduated women-identified feminist activists at Laurier Brantford I was able to gain an understanding of institutional barriers experienced by activists as a result of participating in activism within a university. Activists explained their feelings of frustration and anger towards the university, as they often felt low on the priority list. Participants described feeling silenced within the institution, a reflection of current gender expectations that expect women to be submissive and quiet. Additionally, participants shared how activism also became emotionally draining at times, having participants overcome feelings of burnout and exhaustion.

Although all participants expressed feelings of frustration, they also all agreed that regardless feminist activism was worth the fight and struggles. Through this research I was able to gain an understanding that feminist activism is important to Laurier Brantford because even over the last couple years, Laurier Brantford has been able to make progress in groups, and initiatives on campus that are important for students by providing them with resources and support on campus. One initiative discussed was the LBWC, a centre that provided supports and resources for women-identified students on campus, as well as providing additional supports for students who have experienced sexual violence. In addition, feminist activism aims at educating students about rape

culture and consent on campus. Through these educational initiatives activists are able to teach students about bystander intervention, as well as explaining the effects that sexist representations and jokes can have on both men and women. Participants also made clear that feminist activism is not only beneficial to woman-identified students, but male-identified students as well, as it creates a more inclusive space where everyone is free to be whoever they want to be, regardless of pressure from gender expectations.

Lastly the theme of community building was very prominent throughout the interviews, as all participants addressed the role community building plays in activism. As explored, activism, in itself can create a strong community amongst activists, which is important in order to provide a strong support system. In addition, participants also discussed community building in general, and how this is important in creating a positive environment for students.

Overall, because of this study it can be concluded that feminist activism does positively impact campus culture through creating supports, educating students, and through community building. Moreover, while all activists did express challenges and barriers faced during activism, it can be concluded that these barriers are worth the result of activism.

Limitations

The following section will explore the specific limitations that were presented within the research; 1) The impact of me being a novice researcher; 2) Not being able to name specific feminist initiatives that participants are involved in due to privacy of each participant.

The impact of being a novice researcher.

Due to the fact that this was my first time conducting interviews and research, I found the interview process to be rather difficult. While I am proud of each interview, during the transcription process there were several times I wish I had asked a participant to explain something in further detail. Although after each interview I took notes and identified themes, there were times I later noticed myself missing key ideas that I could have had participants explain more about. An example of this is the role of identity and feminism. While I feel like I was able to obtain sufficient data on participants explaining the role their identity played in their activism, looking back I wish I had addressed the role identity played in leading one to feminism.

Complications with naming specific feminist initiatives.

Although all participants within this research study are currently or were previously actively involved with feminist initiatives on campus, due to privacy of the participants I was not able to address these initiatives specifically. While the privacy of each participant was a priority for the research, I would have liked to be able to credit participants for their specific work on campus and explored how this impacted Laurier Brantford. However, I think the goals of the research were obtained in exploring how feminist activism has a positive impact on campus culture.

Further research.

If further research were to be completed within this topic, one might want to address the suggested topics into their study. 1) Expanding participant pool to other students who do not identify as woman-identified feminist activists; 2) Further research

of the LBWC and its growth at Laurier Brantford; 3) Explore the connections between feminist activism and other forms of social justice activism on campus and the birth of the DEO on campus.

Expanding of participant criteria.

Due to time constraints on this research project I needed to make specific criteria for finding participants. These criteria included that each participant needed to be a current, graduating, or alumni at a small University, and they had to identify as a woman feminist activist on campus. It would be beneficial to also conduct research with students who do not identify as activists to see whether they feel that feminist activism has made a positive impact on their experience at Laurier Brantford. Sampling could include students who currently use the LBWC, or students who have attended events on campus. Through this research one could gain even further insight into the impact of feminist activism on campus, and its impact on the current student body.

Documentation of the LBWC and its growth at Laurier Brantford.

The initial goals of the research were to provide formal documentation and research about the opening of the LBWC. As previously mentioned, the centre is a new space on campus that offers to provide self-identified woman students with a safer space on campus, as well as supports and resources for women and survivors. My initial goal was to interview students who used the space as well as activists who helped to open the centre to see whether this centre has been beneficial to the Laurier Brantford community. However due to the length of time it took to properly open the centre, there would not have been significant data to collect. If further research would be able to document this process it would be beneficial to see the growth and changes of the centre and how it will

grow in coming years at the school, and whether it has an impact on the students who use the space.

The connections between feminist activism and other forms of activism.

Although for the purposes of this research I explored feminist activism on campus, it would be beneficial to see the impacts other forms of social justice activism have on campus. For example, this past year Laurier Brantford had the arrival of the Diversity and Equity Office, in addition this coming Fall 2016, Laurier Brantford welcomes Laurier Students' Public Interest Research Group (LSPIRG) to campus as a non-profit organization that advocates progressively for social change. Further research in the development of these initiatives would be beneficial in documenting the growth of the Laurier Brantford campus, and to gain insight into whether these groups have an impact on the campus culture at Laurier Brantford.

Conclusion

In conclusion the research was able to contribute to the research surrounding feminist activism on university campuses, through exploring barriers faced by activists, as well as the positive impacts that feminist activism can have on campus culture. As presented feminist activists face many challenges while participating in activism that are a product of systemic barriers. These systemic barriers were experienced as a result of the institution reinforcing patriarchal, racist, and heteronormativity ideals. However, as presented throughout this paper, feminist activism is able to have a positive impact on not only on activists but other students as well by creating a more inclusive and safer environment, and building a stronger community amongst students.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Recruitment Letter

Introduction Letter to Participants

Date:

To:

My name is Sarah Cifani. I am currently a graduate student in the Social Justice and Community Engagement program at Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford campus. My research supervisor is Dr. Marcia Oliver. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a research study in order to better understand how and why feminist activism is important to Laurier Brantford's campus culture. I want to understand what barriers are faced by feminist activists on campus and the extent to which feminist activism has created positive changes to Laurier Brantford's campus culture.

You are being invited to participate in this research study because you are a student or alumni feminist activist at Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford.

More specifically, I am requesting that you will participate in an interview with me about your experience with feminist activism at Wilfrid Laurier Brantford. As part of this research study you will be interviewed and interviews will be audiotaped and will last about one hour. Consent will be obtained from each person interviewed. Your individual identity will not be revealed in this project unless requested and each individual will choose a pseudonym of their choice. The data will remain confidential and any identifying information will be erased on the tapes prior to transcription. The tapes will be destroyed once the transcriptions have been completed. The project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a joint University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Committee

Your participation in this study will be useful to future feminist activists on campus in two ways: 1) to shed light on some of the barriers that feminist activists face on university campuses and 2) to reveal the extent to which student feminist activism has led to positive change on Laurier Brantford's campus.

Participation in this research study is voluntary; if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at sarahcifani@gmail.com.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Sarah Cifani

Appendix B- Informed Consent Statement

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

PROJECT TITLE: Feminist Activism at Wilfrid Laurier Brantford

Principal Investigator: *Sarah Cifani, Social Justice Graduate Student, Wilfrid Laurier University*

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sarah Cifani, a Master's student at Laurier Brantford in Social Justice and Community Engagement. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Sarah Cifani at sarahcifani@gmail.com

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH STUDY

The general purpose of this research project is to better understand how and why feminist activism contributes to Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford campus culture and what barriers students face. I am hoping to gain insight to feminist activism being done on campus by students, and how this has contributed to Laurier's campus culture. Additionally, I am hoping to understand whether this activism has contributed to tangible changes and has had positive change on Laurier Brantford's campus that will benefit current and future students. Lastly, I am hoping to shed light on barriers that feminist activists face on university campuses.

PROCEDURES (item 1)

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I will ask you to participate in an interview that will last approximately 1 hour with myself, the researcher. The interview will focus on your thoughts about feminism generally, your experience as a self-identified feminist at Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford campus, and your experience with feminist activism, barriers you have faced and how and why you feel it is important to Laurier Brantford's campus culture. The interview will be audio-taped and will take place at a time and location that is suitable to you.

The interview will be transcribed by myself, the researcher. You will be sent the transcription and will be able to review the document as well as make any changes that you feel are necessary.

You will be asked to review the transcription of our interview in order to approve its use or make suggestions for changes.

POTENTIAL RISKS (item 2)

There are minimal risks associated with this study. Because we will be discussing your personal thoughts and experiences with feminist activism, you may experience feelings of discomfort in sharing personal information. If you feel uncomfortable at any point in the

interview process, you may withdraw without any negative consequences. I will have access to local community resources with Brantford that will be able to provide further support for participants if requested.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS *(item 3)*

The researcher anticipates that there will be several benefits from this research project, including collecting knowledge about feminist activism being completed at Laurier Brantford and how that has contributed to campus culture. By interviewing feminist activist students and alumni I would like to be able to develop strategies that will be helpful for future feminist campus activists at Laurier Brantford. I think it will be beneficial to current and future activists in order to see why feminist activism is important to the campus culture at Laurier Brantford and whether it had a positive impact on campus culture. In addition, I think it will be beneficial in order to develop strategies that are helpful for students feminist activists, but as well it will help students be aware of particular barriers that feminist activist face at Laurier Brantford.

CONFIDENTIALITY *(item 4)*

All interviews will be entirely confidential, conforming to the ethics guidelines of Wilfrid Laurier University. Only the primary researcher (Sarah Cifani), the researchers' supervisory committee (Drs. Marcia Oliver and Jennifer Root), and the interviewee will have access to the transcription of the interview recording. The data will be stored digitally, in secure files, on the researcher's password protected computer. The recorded data and any paper documents (including the consent form, any field notes, and contact information will be stored in a locked safe in my home and destroyed or deleted one year after the completion of the research project.

The participant will remain anonymous and will choose a pseudonym identity for the purposes of the research and will not be named at any point unless requested to do so by the participant herself.

Participant Initial _____

Anonymity: Unless requested, your real name will not be used at any point during the process of data/information collection, or in any written submissions. Participants will choose a pseudonym of her choice. Quotations will be used in research reports and presentations, but they will not contain any information that allows participants to be identified. I will omit certain quotations in the final report if asked to do so.

Audio Recording: Our interview will be audio recorded and used only for the purpose of this research, and will not be used for any other reason.

Dissemination of Research Findings: You will be given the specific quotation(s) that I intend to use in the case report (for this, please ensure that I have your updated contact information). You will be invited to comment on and correct the information and quotations if so desired. The final research findings will be submitted as a Major Research Project (MRP) as part of my MA in Social Justice and Community Engagement degree requirements at Wilfrid Laurier University. I may also submit findings to

academic journals for possible publication.

PARTICIPATION *(item 5)*

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences of any kind. You can choose at any time to remove your information from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer and still remain in the study.

FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION *(item 6)*

Successful completion of this research project is a requirement of the Master of Arts program in Social Justice and Community Engagement at Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford, ON.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR PARTICIPATION *(item 7)*

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Committee (#REB 4855). However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact EITHER Dr. Robert Basso, Chair REB, Wilfrid Laurier University, at 1-519-884-0710, Ext. 4994 or rbasso@wlu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Marcia Oliver at 519.756.8228, Ext. 5557 or moliver@wlu.ca

CONSENT *(item 8)*

I have read and understand the above information. **My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study, with the understanding that my interview will be audio-recorded and remain confidential.**

Participant's signature _____ Date

Investigator's signature _____ Date

I consent to the use of my quotations in this paper

Date _____
Participant's signature

I would like the following pseudonym (a fictitious name) to be used in all research publications and presentations when referring to me: _____

Rather than a pseudonym, I would like my real name to be used in this research project

No / Yes

If yes please sign,

Date _____
Participant's signature

Appendix C- Sample Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Introduction Questions

1. You are currently, or were a former student at Wilfrid Laurier University, what is/was your area of interest or study?
2. What made you choose to attend Laurier's Brantford campus?
3. Do you describe yourself as a feminist?
4. When did you first start to describe yourself as a feminist? Was it before entering university?
5. What made you start using the term feminist as a way to describe yourself?
6. What does feminism mean to you? How would you describe your personal definition of feminism?
7. How have your personal experiences shaped your journey with feminism and with feminist activism at Laurier Brantford?

More Detailed Information and Questions

1. Were you apart of any activities or activism on campus that you would describe as feminist driven? What were they?
2. How would you describe your personal experience with feminist activism on campus?
3. Did you face any struggles or challenges?
4. Who or what would you define as the source of those struggles?
5. Did you face any personal barriers? –Were you able to overcome them
6. Do you feel feminist activism is important to Laurier Brantford?
7. How has (did) feminist activism impacted your own experience at Laurier Brantford

8. Do you think your work has(or will) impact other students' experiences at LB?
9. In your own opinion, do you believe feminist activism can have a positive influence on campus culture, if so how?
10. Do you think feminist activism has created change to campus culture on Laurier Brantford, if so, how?

Appendix D - Final Member Check

Hi _____

Thank you so much for your kind words, they truly mean a lot.

Because you participated in my research project about feminist activism, I wanted to let you know that I successfully defended my MRP this past week. Thank you again for your willingness to participate. During the defense, my committee and I discussed the importance of reaching out to you to again regarding the final written paper and anonymity of participants.

Although participants did choose a false name for the paper, due to the organization of my paper and the topic, it is possible that there may be a potential risk of participants not remaining completely anonymous **if** read by someone within the WLU Community, who has knowledge of feminist organizing on campus.

As a result I want to do one final check-in with each participant to ensure you are comfortable with the way I have chosen to use your quotes or other identifiers in my paper. I want to make sure you enthusiastically endorse the way I have used your interview responses and the final written MRP.

Please take your time to think about this and ensure you understand that my final MRP will be **posted publicly** on Scholars Commons, which is a database that will make my project readily available to members of the WLU community, including administration and other leaders at Laurier. As a result this may create a risk for you, as a participant.

Please re-review the attached consent form and thoroughly read my paper, specifically the results section and any data I have used from our interview. Once you have completed your review and reflected on whether you feel comfortable with the final product being public, please email me back and indicate if you either 1) continue to consent to participation in this research and your awareness of the public nature of the final written paper, or 2) any requested changes or omissions as a condition of your ongoing consent to participate. If you feel any hesitation please let me know if you would like to request any changes or omissions to responses made in the final paper.

Due to time constraints of this project, please send a response to me **by September 12th**. Please let me know if this deadline does not work and we will try to figure out a solution.

Thank you again,

Sarah Cifani

