

Female Student Perceptions and Experiences of Safety at McGill

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Context

This study was done as a part of an internship course (SOC1 499) through McGill's Undergraduate Department of Sociology. As an intern at the Montreal-based non-profit Women in Cities International (WICI), I worked throughout the term to aid in the organization's goal of promoting female inclusion and safety in urban environments. Officially, this study will contribute to WICI's Right to Campus (RTC) campaign. RTC's goal is to promote and propagate an inclusive and equitable culture at McGill where all students are given the necessary tools to engage within the community. This study elaborates on the gendered dynamic of public spaces and ties the wider societal issue of gender-based violence and micro-aggressions to the experiences of McGill students. In this way, this study will aid in furthering RTC's underlying goal of addressing the issues of safety and inclusivity facing students and contribute to creating an environment of empowerment for all.

According to a 1993 survey by Statistics Canada, 50% of all Canadian women will have had at least one experience of physical or sexual violence by the age of 16.¹ While this statistic is outdated, a follow-up survey of this nature has yet to be completed in order to document the present safety of women in the private and public spheres. The only government data and activism campaigns that seek to raise awareness concerning gender-based violence focus exclusively on overt forms of violence such as assault. This focus creates an unrealistic image of gender-based violence in Canada by failing to account for experiences of implicit forms of violence, including the invoking of gender stereotypes and the objectification of women.^{2 3 4}

Sue's *Microaggressions in Everyday Life* describes the presence of gender discrimination on many levels, including "interpersonal behaviours, institutional practices, and cultural values/beliefs."⁵ He draws a comparison between sexism in the past and "Modern Sexism," highlighting how, unlike past sexism, "Modern Sexism" is manifested at these levels through increasingly implicit and subversive means. These implicit means are referred to as "microaggressions," defined as normalized "verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities [...] that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative [...] slights and insults to the target person or group,"⁶ regardless of the perpetrators' intentions.⁷ Sue argues that, disguised as a result of the normalization of

¹ Canada. Statistics Canada. *Violence Against Women Survey*. 3896. Ottawa. released 30 June 1994, Ottawa.

² Canada. Statistics Canada, *Measuring Violence against Women: Statistical Trends*, by Maire Sinha. 85-002-x, Ottawa, released 25 Feb 2013, Ottawa.

³ "The Facts About Violence Against Women," The Facts About Violence Against Women, *Canadian Women Foundation*, accessed July 18, 2016.

⁴ "The Facts on Violence Against Women," Battered Women's Support Services, accessed July 18, 2016.

⁵ Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in everyday life: race, gender, and sexual orientation*, (Hoboken, N.J: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2010), 165.

⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

⁷ Derald Wing Sue et al., "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice," *American Psychologist* 62, no. 4 (2007): 271.

discrimination, microaggressions generally operate outside the consciousness of the perpetrators and victims.⁸ Swim and Cohen contribute to the literature on microaggressions by highlighting the necessity of evolving the way we measure general treatment and social attitudes towards women. They note that the traditional method of measuring sexism through the Attitudes Towards Woman Scale (AWS) focuses on overt attacks while, on the other hand, the Modern Sexism Scale (MS) deals with a full range of violence experienced by women, including microaggressions.⁹ Gartner and Sterzing assert that microaggression are a part of a continuum of violence that ranges from implicit violence to those that are increasingly explicit. Societal refusal to recognize microaggressions as legitimate violence, they argue, encourages an environment that is complacent and accepting of microaggressions, resulting in the normalizing of this violence against women. This normalization impedes the development of strategies to prevent the multiple dimensions of violence against women.¹⁰

The McGill Campus Climate

	2015-2016				2014-2015				2013-2014				2012-2013			
	Downtown		Macdonald		Downtown		Macdonald		Downtown		Macdonald		Downtown		Macdonald	
	Yearly Totals	Weekly Avg.	Yearly Totals	Weekly Avg.	Yearly Totals	Weekly Avg.	Yearly Totals	Weekly Avg.	Yearly Totals	Weekly Avg.	Yearly Totals	Weekly Avg.	Yearly Totals	Weekly Avg.	Yearly Totals	Weekly Avg.
Unsecured Areas ⁽¹⁾	1,271	24	285	5	1752	34	206	4	777	15	105	2	184	4	104	2
Alarms ⁽²⁾	6,056	116	366	7	8,203	158	321	6	11,417	220	251	5	12,715	245	198	4
Emergency Calls ⁽³⁾	504	10	71	1	498	10	70	1	467	9	54	1	464	9	59	1
Criminal Incidents ⁽⁴⁾	465	9	79	2	294	6	64	1	373	7	62	1	333	6	69	1
Provide Assistance ⁽⁵⁾	8263	158	427	8	9,480	182	285	5	8,655	166	190	4	8,389	161	135	3
Miscellaneous ⁽⁶⁾	393	8	2002	39	377	7	1,549	30	299	6	1,570	30	448	9	800	15
Total	16,952	326	3,255	63	20,604	397	2,495	48	21,988	423	2,232	43	22,533	434	1,365	26

Context for Incident Categories:
 (1) Open doors, windows and buildings that are meant to be secured.
 (2) Unauthorized exit/entry, fire panel trouble, PC tab alarm etc.
 (3) Disturbance or emergency situation.
 (4) Criminal act or attempted criminal act.
 (5) Safety hazards, security risks, parking issues, lost & found etc.
 (6) Rule violation, non-criminal mischief, criminal information, etc.

¹⁰ Gartner, R. E., and P. R. Sterzing, "Gender Microaggressions as a Gateway to Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault: Expanding the Conceptualization of Youth Sexual Violence," *Affilia* 31, no. 4 (June 21, 2016): 491.

Figure 1. incident reports triggered by calls or alarms ¹¹

Figure 2. “Incidents against the Person” reports ¹²

	2015-2016 ¹				2014-2015				2013-2014				2012-2013			
	McGill University	Off Campus ²	Mac Campus ³	Mac and JAC ³	McGill University	Off Campus	Mac Campus	Mac and JAC	McGill University	Off Campus	Mac Campus	Mac and JAC	McGill University	Off Campus	Mac Campus	Mac and JAC
Incidents against the Person																
Assault	8	0	1	0	7	0	0	6	3	4	0	0	4	3	2	7
Threats or Harassment	10	4	4	5	6	3	3	7	11	2	0	3	8	3	1	1
Mugging or Robbery	0	0	0	1	2	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
Sexual Assault	2	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	7
Homicide	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	20	4	5	6	18	8	3	13	14	12	0	3	12	8	5	15
% of Total Crime	4.4%	30.8%	6.5%	6.1%	6.7%	32%	5.0%	9.2%	4.0%	48.0%	0	0.8%	3.9%	27.6%	9.4%	6.6%

As figure 1 demonstrates, during the 2015-2016 academic year, there were 9,232 calls of reported incidents McGill Security Services. In the 2014-2015 academic year, there were 294 calls regarding criminal incidents — in the context of “criminal act or attempted criminal act.” This number increased to 465 in 2015-2016. However, the overall rate of calls to security services declined in the 2015-2016 academic year. Moreover, the 2015-2016 Safety Report highlights the rate of occurrence of “Incidents Against Property,” “Incidents Against the Person,” and “Incidents Against the Good Order.” As demonstrated by figure 2, the types of violence falling under the category of “Incidents Against the Person” are explicit types of violence, while there is no data collection concerning student experiences of microaggressions or other implicit forms of violence. This signals that McGill is concentrating primarily, if not exclusively, on overt threats to student safety, ignoring the importance, complexity, and consequences of subtle aggressions. In this sense, McGill’s data collection contributes to a culture that normalizes

¹¹ Morty Yalovsky, Lynne Gervais, and Robert Couvrette, *2015-2016 McGill University Annual Safety Report: A Report to the Human Resources Committee of the Board of Governors of McGill University*, Report, Security Services, McGill, Oct. 2016, 18.

¹² *Ibid*, 20.

microaggressions.

Rationale and Purpose of the Present Investigation

Considering the social extent of gender-based violence, as well as McGill's lack of comprehensive data collection concerning these issues on and around campus, this study seeks to explore how undergraduate-age women studying at McGill navigate public space and how they perceive and experience implicit and subtle threats to their safety on and around McGill's campus. The purpose of this research is to bring awareness to subversive forms of gender-based violence that occur at McGill and beyond, and to contribute to an ongoing process of improving women's safety on and around campus.

Method

Overview

This research project consisted of two focus-groups comprised of McGill students. Each group had 3 to 5 participants divided into one of two groups based on their availability. The interview guide (Appendix A) was developed based on individual experiences, perceptions of safety and safety threats in public spaces. Emphasis was placed upon physical identity in terms of personal appearance, and its influence on how others perceive women's positionality. The focus groups were held in private rooms booked at McGill's Redpath Library, with each focus session lasting for approximately one hour. The focus groups were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were then coded using MAXQDA software. The information from this process was used to identify recurring themes that were then further explored through cross-comparison between participants' narratives.

Participants and Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited through McGill departmental “listserv” advertisements, posters, and Facebook posts. The target audience was McGill students studying in any department at the undergraduate or graduate levels. Interested participants were emailed a demographic survey (Appendix B) to complete. The purpose of this survey was to gain further understanding of potential participants’ positionality in terms of gender, race, ability and religious affiliations. All those who expressed interest in the study were allowed to participate if they were over the age of 18, a McGill student, and consented to being audio-recorded. The participants were compensated with an instructional yoga DVD from Luna Yoga and a pass for a free yoga or meditation class courtesy of Art of Living Montreal.

Results and Discussion

In sum, there were 8 participants — 3 in the first focus group, and 5 in the second. Seven of the participants self-identified as female and one self-identified as male. All were undergraduate-level students at McGill. The study focused exclusively on the narratives of the female participants because, as there was only one male participant, his narrative could not be compared with that of a male peer. Of the final female participants (n=7), 3 self-identified as White in racial or ethnic background, 1 as Chinese, 1 as Arab, 1 as Kazakh, and 1 as Turkish. While 4 of the female participants identified as having religious affiliations, no participants stated that they regularly wear religious attire (for example, a cross or a hijab). Finally, none of the participants self-identified as having physical disabilities.

Analysis of the focus group data revealed four key themes concerning women’s perceptions and experiences relating to safety on campus: an environment of gendered microaggressions, rationalizing one’s safety as a coping strategy, mobility-limiting behaviour to

maintain a sense of control over one's safety, and extensive engagement in the psychological labour of vigilance.

Microaggressions as Gender-Based Violence

An environment of gendered microaggressions was a prominent theme in both focus groups discussions. The microaggressions discussed were either concerning the physical or social environment.

Physical environmental microaggressions were those involving the built environment, such as lighting. The only example provided was that of a lack of lighting at night in public spaces in and around McGill campus — this was mentioned by all participants. Since the sun sets at around 5 p.m. in Montreal during the winter, many women are still in public spaces after sunset and must therefore navigate these spaces in the dark. Tina, an undergraduate Kazakh student, articulated the importance of timing in her perception of the level of threat to her safety in public spaces. She said, “After dusk and after sunset, once there is no more sun you feel less aware of things and there's a likelihood that you could be watched without you knowing... In that sense I would feel unsafe.”

Social environmental microaggressions occur when the individual(s) occupying a space purposely or incidentally foster a specific social environment. For example, a woman may feel unease in a public space surrounded exclusively by men. According to the participants, key elements of social environmental microaggressions were isolation, the presence of power dynamics, and the sexual harassment of women by men. Participants discussed isolation as triggering feelings of unsafety in that it presented situations of increased risk owing to the lack of other individuals around who could intervene in a potentially unsafe situation. Melissa, a White

undergraduate student, described a particular experience she had while walking through an isolated public space. She said, “There’s a creepy tunnel right by my apartment to get to the metro and I’m walking by this man [...] he like turned around, noticed me, turned around and I kept walking and he started walking after me as well and started trying to talk to me and stuff.” While this experience occurred in a public space, it took place in the seclusion of a tunnel. As demonstrated by this example, women may perceive and experience risk when in an isolated public space.

In addition, the presence of power imbalances — a social environmental microaggression — was thoroughly discussed as a factor lessening female safety and increasing the risk of perceived safety. The presence of a power imbalances in an interaction involved the disempowerment of the woman through the empowerment of another party, almost always a man, in the environment. Claire, a White undergraduate student, described her choice to Uber home at night in order to avoid the isolation and lack of visibility associated with walking home alone at night. However, she also said, “being in a situation where I’ve put myself in isolation and giving someone else complete control over my safety, that scares me and that is a threat to me.” This demonstrates the difficult decision women often must make in order to best ensure their safety: while Claire opted to Uber as it removed her from the potential dangers of walking home alone at night, she still felt at risk owing to the isolation of being in an Uber, within the control of the male driver.

Moreover, Eloise, an Arab undergraduate student, stated, “People have walked into my building, following me home. If I didn’t have a doorman they would have probably followed me up to my apartment. This has happened with two men.” In this instance, the power imbalance

was present in the perceived threat associated with being followed. The perceived threat was based on the notion that, since the man following her has better physical capacity than her, she was at risk of attack. Hence, both Eloise and Claire encountered threats to their safety while trying to navigate public spaces in order to get home.

Furthermore, sexual harassment — treating women as instruments for sexual gains — subjects women to additional social and environmental microaggression. In the focus groups, participants discussed sexual harassment in the context of dating culture, where harassment is often normalized. Despite being visibly in distress while discussing their experiences, the participants did not explicitly articulate harassment as a safety threat or gender-based violence. One of Claire' anecdotes reflected this minimalization quite clearly:

[...] this guy was a little bit obsessed with me in my old apartment building.... he was stalking me. [I would run into him in places like the gym]; the gym had never been a place I'd thought to feel unsafe, but suddenly I was like 'oh my god I don't want to walk down that corridor anymore', because I'm scared I'm going to run into him and something bad is going to happen... After literally 3 months of calling me every single day and telling me he was going to show up at my door and all this. I finally respond 'Please stop this is harassment, you're making me feel very uncomfortable I'm going to have to take further measure, and like by the way I have a boyfriend!'.... And then he replied 'Wow jeez I just wanted to be your friend. This is why girls have such a hard time being friends with guys because this is what they think guys want.'

Claire went on to describe how this experience of sexual harassment, led to her emotional

and mental distress as well as severe lack of comfort in certain public spaces. Claire further described what she believed to be the cause of this persistence:

I think there's this unfortunately perpetuated male-female dynamic where the woman is like in media and TV shows resisting male attention, like 'no, I'm not interested!' but she is actually interested you later find out. Then men are taught to be really aggressive and persistent, and I feel like this has happened in two situations for me: the guy in my building and currently there's somebody else, and in both of those situations guys expressed interest in me and I said no, but they didn't take it to mean no they took it to mean maybe or not yet. That's what's unfortunate — this aggression stemming from this notion of persistence.

As Claire's anecdote demonstrates, owing to the normalization of this persistence, women are, under the guise of dating culture, subjected to everyday forms of gender-based violence through sexual harassment.

In short, the presence of physical and social environmental microaggressions leads to women's perceptions and experiences of safety issues in public spaces. These offences are often increasingly implicit, owing to their subtle content and their lack of physical manifestation. Due to their normalization, they are also not socially considered as forms of violence. However, by creating an implicitly hostile and unsafe environment for women public spaces, microaggressions still systematically affect women. Importantly, it must be noted that what starts as a microaggression can escalate into forms of physical and sexual assault. As such, microaggressions are still on the continuum of gender-based violence. This is because they

Rationalization of Safety to Cope with Omnipresent Generalized Threat of Gender-Based Violence

Participants were observed to rationalize their safety as a coping method in response to the omnipresence of environmental microaggressions in public life.. This practice was evident in the contradictory answers provided in the focus groups. In some instances, after asserting general feeling of safety, the same woman would go on to recount an experience of a safety issue, or the perception of the likelihood of encountering a safety issue. Claire began with saying, “I’ve never felt like my safety has been threatened on campus....” However, she immediately proceeded to describe an instance of a male peer harassing her on campus. She dismissed this harassment as “not a safety issue.” However, this harassment led her to feel at risk. In order to mitigate this risk, she changed her behaviour to avoid the male peer in the future. Moreover, rather than responding to a question about her general feeling of safety around McGill’s campus, Hilary, a White undergraduate student, began to recite the services offered around McGill such as Walk Safe and Drive Safe.¹³ Hilary’s answer demonstrates her reliance on these services to provide safety in an environment that may be unsafe otherwise. These methods of coping were employed by the participants as means to rationalize their level of safety in public spaces. In the above narratives, women diminished their perceived risk of a safety issue through reliance on campus services or minimalizing harassment and uncomfortable experiences. In doing so, the women could then provide personal justification that a specific public space is safe.

Disciplining the Self Through Controlling Behaviours and Limiting Mobility

¹³ Walk Safe and Drive Safe are both student-run services that offer McGill students a way to get home at night, through either providing a volunteer to walk with or through a free ride service to get them home.

As a result of experiencing environmental microaggressions, the informants reported self-imposed behavioural change and mobility limitation to both cope with and reduce the risk of experiencing safety threats. These practices are traditionally referred to as precautionary behaviour. Precautionary behaviours consist of two dimensions of behaviours related to avoidance: that of limiting exposure to risk by removing oneself from the threatening situation, and that of risk management, defined as coping with a perceived risk when one cannot avoid the threat.¹⁴ Carmen, a Chinese undergraduate student, expressed reluctance in interacting with strangers following a past negative experience. In this experience, Carmen had given her number to a man who helped her carry her purchases to the metro station. This man proceeded to call her once a day for a month, harassing her and depriving her of a sense of safety within the private sphere (her residence room). She explained, “I just feel like the world outside of McGill is quite dangerous, it really affected me making friends outside”. Her past experiences of safety threats and risk of perceived future safety threats has led to Tina feel “less comfortable to go outside my comfort zone and go to unfamiliar places.” Hence, to ensure control over her sense of safety, Tina constrained her personal mobility.

Since they can appear as personal decisions made without external influence, the consequences of consistent subjection to environmental microaggressions are frequently difficult to identify as.

Eloise stated, “I kind of stopped going to the gym that I used to go to. I went back recently, but up until now I’ve had a lot of trouble wanting to go there. Because everyone used to talk to me all the time. It would make me feel very uncomfortable, I hated going back.”.

¹⁴ DuBow, *Reactions to Crime*.

However, minutes before this statement she had felt unsure if she had stopped going to the gym due to her own lack of motivation, or if it had been because of this harassment. Stemming from this was discussion on the struggle of women finding the right balance between placing responsibility on themselves and the policing of their behaviours in order to ensure their safety, all the while recognizing the role of the other person in creating the safety threat. Upon being asked if she feels that it is likely that she will experience some sort of victimization again, one woman stated that she believed it to be “Likely. Well it depends on my behaviours but because I’m always out and about and taking the metro at night... Most likely something will occur”, highlighting her sense of responsibility of controlling her behaviours to ensure she avoids safety threats. Another woman echoed her sentiment stating that, “I think this kind of thing, I can prevent it in the first place just...” Finally, a participant offered, “I feel like everyone blames themselves for putting themselves in that situation. It’s hard to find a balance between saying “next time I should do this” but also knowing it’s not your fault if someone put you in that situation.”

In short, the informants discussed various instances of self-policing their behaviours and limiting their mobility in order to guarantee their level of perceived and experienced safety. Such practices of women being “careful” or avoiding certain spaces are normalized within society and frequently portrayed as acts of female agency. However, these practices are greatly influenced by the external, generalized and omnipresent threat of gender-based violence in the public sphere. Moreover, these practices explicitly highlight inequalities within society, as environments are physically and socially constructed to be safer for white, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied men, rather than women —particularly women at intersection at intersections of other identities.

This results in women being subjected to threats to their inclusion and safety in what is socially deemed a “safe” environment, owing to the fact that it was built based on a specific male standard. These findings are in line with an argument proposed by Franklin & Franklin.¹⁵ By contrasting women’s and men’s fear of crime, they highlight the uniqueness of self-discipline and mobility limitation to women’s way of coping with threats to their safety. Moreover, while men are socialized to explore their surroundings, women are discouraged from exploration and instead taught to practice caution when faced with the unknown — manifested in the consequential self-policing of their behaviours.¹⁶

Psychological Labour of Constant Vigilance in Public Sphere

The notion of “constant vigilance” emerged in both focus groups as a practice women use in order to maximize their safety levels in public spaces. This practice involves constant — but implicit — awareness of surroundings as well as constant measurement of the level of safety of an environment. Melissa discussed her own practice of constant vigilance by saying:

I find as a girl, even if it’s not prominent in the front of your mind, it’s always in the back of your mind... [the fear of] unwarranted advances of any kind, and sometimes it actually does happen... There is sort of that level of vigilance, like I’m always vigilant when I feel unsafe I think. There’s always that sort of heightened [awareness], where you’re just ready for anything kind of thing.

Thelma, a Turkish undergraduate student, offered insight into one of the reasons women practice constant vigilance. She stated:

¹⁵ Courtney A. Franklin, and Travis W. Franklin, "Predicting Fear of Crime," *Feminist Criminology* 4, no. 1 (2009): 83.

¹⁶ Christopher Kilmartin, *The Masculine Self* (Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY: Sloan Pub., 2007).

I think [the practice of constant vigilance occurs] because fear is engraved in you and [you hear] all the stories... it happening to yourself personally is super rare. But because you hear all the stories, that one little thing happened, you hear it on the news and you expect it to happen to you.

As such, Thelma suggested that one's perception of societal unsafety plays a role in creating the need for constant vigilance. Moreover, one of the focus groups discussed the impact of one's familiarity with an environment on practicing constant vigilance, with a higher level of comfort being associated with a lesser need for vigilance. Hilary articulated how moving away from home impacted her use of constant vigilance. She said:

I think I have a lot more awareness since coming here of like the repercussion of my actions, little things you wouldn't think about. One girl that I know... this guy showed up at her door at rez, she told him what rez she was in. He somehow found out her room number and was knocking at her door late at night. So even little things like that. You meet someone new, just being a lot more careful, which I wouldn't have to think about when I lived with my parents in a smaller city.

Furthermore, the participants highlighted their inclination to believe that, when men they do not know initiate an interaction with them in a public space, some form of harassment is bound to follow. Claire stated:

"I've gradually learned that it sucks, it sucks that's it's on me to change my nature to combat this constant harassment, but initially, I used to be very friendly, but over time it just gets super annoying. You learn to be like 'okay, no bye' and put your headphones back in. Where do you draw the line between you are literally just

being friendly, and you're invading my space?"

Claire's testimony demonstrates her use of constant vigilance in her self-protection against a situation with the potential to turn into harassment. A further example of constant vigilance in a harmless situation is highlighted in an excerpt where the Thelma recounted:

"There was this one man, maybe he was homeless, he came up to talk to me, I get that feeling like 'oh crap' but he was super nice and walked me there.. I was like 'oh shoot what did I do'. But he was super nice and walked off right when we got there. You kind of forget that people are nice, they're not all evil."

Hence, an act of constant vigilance is manifested in one's perception and treatment of others. As evident in these examples, regardless of the actual threat to their physical safety, women practice constant vigilance in order to limit their exposure to safety threats.

Conclusion

Through conducting two focus groups with female McGill students, four key themes emerged concerning women's perceptions and experiences of safety and safety threats in public spaces. First, there was the overall recurrence in a narrative regarding the generalized presence of gendered environmental microaggressions — a form of gender-based violence — in public spaces.. Owing to the scope and vast presence of environmental microaggressions, a further theme emerged concerning the participant's rationalization of their safety. In order to cope with perception of constant threats to their safety, this rationalization was done through relying on campus services and minimalizing and normalizing experiences of sexual harassment. Another theme highlighted the practice of the disciplining of oneself by controlling specific behaviours, for example limiting personal mobility or socialization with strangers. Cumulatively, owing to

their constant vigilance and action against the threat of gender-based violence, female participants engage extensively in psychological labour.

Strengths and Limitations

A strength of this study is its inclusion of women from a variety of races and ethnicities, giving insight into how women from different racial backgrounds perceive issues of safety and safety threats on and around McGill. Moreover, in using a focus group methodology, this study was able to foster discussion between individuals in order to deepen the complexity of the interviews. Limitations of this study can be seen in the small number of participants, making these results ungeneralizable to the experiences of other female undergraduates across Canada. Further research with larger populations ought to be done in the same area of study. Moreover, the inclusion of individuals with increasingly diverse positionalities would be interesting and beneficial in further research in order to gain an intersectional picture, as well as to enable comparison between groups.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

INTRODUCTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Before getting started with the interview, I just want to go over a few things. I want to assure you that the questions are all very broad with no right or wrong answers-- what I am interested in is your unique, subjective, thoughts and experiences regarding my questions.

I want to stress the importance of keeping this a safe and respectful space. It is important that everyone has the chance to speak, and that people don't speak over each other. That being said, it's also important that you don't hold back.

Moreover, everything said today will be kept confidential, with your identities being protected, in both my documents, as well as final paper. It is very important that everyone here maintains the confidentiality of what is discussed and who participated in this group; however, I cannot guarantee this will be the case.

However, should you want to, you can decide to leave the focus group at any point. Do you have any questions?

BACKGROUND QUESTION

1. Can I get everyone to go around the circle to say their name and preferred pronoun into the audio recorder?

MAIN QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to you to feel or be safe?
 - i. PROBE: What does it mean to you to feel or be unsafe?
2. In general, do you think there are different ways to feel unsafe? What are these, in your opinion?
 - i. PROBE: What role do physical and/ or emotional variants play in your feeling of safety?
 - ii. PROBE: Do you consider physical or emotional variants to have a greater impact on your level of safety? Why is that?
3. How, if at all do you think people might experience being safe or unsafe differently? In other words, what factors might mean that some people are safer than others and vice-versa, that some are less safe than others?
 - i. PROBE: What are some of the factors that influence your feeling of safety or lack of safety?
 - ii. PROBE: Why do you or do you not think these factors are unique to you?

- iii. PROBE: Why might you believe you are in general safer or less safe than others? PROBE: Do you think you feel more or less safe, in general, than the average McGill student? Why is that?
 - iv. PROBE: How might elements of physical identity (i.e. gender, race etc.), if at all, have an impact on one's feeling of safety?
- 4. In general, are there particular spaces on McGill's campus where you feel more of less safe? Why is that?
 - i. PROBE: Do you always feel (more/less) safe in the particular space?
 - ii. PROBE: What would make that space feel (safer/less safe) to you?
- 5. Can you describe to me any particular experiences you've had where you have felt unsafe on or around campus?
 - i. PROBE: What in particular made you feel unsafe?
 - ii. PROBE: What would have made you feel safer in that situation?
- 6. Going back to the experiences you talked about involving a person making you feel unsafe...
 - B. Have you ever had an experience involving another person that made you feel unsafe?
 - i. PROBE: How do you understand these encounters? What goes on?
 - ii. PROBE: How are these experiences (your multiple experiences or your experience compared to that of another participant) different or similar?
- 7. How do you make sense these experiences that made you feel unsafe? In other words, why do you think they happen and don't happen?
 - i. PROBE: How likely is it, in your view, that you will experience something similar again? Why or why not?
 - ii. PROBE: How have you responded to such experiences?
 - iii. PROBE: For instance, changed your behaviour? How so?
 - iv. PROBE: Sought psychological counselling or some other form of support?
- 8. How, if at all, do you see McGill playing a role in creating safer spaces for students?
 - i. PROBE: How do you or do you not think McGill makes enough effort to ensure your safety?
 - ii. PROBE: How might McGill better foster your sense of safety?
 - iii. PROBE: you see other entities having a role in making on and around campus safer?

CLOSING

Alright, we are finished. Before ending the focus group, is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to share, or that you think it's important for me to know?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. I really appreciate your participation

in this study. Do not hesitate to contact me at any point should you have any questions about this research project.

APPENDIX B

Preliminary Demographic Survey Potential Participants

The following is a series of questions regarding your identity and background. This information will be used to determine if you are qualified to participate in my study. Please be as candid as possible. You may choose to decline to answer any questions, or to terminate your participation at any time should you desire.

To recap-- Participation in this study will consist of partaking in a focus group discussion of approximately one hour in length, where you will be asked about your thoughts on safety issues, as well as experiences of verbal and emotional aggressions and harassment on and around McGill's campuses. Pseudonyms will be used in any publications and all information obtained in the interview will remain confidential.

1. What degree are you currently pursuing at McGill? (i.e. Undergraduate Degree, Master's Degree, or PhD)
2. What is your gender identity?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Androgynous
 - d. Trans*
 - e. Queer
 - f. Other + specify
3. How do you identify sexually?
 - a. Heterosexual
 - b. Homosexual
 - c. Bisexual
 - d. Asexual
 - e. Other + specify
4. Which of the following best describes your ethnic or cultural background?
 - a. White
 - b. Indigenous
 - c. South Asian (East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan etc.)
 - d. Chinese
 - e. Black
 - f. Filipino
 - g. Latin American
 - h. Arab

- i. Southeast Asian (Vietnamese, Cambodia, Malaysian, Laotian etc.)
- j. West Asian (Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
- k. Korean
- l. Japanese
- m. Other + specify

5. Do you have any disabilities? If yes, please specify.

6. Do you belong to a religion? If yes, please specify.

- a. Is there any attire associated with your religion that you regularly wear?

Thank you, you have completed the questionnaire.