"People Don't Talk About It Here":

A Grounded Theory Study of Sexual Violence Prevention and School Climate

in Rural Nova Scotia

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Abstract

Sexual violence is a prevalent issue in Nova Scotia, and residents in rural areas of the province face increased barriers developing comprehensive prevention initiatives and responses to this form of Gender Based Violence (GBV). Promising primary prevention approaches include social-ecological approaches that influence norms and values surrounding sexual violence and can be used in youth prevention programs in tandem with school climate approaches. For this qualitative thesis, student and staff experiences of sexual violence prevention in their high schools in Northeastern Nova Scotia were analysed using a constructivist Grounded Theory Method (GTM). Four in-depth open-ended participant interviews were coded using this method to develop a theory of sexual violence prevention in rural areas. The analysis of this research led to the conceptualization of a theory of resource allocation as value statement within school systems in rural Nova Scotia, developed from four core categories: sexual violence stigma in Nova Scotia, resource allocation as value statement, sexual violence prevention as social-ecological norm development, and rurality as an experiential spectrum. This research has implications for methodological approaches to evaluating primary sexual violence prevention initiatives, and for the development of future sexual violence prevention programming in high schools in rural areas.

Keywords: sexual violence prevention, primary prevention, grounded theory method, rural studies, school climate

Résumé

La violence sexuelle est un problème répandu en Nouvelle-Écosse, et les résidents des zones rurales de la province sont confrontés à des obstacles accrus dans l'élaboration d'initiatives de prévention et de réponses complètes à cette forme de violence fondée sur le genre (VFG). Les approches prometteuses en matière de prévention primaire comprennent les approches socioécologiques qui influencent les normes et les valeurs entourant la violence sexuelle et qui peuvent être utilisées dans les programmes de prévention pour les jeunes de pair avec les approches liées au climat scolaire. Pour cette thèse qualitative, les expériences des étudiants et du personnel en matière de prévention de la violence sexuelle dans leurs écoles secondaires du nord-est de la Nouvelle-Écosse ont été analysées à l'aide d'une approche constructiviste fondée sur la théorie. Quatre entrevues détaillées avec des participants à questions ouvertes ont été codées à l'aide de cette méthode afin d'élaborer une théorie de la prévention de la violence sexuelle en milieu rural. Les résultats de cette recherche sont une théorie de l'allocation des ressources en tant qu'énoncé de valeur dans les systèmes scolaires des régions rurales de la Nouvelle-Écosse, élaborée à partir des quatre catégories principales : la stigmatisation de la violence sexuelle en Nouvelle-Écosse, l'allocation des ressources en tant qu'énoncé de valeur, la prévention de la violence sexuelle en tant qu'élaboration de normes socioécologiques et la ruralité en tant que spectre. Cette recherche a des répercussions sur les approches méthodologiques de l'évaluation des initiatives primaires de prévention de la violence sexuelle et sur l'élaboration de futurs programmes de prévention de la violence sexuelle dans les écoles secondaires des régions rurales.

Mots clés : prévention de la violence sexuelle, prévention primaire, méthode de la théorie à base empirique, études rurales, climat scolaire, violence fondée sur le genre (VBG).

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Chapter One: Introduction

Many public schools throughout rural Nova Scotia are found in idyllic locales; nestled into rolling highland hills, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, or tucked into quiet corners of countryside with fields and forests close by. Others are found in industrial or post-industrial landscapes close to fisheries, factories, and coal mines with students bussed in to attend the predominantly pre-primary to grade 12 institution (Province of Nova Scotia, 2020). All of these rural schools exist at the complex intersection of maritime rurality, close school-community connections, and the Nova Scotia Education system.

It is in these locales that I grew up and first experienced formalised education, that I returned to while working as a sexual violence prevention educator, and that I still consider home. The schools in these rural areas operate not only as classrooms for education, but as community hubs and youth centres in areas without other intergenerational spaces for young people to gather and socialise (Bennett, 2013; Corbett & Helmer, 2017). I have witnessed, time and time again, young people working diligently within their schools to build coalitions of safety and respect for themselves and their peers in areas of sexual violence prevention, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender 2-Spirit Queer and Intersex (LGBT2QI+) inclusion and education, Indigenous rights, and other fields of anti-oppression and inclusion. I have also witnessed teachers and support staff who go above and beyond to support student action in sexual violence prevention and gender equity initiatives that have been historically underfunded and lack formalised support in the province (Rubin, 2008). I have seen the people living in communities balance the real struggles of rural life with a bone deep connection to the families, neighbours, land, and ocean of Nova Scotia. Often, young people growing up in these spaces are pulled between this connection and the cultural, educationally reinforced belief that there is more and better available to them

elsewhere (Corbett, 2013). Within this dynamic and place-based structure of education, service-access, and commitment to community lie the schools described above, and the students and staff members who create these communities. The experiences of students and staff members in rural Nova Scotia are crucial research sources for researchers seeking insights into theories of school climate and effective sexual violence prevention strategies in rural areas.

1.2 Background

Sexual violence is a pervasive issue in communities across Canada. Presently, there are approximately 5.9 million people in the provinces who have been sexually assaulted since the age of 15 (Government of Canada, 2020). Nationally, sexual violence is the only violent crime in Canada that is not declining, with the majority of victims of this gendered form of violence being women and girls (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2020; Government of Canada, 2020). Young Canadians are a particularly vulnerable group, with victimization numbers 18 times higher for youth ages 15 to 24 than for Canadians over 55 (2020). For this research, sexual violence is defined using the World Health Organization (WHO)'s definition in tandem with Breaking the Silence Nova Scotia's contextual definition: "Sexual violence is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work" (WHO, 2012).

> Sexual violence is entrenched and normalized in our society to the point that actions
> and even the harms associated with it have become tolerated and accepted. [referred to in
> the literature as "rape culture"]. A person's identity and social location—determined by

their gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, race, ability, sexual orientation, and

employment status or income— can leave some people more vulnerable to experiencing

sexual violence than others.

(Government of Nova Scotia, 2018)

Sexual violence is a symptom of gendered violence and is most commonly perpetrated by

men against women (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2020). Men and gender minority peoples

are also victims of sexual violence, with an estimated ten to twenty percent of men and an

estimated fifty percent of transgender or gender diverse people experiencing sexual violence in

their lifetime in Canada (Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, 2021; Ball, 2017;

Government of Canada, 2020). Canadians who identify as sexual minorities also reported high

rates of sexual victimization - almost three times higher than heterosexual Canadians. Race and

Indigeneity further impact rates of sexual violence, as non-white women and Indigenous women

in Canada encounter higher rates of sexual violence than white women, and often encounter

worse outcomes when attempting to report or seek services for sexual violence (Coulter et al.,

2017; CWF, 2020; Government of Canada, 2020). The Sex Information & Education Council of

Canada (SIECCAN) outlines the issue in Canada as "a significant public health problem and

human rights violation" that impacts certain demographics more than others. Because sexual

violence functions as a symptom of power and oppression, statistics of victimization and

vulnerability are impacted by dynamics such as race, class, colonialism, gender, and sexuality.

An intersectional feminist approach (further discussed in section 1.5 of this chapter) is integral to

understanding how these structures of power and access influence sexual violence.

In rural Canada there are additional barriers to sexual violence prevention and response. Access to services, isolation, confidentiality concerns, limited resources, and lack of knowledge about sexual violence are all issues in rural communities that impact sexual violence outcomes (Carter-Snell et al., 2019; Church et al., 2020; Sharkey et al, 2017). In Nova Scotia, rural perceptions of sexual violence present as increased stigma towards sexual violence, lack of resource availability or knowledge of resources, social isolation, and victim-blaming responses to sexual violence reports (Gladu, 2017; Johnson & Hiller, 2019; Rubin, 2008). In their 2017 provincial study of sexual violence, Breaking the Silence found that sixty-nine percent of respondents personally knew at least one victim of sexual violence (Government of Nova Scotia, 2018). Youth and community members in rural Nova Scotia have indicated the need for further structural and formalized supports in preventing and responding to issues of sexual violence, as well as increased professional development for adults serving young populations (Rubin, 2008; Government of Nova Scotia, 2018).

Because of the widespread nature of sexual violence and it's devastating long-term impacts on personal, community, and social health in the province of Nova Scotia and the country of Canada, comprehensive prevention initiatives are needed to intervene before violence can occur. These initiatives may be school-based, community-based, online or virtual, or some combination of approaches. The SIECCAN national working group identified comprehensive sex education as a core component of empowerment for Canadians in addressing sexual violence prevention (2019), and Canadian youth (ages 14-17) have reported school as the most useful/valuable source of sexual health education (Frappier et al., 2008; Laverty et al., 2021). High school prevention programs have also been shown to be highly effective at teaching young people about reducing gendered violence, improving healthy relationship skills, and preventing

sexual violence (CWF, 2020). In-school programming has been shown to impart values of respect for gender equality and anti-violence, support skill-building through consent education, and increase awareness toward sexual violence beliefs and behaviours (SIECCAN, 2019). Thus, in-school sexual violence prevention programming and initiatives in rural Nova Scotia form the core research area of this study.

This thesis will explore concepts related to sexual violence prevention using qualitative methodology and an intersectional feminist analysis, as defined in the literature review and methodology chapters. Rurality and rural sociology studies serve as foundational literature to inform an understanding of the lived experiences of the population within this research. School climate research is used as a framework to navigate student and staff experiences in their rural schools, and to identify dimensions of belonging and safety in their institutions. It is the intention of this research to enhance the understanding of sexual violence prevention approaches within rural schools in Nova Scotia by using student and staff interviews to create a grounded theory related to in-school sexual violence prevention measures in rural school boards and centres for education.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Sexual violence is a widespread and socially destructive form of gendered oppression that impacts rural communities across Canada. Young people are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, as are rural or remote populations and people of marginalised identities. Schools in rural areas are particularly well-suited to undertake sexual violence prevention initiatives, given their broad reach and large number of the population of young people who attend them (Province of Nova Scotia, 2020). School-based sexual violence prevention has been shown to be an

effective tool in building capacity for individuals to identify, intervene, and prevent sexual

violence (CWF, 2020). "Risk factors that shape perpetrator behavior such as peer attitudes and

behaviors, gender- and violence-related cognitions, and structural/environmental factors"

(MacCauley et al., 2019) are all impacted by school-based primary prevention approaches.

Student and staff experiences in their school climates also impact attitudes towards sexual

violence and harassment (Basile, 2018; Gillander & Stein, 2017; Nickerson et al., 2014). School

climate is an important factor to consider to better understand the impact of sexual violence

prevention efforts in rural schools. This research will explore what students and staff in rural

Nova Scotia identify as supports and barriers to sexual violence prevention initiatives in their

schools, their experiences within their school climates, and how they perceive the importance of

sexual violence prevention. It is the intention of this qualitative research to address the problem

of sexual violence in rural communities by developing a constructivist grounded theory from the

data provided by students and staff.

1.4 Research Questions

The primary research questions for this project are:

1. In what ways do students and staff in rural Nova Scotian high schools experience
   school climates that challenge or prevent sexual violence while navigating the
   specific barriers of stigma and access surrounding sexual violence in rural Atlantic
   Canada?

2. What do students and staff in high schools in rural Nova Scotia envision as future or
   potential strategies for the prevention of sexual violence?

For question one, I wish to explore a more contextual experience of meaning making from students and staffs within their specific school climate, and to situate this meaning in the locale of rural Nova Scotia – specifically within the Strait Regional Centre for Education and the Chignecto Regional Centre for Education on the Northumberland coast. It is my contention that defining a concept of "place" within the rural maritime context is crucial in understanding student and staff experiences and understandings of sexual violence prevention. For the second question, I designed a more strengths-based exploration aiming to explore possible imagined futures for sexual violence prevention in Nova Scotia. This approach was taken to explore what participants envision as "ideal-world" sexual violence prevention programming in their schools, and what barriers currently exist that impede that vision. I believe this research question will also keep the discussions and research rooted in possibility and potential, in lieu of a deficit-based approach to sexual violence prevention in rural regions.

These research questions guided the research design and interview protocols and are used in the constructivist grounded theory approach (section 1.5.1 and 3.4) to inform the development of a preliminary theory that is the ultimate result of this qualitative study. Research questions in this approach are intended to guide the process of research, in lieu of serving as hypotheses or deductive foundations for research (Bhattacharya, 2017; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

1.5 Theoretical Framework

1.5.1 Constructivist Grounded Theory

Constructivist Grounded Theory, which will be further discussed in the methodology (Chapter 3), is a contemporary form of grounded theory research that employs a relativist epistemology to situate the experiences of participants, researcher, and theory (Charmaz, 2017).

A constructivist theoretical approach differs from Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original

conception of grounded theory by situating the design, analysis, and outcomes of the grounded

theory not only in the data itself (as Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory advocates) but in the

relevant academic and community literature, and in the researcher's position (Charmaz, 2017).

As a theoretical framework, constructivist grounded theory informs the researcher's approach by

incorporating reflexive techniques (such as section 1.8: Researcher position statement) and by

developing a final theory that is "in conversation" with the current literature on the topic

(Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). Constructivist grounded theory enables a researcher to "explore

and theorize individual and social life" (Charmaz, 2017, p. 299), and in this thesis was used to

inform all sections of the research design and outcomes. As a constructivist grounded approach

encourages the examination of social issue topics based in the lived experiences of participants,

it also challenges the traditional academic role of "researcher-as-expert" and reframes the

participants as experts in their own lives, connected to the intersectional feminist theory outlined

in section 1.5.2.

1.5.2 Intersectional Feminist Theory

Originally presented in academic literature by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in her work on

the intersecting identities of Black women navigating the justice system, intersectional theory

has a long history in the community activism of Women of Colour and Black feminist

movements (Duran & Jones, 2020). Intersectional feminist theory is a framework employed to

understand intersecting structures of oppression and domination in research and social analysis

(Duran & Jones, 2020). For this thesis, intersectional feminist theory shaped the development of

the research design and approach, and the selection of methodology that is inductive and centres

participant experience. Intersectionality in academic research also requires the researcher to consider their own roles in the position of power as "researcher" representing an institution and researching within a community (Hall & Hiteva, 2020). In my own approaches to participant recruitment, interviewing, and communication, this meant that participants were supported in following their own lines of inquiry about the subject matter (for example, a participant who wanted to explore their own understanding of sexual violence was encouraged to do so, even if this marked a divergence from the interview script), questioning the researcher, and shaping the interviews in ways that positioned them as co-creators of the research (Bhattacharya, 2017; Hall & Hiteva, 2020).

1.6 Definition of Terms

Sexual Violence: While sexual violence is a broad and complex term, this research uses the definition of the World Health Organisation (2012), which broadly defines sexual violence as:

> Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.
>
> Coercion can encompass:
>
> • Varying degrees of force;
>
> • Psychological intimidation;
>
> • Blackmail; or
>
> • Threats (of physical harm or of not obtaining a job/grade etc.).

In addition, sexual violence may also take place when someone is not able to give

consent – for instance, while intoxicated, drugged, asleep or mentally incapacitated. (p.2)

Intersectionality: First introduced by Black female lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to

describe the unique experiences of Black women in the legal system, this thesis borrows

Crenshaw's recent explanation of intersectionality as

> […] a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate
>
> together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from
>
> inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is
>
> how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its
>
> parts.
>
> (Crenshaw, 2020)

The concept of intersectionality creates a lens for examining the experiences of rural youth with

sexual violence as impacted and navigated through their gender, sexual, racial, and class

identities.

School Climate: Definitions of school climate vary across the literature, however, dimensions of

school climate consistently include school safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the

institutional environment (Capp et al., 2020; Thapa et al., 2013; Wang & Degol, 2016). For the

purposes of this thesis, we use the following definitions of these dimensions to define school

climate:

School safety includes social-emotional and physical safety, supportive environments, and clear rules.

Relationships represent the need for positive, supportive relationships with teachers that demonstrate respect for diversity, collaboration, and positive values. This dimension is also predicated on the idea that learning is inherently relational (Cohen et al., 2009; Thapa et al., 2013).

Teaching and learning reflect the quality of instruction and how students and staff members participate in and shape educational goals within a school (Cohen et al., 2009; Wang & Degol, 2016).

Finally, the **institutional environment** refers to the physical environment at school, including the maintenance and functioning of facilities (Cohen et al., 2009; Wang & Degol, 2016). This dimension also encompasses structural organization elements including school schedules and class sizes, and the availability of resources such as instructional supplies and tools (Wang & Degol, 2016).

(Capp et al., 2020)

1.7 Organisation of Thesis

This thesis contains six chapters, as listed in the Table of Contents: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion. The current chapter has covered an introduction to the problem of sexual violence in Canada and rural Nova Scotia and has provided the reader with the research questions and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 will review the literature regarding sexual violence prevention, school climate, and the historical and geospatial contexts of rural Nova Scotia.

Chapter 3, Methodology, presents the research design and procedures situated in a qualitative grounded theory approach. The research aims, qualitative paradigm, and grounded theory methods and criteria will all be outlined in this chapter, as well as an overview of the data coding and analysis process which occurs concurrently with data collection while using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). Chapter 4 presents the analysis from the coding procedure and the results of the research; core categories culminating in a grounded theory related to sexual violence prevention and school climate. All results are rooted in the data of participants, and the theory itself is intended to reflect the knowledge of students and staff interviewed, supported by the literature reviewed.

Chapter 5 and 6 will provide a discussion of the implications of the theory on sexual violence prevention approaches connected to school climate in rural locales, and a summary and conclusion of the thesis. The research questions will be revisited, along with a discussion of the student and staff experiences separately and together. The final grounded theory will be explored in relation to current literature and future research implications.

1.8 Researcher Position Statement

Positionality "describes an individual's world view and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context" (Holmes, 2020, p. 1). Researcher position statements are used in qualitative research to outline the researcher's understanding and perception of themselves and their relationship to the study, and to provide the reader with an understanding of how their position may influence the research (Holmes, 2020). Positionality statements are context-dependent and are representative of a qualitative, reflexive approach to

the research process which recognizes the researcher "is not separate from the social processes they study" (Holmes, 2020, p. 2).

My position is as a female-identified graduate student studying sexual violence from a qualitative and feminist perspective. While undertaking this research, I was fortunate to be able to spend much of my time in my home community of Pictou County, Nova Scotia, which is in the Northeastern region specified in this research. The Northeastern region is also where I worked as a coordinator of a healthy relationships program for high school students developed by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association (AWRC&SASA), serving schools and communities spread across a large swath of rural Nova Scotia. The Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) program was delivered across the province, with adult coordinators training youth facilitators in grades eleven and twelve to deliver the violence prevention program in grade nine health classes (AWRC&SASA, 2021). The students and staff members I met through this work were foundational in my passion for sexual violence prevention, and in my belief in the importance of primary prevention approaches tailored to rural areas. The enthusiasm, dedication, and compassion displayed by the community members preventing and responding to address sexual violence in their small towns and villages provided lessons I will always carry with me about the resilience and power of rural communities. Although I have called other towns and cities "home", rural Nova Scotia has informed much of my life experience and is a place I hope to always return to.

It is also important to note my identity as a white settler studying rurality and sexual violence in the unceded land of the Mi'kmaq, and that rural studies and rural concepts of place must acknowledge Canada as a settler-state to address the intersections of sexual violence, colonialism, and gender-based violence. The legacy of residential schools, reserve systems,

ongoing colonial violence against Indigenous women, and racism all influence how the communities studied in this thesis experience gender, sexual violence, and rurality in Canada.

This reflexive statement is intended to contextualise my position as a researcher, community member, and professional. Positionality in qualitative research affirms that my experiences and identity are connected to my "understanding, interpretation, acceptance and belief" (Holmes, 2020, p. 5) of my own findings and of the research that informs this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter will cover the current literature on rurality, school climate studies, and sexual violence prevention. These three sections present how these fields of literature impact students and staff in rural Nova Scotia, and how they interact to inform the social-ecological understanding of sexual violence. The unique context of rural Nova Scotia in relation to rural Canada is presented, followed by an overview of school climate and its impact on norm development and violence outcomes, and the chapter will conclude with current understandings of best practice primary prevention of sexual violence.

2.1 Rurality

This research grounds itself in the sociology of rural education, and specifically in the region of Northern Nova Scotia. Nationally, Nova Scotia has lagged behind other provinces in immigration and has suffered from a "brain drain" of their youth to other provinces (Bennett, 2013; Sano et al., 2020). Out-migration of young people is an issue for rural areas globally, and Nova Scotia is no exception, with some estimates suggesting that at the current rate of youth outmigration there will be 100,000 fewer working age people in Nova Scotia by 2036, in a province which currently has a population of approximately 971,000 (MacKinnon, 2020; oneNS, 2014; Government of Canada, 2016). Internally, the rural urban split of Nova Scotia is increasing, with younger rural residents moving to the growth corridor of the Halifax Regional Municipality – the urban centre of the province (Bennett, 2013; State of Rural Canada, 2019). Nova Scotia is one of Canada's most rural provinces, with an estimated forty-five percent of Nova Scotians living rurally and comprising the majority of the province's landmass (State of Rural Canada, 2019). The small communities spread across large geographic areas means that rural school staff members may be put in the roles of serving multiple schools in one region,

entailing hours of driving and low resource coverage at some of the more distant schools. One

staff member participant in this studied shared the following:

> **Dawn:** youth joke that you have to have your mental breakdown on a Wednesday
> because that's when the mental health clinician is there, or the youth health centre is
> open. That's a real issue.

The context of "rural" in Nova Scotia is crucial to understanding gendered experiences of

oppression and violence. Students in rural locales are also, of course, subject to the norms of

sexuality and gender in these areas - consider Corbett's (2007) analysis of rural outmigration

which indicated sexism as a contributing factor to the decisions of young women and

LGBT2QI+ youth to leave their family's communities while straight-identifying boys and young

men were more likely to be interested in staying. Sano et al.'s (2020) following study of rural

youth in Atlantic Canada reaffirms that young women are more likely to leave their rural homes

for opportunities elsewhere, and that women perceived fewer opportunities for higher paying

jobs and success in rural areas. In addition, rural areas are impacted by patriarchal views of

gender identity and roles to a greater degree than their urban counterparts, which can impact how

young women experience their communities and their perceptions of sexual or gendered violence

(Cairns, 2013). Whiteness, heteronormativity, class, and colonialism further impact young

people's experiences in rural locales differently than their urban counterparts, as rural

communities are often perceived as heterogenous straight, white spaces – even though that is

certainly not the reality for all rural residents (Cairns, 2013).

Additionally, the community-centredness of rural schools poses both barrier and strength,

as rural schools tend to have higher rates of parental and community engagement which

enhances academic engagement and investment but may also serve as a barrier to accessing

sexual health resources or services offered in shared community/school spaces (Bennett, 2013;

Church et al., 2020; Heslop et al., 2018). Because of the familiarity of school staff and rural

community members, confidentiality is a concern for students and staff alike in accessing any

stigmatized services such as sexual health, sexual assault reporting, or mental health support

(Church et al., 2020). Rural Nova Scotian communities are typified by a strong sense of

connectedness and "knowing your neighbors", which is often identified as a positive aspect of

living in these areas (Cairns, 2013; Church et al., 2020; Francis et al., 2006). However, these

close connections and the sense that "everybody knows everybody" can also impact perceptions

of safety and stigma regarding the issue of sexual violence (Cartner-Snell et al., 2019).

The environments in which we develop our understanding of gender, sex, sexuality, and

accompanying norms influence sexual identity development and understandings of sexual and

gender norms. For sexual violence prevention initiatives, it is crucial to develop an analysis of

the dynamics of rural spaces to support schools in undertaking an informed sexual violence

prevention approach. Stigma, youth's experiences of rural life, resource access and allocation are

all deeply influenced by rural contexts, as evidenced by the literature and the participant

interviews (outlined in Chapters 3-6). Rural identity and the contextual setting of Northeastern

Nova Scotia provides a way of understanding sexual violence prevention initiatives that are

responsive to the communities they are situated within.

2.3 School Climate

School climate developed as a research interest in the 1960s and has been used broadly

by educators, sociologists, and researchers to refer to a broad and multidimensional view of the

characteristics of the experience of a school's characteristics and educational approaches (Wang

& Degol, 2016). Though school climate definitions varied from theoretical to practical scales,

dimensions of school climate consistently include school safety, relationships, teaching and

learning, and the institutional environment (Capp et al., 2020; Thapa et al., 2013; Wang &

Degol, 2016). A visualisation of Wang and Degol's (2016) identified categories of school

climate is found under Figure 1 on page 19. School climate studies inform sexual violence

prevention development and approaches as they are linked to sexual violence prevalence in

schools and communities (Adams et al., 2020; Gordon et al., 2020; Institute of Medicine, 2011;

Kosciw et al., 2018). In the interviews undertaken for this research, school climate was defined

by staff member Alicia as follows:

> **Alicia:** what the feeling is in the building, and how students and staff are being supported
> by people in the building. What does the day-to-day look like and feel like? Do people
> feel like they are being cared about within their school? Or does it feel like something
> very different from that?

School climate research also informs violence prevention efforts by paying careful

attention to the norms that are established within institutions of learning. A safe school is seen as

one where students feel comfortable discussing difficult experiences with peers and teachers,

where they feel cared for and supported, and where they have an understanding of what will and

will not be tolerated by peers and disciplinary processes (Gillander & Stein, 2020; Timmerman,

2004). Perceptions of safety are influenced by gender, race, class, and sexuality and their

intersections, and positive school climates are correlated with improved outcomes across

socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic groups (Duke, 2020). School climates that are seen as

permissive of gendered violence or sexual harassment have been shown to have more students

who believe rape myths or victim-blaming statements (Ormerod et al., 2008). As school climate

is thus identified as a measure of potentiality for violence amongst youth, exploring and

assessing student and staff experiences in their schooling environments could lead to a more

comprehensive understanding of prevention approaches in the area of sexual violence (Adams et al., 2020; Garnett & Brion-Meisels, 2017; Nickerson et al., 2014).

Figure 1

The Conceptualization and Categorization of School Climate
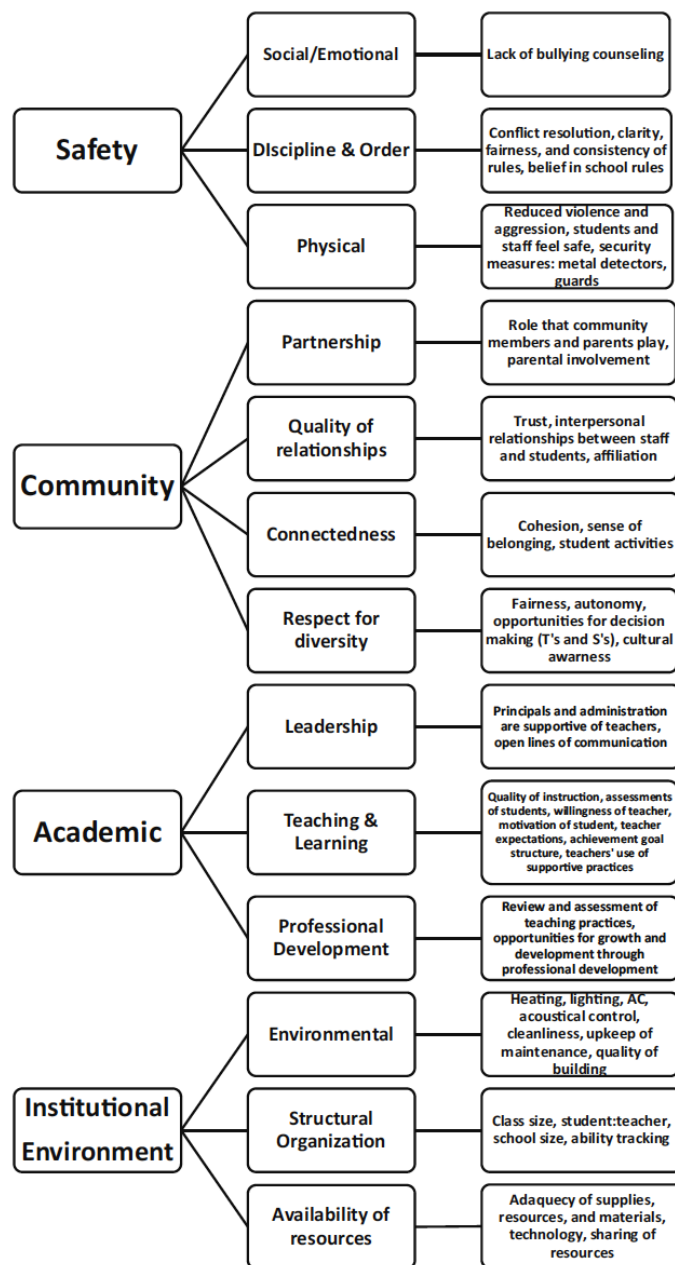
(Wang & Degol, 2016)

School climates that are inclusive of gender and sexuality diverse students and staff improve student outcomes in rates of sexual violence and intimate partner violence (Adams et al., 2020; Gordon et al., 2020; Institute of Medicine, 2011; Kosciw et al., 2018). Inclusion may be indicated by having Gender and Sexuality Alliances or Gay Strait Alliances (both known as GSA's), incorporating sexual and gender diverse examples into curricula, and having policies to respond to bullying or harassment that was gender or sexuality motivated (Adams et al., 2020; Kosciw et al., 2018). Inclusive, positive school climates are associated with lower victimisation rates for physical and sexual violence, as well as bullying (Birkett et al., 2009; Gordon et al., 2020; Kosciw et all., 2011). "Evidence from the sexual harassment literature indicates that a positive organizational climate decreases rates of violence, reduces retaliation against those who do confront and report violence, and improves […] psychological outcomes of survivors" (MacCauley et al., 2019, p.1911). Because the experiences of students and staff are navigated through their school climates, and school climates shape the beliefs and attitudes of the individuals who pass through them, the research undertaken in this thesis aims to explore participants assessments of their school climates and how they connect to sexual violence prevention.

2.3 Sexual Violence Prevention

The most recent large-scale provincial prevention project in Nova Scotia, Breaking the Silence (2017), saw over $1.5 million in one-time grants allotted to groups across Nova Scotia for innovative approaches for primary prevention initiatives. In 2019, a hundred million-dollar grants were distributed to primary prevention initiatives across Canada as part of the federal government's $100 million National Strategy to End Gender-Based Violence (Women and

Gender Equality Canada, 2019). The most recent provincial budget saw funds allocated to the

expansion of sexual assault services across Nova Scotia, and prevention programs for

universities have grown exponentially in the last ten years (Chiu, 2019; Davie, 2019;

Government of Nova Scotia, 2021). These are only a few examples of the provincial, and federal

initiatives that have been developed to prevent sexual violence, with the funds delivered

primarily to community efforts spearheaded by grassroots women's organisations and other

community groups (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2019). As stated in their strategy to

prevent Gender Based Violence (GBV):

> Prevention by addressing root causes and understanding risk factors is the most effective
> way to end GBV and its devastating effects. There are many forms of violence that
> require tailored solutions, including careful research and consideration of diverse needs.
>
> GBV is primarily rooted in gender inequality and is greatly influenced by sexism, racism,
> classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, colonialism, and other forms of oppression.
> It is further exacerbated by social and economic power imbalances, gender inequalities
> and outdated societal gender roles and norms.
> (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2019)

Beyond government funding, coalitions of women's organisations, youth groups, and

anti-violence organisations are working within rural Nova Scotia to end gender-based and sexual

violence. As communities rally to prevent violence and support survivors, the barriers advocates

face and the rates of sexual violence provincially and nationally indicate there is still much to be

done in the area of sexual violence prevention. This area of the literature review will explore

promising practices in sexual violence prevention, focusing on school-based primary prevention

approaches.

Sexual violence prevention is often considered in three levels; primary, secondary, and

tertiary (Degue et al., 2014; Iverson & Issadore, 2020). Primary prevention is focused on

preventing the perpetration of sexual violence – for example, by changing harmful attitudes held

by boys and men (who are most likely to perpetrate sexual violence) and teaching all young

people about gender equality and consent (Iverson & Issadore, 2020; Laverty et al., 2020).

Primary prevention necessitates the changing of social norms surrounding sexual violence and

reaching potential perpetrators, with primary prevention efforts taking place in childhood or

adolescence (Iverson & Issadore, 2020; Iverson, 2006). Secondary prevention is often associated

with risk reduction initiatives such as teaching students how to be active bystanders in their peer

groups, or teaching students how to prevent their own victimisation (Iverson & Issadore, 2020).

Finally, tertiary prevention is intended to serve as the "management of a chronic problem"

(Iverson & Issadore, 2020, p. 61), and in sexual violence functions to support survivors through

the reporting process or justice systems in a manner intended to reduce secondary victimisation

(Iverson & Issadore, 2020; Potter et al., 2000). While all three levels of sexual violence

prevention serve important purposes and operate in tandem, this thesis research is focused on

primary prevention initiatives.

In-school sexual violence prevention can also be delivered through the sexual health and

education curriculums offered to middle and high-school students. Sexual health curriculums are

designed and delivered at a provincial level, and often by the school or school-board level

(Laverty et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019). Young people in Canada have indicated that they

believe school-based sexual health education to be the most useful/valuable between school,

peer, parent, and internet resources (Laverty et al., 2021; Frappier et al., 2008). However,

students also report a dearth of information on sexual violence, relationships, or more practical

sexual health information related to the social and emotional aspects of dating and sexuality

(Laverty et al., 2021; Levin & Hammock, 2020). Because access to comprehensive sexual health

education can reduce negative outcomes in dating violence and sexual assault, it is included in

this research as a category of sexual violence prevention in schools. Health classes and in-class

curriculums were noted by all participants in the study as a site of potential sexual violence

prevention, however, as one participant stated

> **Dawn:** People would assume they're doing it [sexual violence prevention] in health
> class, when I don't know that they actually would. They might talk about consent at a very
> basic level, but it wouldn't... it would depend on whether people were actually
> comfortable talking about it, is the biggest thing.

This reflects the findings in Laverty et al.'s (2021) research on sexual health education, which

found that content delivery in sexual health curriculums varied widely depending on instructor

comfort and bias. Many high school students want more information about not only the

biological components of sexuality, but to learn about sexual ethics and consent (Beres, 2014;

Laverty et al., 2021; Oak et al., 2020). The thirst of students for knowledge about relationships,

consent, sexual ethics, and communication make in-school curricular approaches a very

promising area for sexual violence prevention.

Effective sexual violence prevention education in schools goes beyond initiatives that are

solely curriculum-based and includes schools as sites of norm development for young people. A

social-ecological approach is a public health framework that aims to change the cultural

understanding of an issue on an individual, relational, and community level (Dunne et al., 2020).

Risk and protective factors are assessed, and interventions are put in place to change the dominant rhetoric surrounding a public health concern – for example, the change in social acceptance of tobacco use indoors or attitudes towards drunk driving (Dunne et al., 2020; Willis & Germann, 2016). Social-ecological models in the field of sexual violence prevention use primary prevention approaches to address sexual violence by changing gender norms and challenging rape-myth acceptance (Dunne et al., 2020). An example of a social-ecological model of sexual violence prevention is the "STOP SV" approach from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States, which uses a variety of educational programs, staff professional development, systemic policy change, and service provision to address sexual violence (Basile et al., 2016). In schools, social-ecological approaches are a best-practice in sexual violence prevention as they aim to establish school climates and peer cultures where sexual violence is not normalised or accepted, where harmful gender norms are challenged, and where students have access to information and resources to help them develop healthy, respectful sexual and interpersonal relationships (Dunne et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2016; Willis & Germann, 2016).

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the methodological approaches undertaken for this research and to describe the rationale for the methods selected. This research was developed using a qualitative approach and practice with in-depth, open-ended interviews as the primary data collection method. Charmaz' constructivist grounded theory (2006; 2014; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020) was the central organising methodology for this research, building upon the fundamental structure of Strauss and Glaser's grounded theory method (1967), both approaches to grounded theory will be described in section 3.4. The four participants interviewed were two students and two staff members in high schools located in rural Northeastern Nova Scotia, and the data gathered were transcriptions of open-ended in-depth interviews, field notes and memos, in-vivo participant data, and grounded theory concepts and categories as defined and enumerated below. The methods used for data analysis were developed using grounded theory through a structure of intersectional feminist theory as discussed in the theoretical background in section 1.2 (Charmaz, 2020; Crenshaw, 1997).

3.2 Research Aims

This thesis was developed to contribute to an understanding of how students and staff in rural Nova Scotia experience sexual violence prevention efforts in their schools, and how these efforts contribute to their perceptions of school climate by developing a preliminary theory connected to school climate and sexual violence prevention in rural schools in Nova Scotia. In the tradition of constructivist grounded theory method, school climate and sexual violence were chosen as contextual research for this review due to my background as a sexual violence

prevention educator in rural Nova Scotia, operating across multiple roles, schools, and regions. Transparency regarding the personal and professional experience of the researcher with the research topic is identified by Charmaz and Thornberg (2020) as a criterion of credibility in grounded theory method. During my professional career as a violence-prevention educator and support staff member, the impact of stigma within schools surrounding the issue of sexual violence was a repeatedly faced barrier, and thus these topic areas were identified as crucial to understanding the research question of student and staff experiences of sexual violence prevention. This professional background was covered in further detail under the Researcher Position Statement in section 1.7. Constructivist grounded theory begins with general topic areas, contextual literature, and research questions in lieu of a deductive hypothesis and aims to develop a theory based in the data gathered as the primary research outcome (Charmaz, 1990). The in-vivo data points, concepts, memos, and categories identified through this study will operate to develop a preliminary research theory to assist in the qualitative exploration of school climate and sexual violence prevention.

To generate a theory of sexual violence prevention and school climate in rural Nova Scotia, open-ended interview questions were developed to examine how students or staff members describe their daily experiences in their schools, relationships with peers and staff, and perceptions of sexual violence prevention approaches within their school careers (Appendix A: Interview Protocols). Study questions were designed to examine differences between current school climate perceptions and what participants identified as ideal programming, policy approaches, or curriculum developments for sexual violence prevention.

To identify commonalities between students' and staffs' desired or proposed structural responses to the issue of sexual violence, both high-school aged (15 to 19) students and support

staff working with this age group were identified as research populations for this study. The intent of fostering intergenerational and inter-constituent understanding of shared issues or concerns within schools for sexual violence prevention is a primary aim of this thesis, while exploring the meaning students and staff attribute to their experiences within their schools.

3.3 Qualitative Paradigm

Qualitative research aims to create and explore research approaches in a manner that makes evident the power structures of research and contextualises the process of meaning-making amongst participants and the researchers themselves (Bhattacharya, 2017). For this reason, qualitative methods seemed particularly appropriate for the study of sexual violence prevention in rural Atlantic Canada, an issue that is particularly bound by multiple levels of intersectional relationships of power. As qualitative research also asks scholars to explore phenomena using highly localised and contextualised lenses to reach expansive themes, this methodological grounding was appropriate for a study with emphasis on place (Maxwell, 2004). Rural communities have complex and contextual relationships with the issue of sexual violence that operate differently from urban locales, as highlighted in the literature review section 2.1. Increased stigma, lack of resources, and confidentiality concerns all shape sexual violence prevention and response in rural areas (Bennett, 2013; Church et al., 2020; Heslop, Burns, & Lobo, 2018). The methodologies used were selected as relationships of power and understandings of educational systems and sexual violence are situated in the unique locale of rural Nova Scotia. Finally, qualitative research, as defined by Bhattacharya (2017) means working "within the context of human experiences and the ways in which meaning is made out

of those experiences" (p.6). To this end, I wish to explore the experiences of a specific set of young people and adults, as they define and make meaning from them.

3.4 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was employed for the analysis and structure of this study because of its interest in engaging with participant data to create a substantive theory that is useful to the population studied and applicable in practice (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). The inductive approach of creating theory rooted and transformed through its relationships with the researcher and participants was also attractive for this study due to my lived experience in these areas and interest in participant-informed research strategies (section 1.7). Grounded theory method was originally defined by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 and is intended to develop a practical theory by exploring relationships across the data gathered by a qualitative researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The data is grouped and categorised using a constant comparison method, explained further below, which leads to the creation of a theory grounded in the data. Modern grounded theory offers a different approach to classical hypothesis testing in research and allows the data to "speak for itself" while remaining in conversation with relevant literature across qualitative and quantitative fields (Kelle, 2007; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020).

3.4.1 Grounded Theory Research Criteria

Although grounded theory method offers flexibility to the researcher in their initial exploration of their data, qualitative researchers have identified and delineated rigorous expectations to meet research criteria (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020; Chiavotti & Piran, 2003).

Construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability are crucial in this methodology to inform a sound qualitative study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

Charmaz (2006, 2014) offers four main criteria for the grounded theorist to meet: Credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. Credibility is defined by the researcher's collection and use of data that is relevant to the identified research topics, interviewing techniques that incorporate incisive questions, systematic comparison between the concepts identified across participants, and clarity of protocol for analysis development (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). Reflexivity and description of the researcher's relationship to the data and research is also relevant to assessing the credibility of the grounded theory outcomes. Originality establishes the significance of the problem explored, offers new insights into approaches to addressing the problem, and emphasizes the researcher's additions to this area (Charmaz, 2020). Resonance reflects a researcher's understanding of the participants' lived experiences and follows trains of inquiry within interviews to reflect the experiences that seem most relevant to the participants themselves (Charmaz, 2020). Finally, usefulness indicates the practicality of the research in assisting policymakers or practitioners who interact with the research questions identified - usefulness is also identified through the grounded theory's, contribution to research, and the ability of the grounded theory drawn from the data to illuminate practices that could help address the identified research problem (Charmaz, 2020).

3.4.2 Constant Comparison method

The constant comparison method is used at every level of data analysis while using the grounded theory method (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020; Oktay, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). "The basic, defining rule for the constant comparison method: while coding an incident for a

category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the

same category" (Oktay, 2012). This method uses repetitive comparison to strengthen internal

validity by using in-vivo data, concepts, and categories to verify and define each other within the

same study. In this research, concepts or potential categories discovered in earlier interviews

impacted the coding and analysis of later interviews by examining similar and different traits

between codes. For example, while the rural nature of their experiences was cited by all

participants, the impacts of rurality on the school experiences of youth participants were

described as neither exclusively harmful nor beneficial, as displayed through these in-vivo data

points:

Figure 2

Excerpts from Youth Interviews

It's such a small community. Like, one person does something, and everybody knows about it. You feel that stigma where you can't talk to them because everybody knows each other.	Our school was all, like, from a glance you'd think our school was a big family because it was such a small school. Everybody knew everybody.

By using the constant comparison method across all mentions of rurality in the participant

interviews, rurality was identified as a contextual spectrum instead of a singular experiential

code. Grounded theorists use this method to define and refine their concepts, categories, and data

analysis while working towards the research outcome of a core category and theory (Charmaz,

1990). Constant comparison of data also allows researchers to identify which information is

"repeatedly present and relevant to participants" (Chiavotti & Piran, 2003, p. 429), thereby

indicating potential core concepts within the data that are indicated as important to the voices

included in the study. Constant comparison method also develops and shapes categories by indicating which concepts are likely to lead to categories, and how those categories interrelate and impact each other (Chiavotti & Piran, 2003). This allows information to "earn its way into the theory" (p. 429) by repetitive impact on the data around it, or repetitive mention by research participants.

3.5 In-Depth Open-ended Interviews

In-depth open-ended interviews were chosen to be a semi-private experience for students as they explored potentially sensitive topics, and for staff members as they explore their perception of their workplace. Because students and staff were given the option to book the interview at their convenience, using the technology they felt most comfortable with, participants had agency to create private interview experiences outside of their school or workplaces (see Appendix A: Interview Protocols). One-on-one interviews between the participant and researcher were chosen to allow participants confidentiality due to the personal questions being asked in the interviews, and the potential vulnerabilities of staff participants while answering questions about their experiences in their workplace (Bhattacharya, 2017). The open-ended aspect of this interview format allowed guidance of the participant through various paths of inquiry that pertained to the research question and previous interviews, which is particularly well-suited to the use of the constant comparison method and grounded theory method (Oktay, 2012; Creswell, 2007).

3.5.1 Interview Approach

The approach of the researcher, including their skills, ability to conduct interviews, follow inquiry leads, and leave space for silence or further prompts is indicated by Merriam & Tisdell (2015) as a critical component of qualitative research. In using an open-ended in-depth interview method, I was careful to create a script and outline of questions which allowed for participants to explore their perspectives and allowed us to follow topic areas that seemed relevant to our previously identified categories. I used silence, prompts, and supplementary questions throughout the interviews and changed order of questions where necessary, as well as adding unscripted prompts from previous interviews into later interviews (2015). Additionally, if a participant was particularly interested in following or sharing a thought process or experience, I would allow them to do so and guide them back using the pre-determined questions to ensure the research topics were discussed.

This study used the following forms of qualitative research questions as outlined by Patton (2015): Experience and behaviour questions; opinion and values questions; feeling questions; and background/demographic questions, as well as prompts and supplementary questions. This research also used "ideal position" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) questions to explore school climate and sexual violence prevention strategies by asking participants "In an ideal world, what would you like to see as further supports for sexual violence prevention in high schools in rural Nova Scotia?" with supplementary prompts regarding daily experiences, policies, and institutional or community supports. Ideal position questions allow the researcher to "elicit both information and opinion" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 120) by asking participants to delineate the similarities and differences between their current circumstance and a hypothetical best-case scenario.

The interview questions used for this study primarily focus on experience and feeling exploration but are also supplemented in questions 5 and 6 with ideal position questions and allow for flexibility from both the researcher and the participant. The language, tone, and delivery of the questions used language that was accessible and familiar to participants, and terminology was reviewed at the beginning to ensure a shared understanding of the terms "sexual violence" "sexual harassment" and "school climate" (Appendix A: Interview Protocols). Probes or were used following open-ended questions to explore certain concepts, themes, or experiences more deeply. These prompts often employed interpretive questions that offered "tentative explanations or interpretations" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 120) of the participants responses in order to confirm or assess my understanding of the participants' responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Flexibility in the delivery of the questions, order of questions, or wording of questions between the participants was also used, while keeping the core themes intact. This allowed me to explore new or resonant areas using the constant comparison method and gave me the ability to move in and out of lines of inquiry by reading the participants responses to certain questions. It also allowed for more specific questioning of the different experiences of staff and youth, using phrasing or conversational approaches more suited to each participant and group. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) highlight the need for a qualitative researcher to be able to work outside of a rigid script to clearly communicate with and understand the participants' perceptions of their experiences and knowledge.

3.6 Sampling and Selection

The participant population included high school (grades 10, 11, and 12) students and high school teaching or support staff within Pictou county, Antigonish county, Guysborough county, and Inverness county in the Northeastern region of Nova Scotia. All participants were recruited using social media and web-based recruitment materials [see Appendix B: Recruitment Materials]. These specific regions were selected for their rurality and because students in these areas have participated in the peer-delivered sexual and intimate partner violence prevention program "Healthy Relationships for Youth" (HRY), have a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) student organization, and all deliver the provincial "Healthy Living 9" curriculum which addresses issues of sex and sexuality, so students have been exposed to some level of understanding around issues of sexual violence. Details are included here:

a) **Student participants:** High school aged students in the specified regions in grades 10 through 12 (approximately aged 15-18) who attended a public high school in the year 2019-2020.

b) **School staff participants**: Teaching and support staff were included based on their role as high school (grades 10-12) teachers or support staff in the specified regions during the 2019-2020 school year. Support staff were identified as any staff member employed by the centre for education who offered programming or services for students – examples of these roles include (but are not limited to) guidance counsellors, school-based community outreach staff members, youth health centre nurses, and school psychologists.

3.7 Participant Profiles

Pseudonyms are used to refer to the final four participants who were interviewed for this research. Two student participants from the Northeastern region were interviewed, Amber and Emily. Amber is a first-year university student who attended Grade 12 in one of the study catchment regions during the 2019 to 2020 school year. She participated in social action groups in her school for mental health awareness, LGBTTQI+ inclusion, and gender justice, as well as various student leadership groups. Amber identifies as LGBTTQ+ and was "out" during her later high school years. Emily is a current Grade 12 student who lives in a small village in Northeastern Nova Scotia. She is active in student leadership groups and sports activities in her school and is passionate about improving her school's climate. Emily also participates in a variety of community organisations for inclusion and poverty reduction and describes herself as "very involved".

Two teaching or support staff participants participated in interviews, Alicia and Dawn. Alicia moved to a town in the Northeastern region of Nova Scotia with her family when she was younger but noted that there are still times when she feels like she's not "from here". She works with high school students as a support staff member and is passionate about sexual violence prevention work with youth within schools and in community. Dawn worked as support staff in the 2019 to 2020 school year and has since left her position, citing travel and burnout as contributing to the decision. Dawn is particularly interested in consent education for youth in rural Nova Scotia. Both Dawn and Alicia are active within schools and in their communities around issues of gender equality. Neither Dawn nor Alicia's specific support staff role will be named to protect their confidentiality, but both work within the public schools in the regions specified with high school students.

3.8 Interview Guide

Interview guides were printed templates which included logistical information, the interview script, and a space for researcher comments field notes and memos during and following the interview (Guoin, Diehl, & McDonald, 2012). This guide organized the interviews and prompted me to note dissonance, discomfort, excitement, or other emotive responses from myself or the participant while gathering data, as suggested by Hamburg and Johansson (1999) and Glaser and Strauss (1967). By referencing these moments in connection with my coding approach, I was able to confirm whether certain codes were based on constant comparison approaches or were included by my own inclinations to notice certain themes above others (Johansson, 1999). The interview guide was also used to track participants' reactions to certain questions or trails of thought and indicated particular sections where the participant's cues indicated the significance of phrases or themes for particular sections. Memoing with the interview guide also allowed for early data analysis during the interview process, as emergent themes and comparison were explored through memo taking (Oktay, 2012). The interview guide also outlines the order of questions or topics covered and offers the interviewer a checkpoint to confirm that their leading questions connected to their core topic areas have been asked, even if they chose to follow an unstructured or unscripted flow within the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

3.9 Data Collection

3.9.1 Recruitment

Participant recruitment took place for six months from August 2020 to January 2021. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all recruitment strategies took place using social media, email, or

research website traffic. Recruitment material texts and images can be found under Appendix B: Recruitment Materials. Four staff members and four students responded to the initial recruitment materials, and two staff members and two students completed the interviews with the researcher.

3.9.2 Interview Procedure

Four in-depth open-ended interviews took place between October 2020 and January 2021. Two staff participants were interviewed followed by two student participants, with each interview using the methodology of constant comparison and the tools of field notes, interview guides, and memoing. All participants elected to interview by telephone. Interview protocols can be found under Appendix A; Participant Consent/Assent forms can be found under Appendix D.

3.9.3 Field Notes

Field notes were taken within the interview guide and used to note specific contexts, procedural reminders, or observations of the researcher while interacting with the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Field notes differ from memos (described in section 3.8.4), as they are brief impressions of contextual information taken during the act of interviewing, whereas memos are representative of analysis and preliminary coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In this study field notes were used as data points by indicating incidents and observations that would then be further analysed and interpreted into memos.

3.9.4 Transcription

Each interview was transcribed by the researcher from audio recordings of the interviews. A measure of rigor in qualitative research is in the accuracy of transcriptions and whether they

capture the interview verbatim (Poland, 2004). Codes were used to denote pauses, laughter, quotations in others' voices, and overlapping discussion. Transcriptions were the primary data material of this study as line-by-line analysis of transcriptions was used during the coding process to identify in-vivo data points and concepts. Line-by-line transcription analysis was also used during selective coding to ensure core category saturation.

3.9.5 Memos

Memos allow qualitative researchers to examine their ideas, develop tentative codes and categories, and ensure their proposed theory stays close to the data throughout the analysis process (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). In this study, memos were used throughout the stages of interviewing (pre and post), transcription, open-coding, selective coding, and final analysis. Memos were used to compare data and experiences, to note questions for the data, and to "develop tentative theoretical ideas" (Oktay, 2012, p. 15). "Memoing" is a particular tool of grounded theory method as the researcher's memos direct lines of inquiry, interview strategy, and coding approaches.

> Memo writing is the methodological link, the distillation process, through which the researcher transforms data into theory. In the memo writing process, the researcher analytically interprets data. Through sorting, analyzing, and coding the 'raw' data in memos, the Grounded Theorist discovers emergent social patterns. By writing memos continuously throughout the research process, the researcher explores, explicates, and theorizes these emergent patterns. It is the methodological practices of memo writing that roots the researcher in the analyses of the data which simultaneously increasing the level of abstraction of his/her analytical ideas.

Lempert, 2007, p. 2

As the research continues, memos serve as data themselves by outlining areas of the in-vivo data that are likely to be concepts or categories. In later analysis memos become closely tied to the developing theory of the data, and by reviewing memos as data themselves throughout the process of analysis a researcher can check for internal consistency and quality of their methods (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020).

3.10 Data Analysis

Grounded theory method uses an iterative, recursive analysis model (Bhattacharya, 2017; Charmaz & Thornberg 2020). For this study, constant comparison method was used beginning concurrently with the first interview, and through Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory the literature review also indicated comparison topic areas from the beginning of collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2014). Data used were the interview transcripts, field notes from the interviews, and memos taken throughout the interview, transcription, and coding processes. As is standard in the field of qualitative study, the analysis operated simultaneously with data collection and review, and increased in detail and theme identification during the process of interviewing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This means that each interview provided more context to the emerging concepts and themes, and the transcription and coding processes further concentrated the data into concepts and categories leading to the identification of the core category and, ultimately, of the grounded theory that is the final result of this study (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020; Oktay, 2012; Chiavotti & Piran, 2015).

Primarily following the guidelines set forth by Charmaz & Thornberg (2020) and Oktay (2012), constant comparison method, open-coding, axial coding, selective coding, and memoing

were all used as data analysis methods for this study. Each of these methods will be explored in

more detail throughout this section. The aim of coding in grounded theory analysis is to narrow a

broad number of data points and codes into more precise and descriptive categories, and

ultimately into a substantial theory that is useful in the field (Oktay, 2012).

The completion of the analysis process was identified by theoretical saturation, which

entails identifying when coded concepts and categories are repeating without adding new

understanding to the identified core concept (Glaser, 1978). This means that every identified

concept and category fits within the core concept either as subcategories, dimensions, or

properties of the core category (Holton, 2007). Saturation is defined by Merriam & Tisdell

(2015) as occurring "[…] when the ongoing analysis of your data has produced categories,

themes, or findings robust enough to cover what emerges in later data collection" (p. 199). When

saturation of the core category is achieved, the category has then been as fully developed as it

can be through coding and moves on to becoming the final result of the study as a grounded

theory of the research topics identified (Holton, 2007).

3.11 Open coding

Open coding is the early analysis stage of breaking down the transcription data into

thematic codes, similar groups, or repeated concepts (Oktay, 2012). In open coding, the

researcher does not begin with a pre-defined code but immerses themselves in the data and

identifies the legend of coding criteria using constant comparison method and line-by-line

analysis of the text (Oktay, 2012). The researcher "needs to stay close to what the respondents

actually say, how they think, and how they describe their feelings" (Oktay, 2012, p. 5) in order to

maintain an inductive qualitative approach to coding. The method of constructivist grounded

theory offers further structure to the beginning stage of analysis by using the theoretical

information from pre-defined research topic areas to inform the coding process (Charmaz &

Thornberg, 2020; Kelle, 2007). Strong emotions, gerunds (action verbs), repeated themes, and

concepts from research topics were all used as starting points in the open-coding process. An

example of preliminary open coding of a staff participant interview is included here for

reference:

Figure 3

Open-Coding Sample Text

This interview section provides substantive in-vivo data points which are coded, analysed, and

operationalised as preliminary codes which may become categories if supported by constant

comparison method (Oktay, 2012). The full open coding process included substantive coding of

in-vivo data points, identification of concepts, and the development of categories – all of which

are explained in this section. Complete coding protocols for this study can be found under

Appendix E.

3.11.1 Substantive Coding of in-vivo data points

Substantive coding is specifically rooted in experiences of identified groups or places – in

this study, students and staff members in high schools in rural Nova Scotia (Lempert, 2007). The

purpose of using substantive coding methods is to arrive at a substantive theory that is reflective

of the people and locales studied, and which uses data to create the theory based on sociological

understanding of the field (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In-vivo codes use verbatim quotes from

participants, and often identify substantive concepts within direct word usage (Corbin & Strauss,

2015; Oktay, 2012). These initial codes may evolve into stronger, more broad-reaching

categories if supported by constant comparison method or they may serve as context, properties,

and dimensions of later analytic categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Figure 4 outlines data on

the number of in-vivo codes identified following analysis of the four participants, and the themed

concepts or categories that were most commonly connected to these in-vivo codes.

Figure 4

In-Vivo data point themes

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

In-Vivo

149 in-vivo data points total
55 in-vivo data points from two Youth Participants
94 in-vivo data points from two Staff Participants

63 in-vivo data points referencing curriculum, resource access, resource allocation (dimensions of time, dosage, and value-placed)

41 in-vivo data points referencing stigma around the subject of sexual violence and related discomfort regarding discussing sexual violence (primarily from teaching staff)

39 in-vivo data points referencing institutional decision making, administration, value assignment by those in power, staff support from admin

23 in-vivo data points referencing gender or sexual identity

22 in-vivo data points referencing rural barriers or specific rural Nova Scotia context

16 in-vivo data points referencing staff training or support

**In-vivo's and concepts were double-coded for multiple themes where appropriate

</div>

This figure also illustrates how substantive in-vivo coding directs the researcher into areas of inquiry regarding theoretical comparisons by outlining some of the most often referenced pillars of the shared experiences of participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Some in-vivo points were coded more than once if there were multiple concepts referenced, for example:

> **Emily:** I feel like if they don't bring it up, then people who have gone through these experiences feel very alone and different than everyone else.

could be coded under concepts of sexual violence stigma, school climate, student experience, and perceptions of support from adult staff members. Substantive coding of in-vivo data was used to stay close to the data while adding analytical perspective (Oktay, 2012).

3.11.2 Identification of concepts

Constructivist grounded theory open-coding techniques were used to identify concepts that were particularly salient to the research themes, related to the research topic, or repeated across participants. As outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their original definition of grounded theory, "concepts" are used in this approach as a basic unit of analysis within the phenomena being explored. The concepts for this study were identified through constant comparison method and theoretically coded substantive in-vivo data points.

Concepts are the starting point for grounded theory and inform the categories which follow. They are analyzed as potential indicators of the theory that a researcher hopes to define through their study, and in this research were coded and given "conceptual labels" to inform categories and propositions as suggested by Lunenburg and Irby (2008). Substantive in-vivo data points or codes were analyzed for repetition, groupings, and thematic connections which were then developed into concepts. "Nascent concepts" developed in the first round of open coding were revisited in tandem with the coding of later interviews to more fully define and elaborate on earlier codes (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). All interviews were coded and recoded as newer interviews were transcribed, in order to compare the developing concepts against one another. Finally, the master concept list (Appendix F) was developed and coded against itself to refine the final list of codes drawn from the data during the open-coding process.

3.11.3 Identification of categories

Following the identification of concepts, the conceptual labels were grouped, compared for thematic resonance, and coded again to create the categories of the study. Categories in grounded theory, as defined by Corbin and Strauss (1990), are:

[…] higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent. They are generated through the same analytic process of making comparisons to highlight similarities and differences that is used to produce lower-level concepts. Categories are the "cornerstones" of developing theory. They provide the means by which the theory can be integrated. (pg. 7)

At this stage in the research the data has been coded for substantive in-vivo data points, theoretical and substantive concepts, and recoded to understand the interrelations and groupings of the concepts into categories. During category development, concepts revealed themselves to be dimensions or properties of the categories – they defined a characteristic of the category, or provided context for it (Oktay, 2012). This enhancement of the understanding of the categories strengthened their ability to reflect the participants experiences and reflections, and to create a quality final theory that matches the grounded theory criteria of credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness (Charmaz 2006; 2014). An example of the process for inductive definitions of categories using constant comparison method is included here:

Figure 5

Excerpt from Concept & Category Coding Document

In-vivo	Concepts	Categories
"They don't know how to address it, sometimes they won't even say it" "I'll have to say […] 'this was a rape' or 'this was a sexual assault'" "There's often a lot of discomfort around the word sexual violence, I would say even a misunderstanding of what it means" "there's also some nuance in there in being like 'teachers can't talk about this we need to bring in somebody from outside to talk about it', so… what kind of a message does that send?" "it's very much based on if people feel comfortable talking about it which doesn't always lead to reoccurring conversations because if staff people, like teachers generally aren't super confident talking about it, and then that leaves it for support staff and some support staff don't feel comfortable." "that's a big part of it – not knowing or being nervous about breaking the rules. Maybe that's not the right way to put it, but I guess, yeah, being nervous about doing something that might make people uncomfortable"	• Shame • Language • Gender • Victim-blaming • Discomfort • Narrow view of sexual violence • Seeing sexual violence prevention as inappropriate/too sexual for schools • Role of Admin/institutional support	Stigma Teacher Training Institutional Support

These concepts and categories were further recoded until the dimensions of separate core categories were fully established.

3.11.4 Axial coding and propositions

Axial coding and Propositions create the third data exploration approach defined within grounded theory and are created by defining relationships between the identified categories and their concepts, or between categories and other categories (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). In order to

effectively develop a practical substantive theory propositions are used to explore these relationships and develop the theory through understanding how the components engage with each other. The components of axial coding are:

1. Identifying the variety of conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences associated with a category

2. Relating a category to its subcategories

3. Looking for clues in the data about how major categories might relate to each other

(Oktay, 2012)

This process also examines how the categories identified through open coding relate to the research questions and provides "cumulative knowledge about relationships between this category and other categories and subcategories" (Strauss, 1987, p.32).

3.11.5 Identification of core categories

The core categories are "the main conceptual element(s) through which all other categories and properties are connected" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 32). The identification of the core categories is the analytical process where the analysis moves beyond descriptive and toward original theory development (Oktay, 2012). These categories are identified as core because of their connections and centrality amongst all other labelled categories, and because of their function as a developmental tool for the theory created from this study (core categories and grounded theory can be found in Chapter 4: Results).

3.12 Selective Coding

Selective coding was used to refine the core categories by relating them to each other and recoding all categories by their interactions with the core (Oktay, 2012). Once more, this coding approach is used to strengthen the core categories and create a more robust understanding of the final theory. The methods used for selective coding were diagrams, recoding of all categories, and theoretical saturation.

3.12.1 Diagrams

Figure 6

Theory Diagram
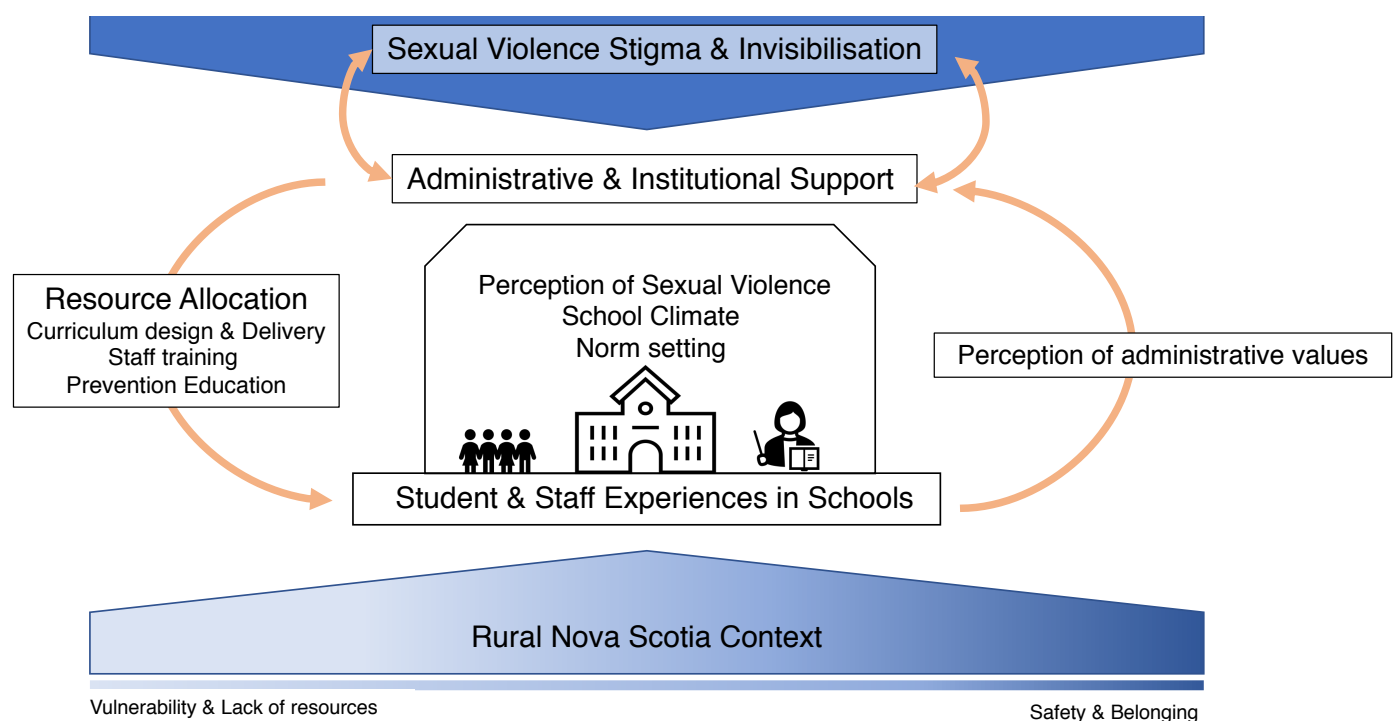
Diagramming was used as a tool of grounded theory methodology to outline the progression of theory development stemming from the core category identified. This tool is described by Oktay (2012) as a method to display data that provides a visual understanding of

how categories interrelate in order to strengthen the understanding of the final grounded theory. This diagram (Figure 6) indicates the impact of the primary coded categories from the study upon one another.

"Sexual Violence Stigma and Invisibilisation" impacts all levels of category below it, as this stigma impacts student and staff experiences, resource allocation, and administrative and institutional support. "Sexual Violence Stigma and Invisibilisation" is in turn impacted by "Administrative and Institutional Support", as in-vivo data points from students and staff repeatedly referenced perceived support from powerholders as indicative of the level of stigma surrounding sexual violence.

"Administrative and Institutional Support" are shown through resource allocation towards sexual violence prevention. The types of resource allocation coded from this study were curriculum design and delivery, staff training, and prevention education. These resources impacted how supportive leadership was perceived to be of sexual violence prevention efforts, and also impacted whether students and staff felt sexual violence prevention was taken seriously in their schools.

"Student and Staff Experiences in Schools" were shaped by their rural contexts, sexual violence stigma and invisibilisation, and perceived support from their institutional leadership. It should be noted that students also defined teachers and staff members as leaders within the institution, although staff members did not.

Finally, the "Rural Nova Scotia Context" of the participants' experiences forms the context through which their experiences of sexual violence prevention and school climate were experienced. Participants indicated that this context often came with many challenges and barriers, but also with opportunities and close-knit support networks. Therefore, the rural context

of this study was coded as a contextual spectrum impacting the experiences of students and staff members.

3.12.2 Recoding of Core Categories

Following the identification of the grounded theory (Chapter Four: Results), the core categories identified were reviewed and recoded as either core components of the theory or dimensions to that theory. This process develops the theory as a research product to be used within the research study to provide further qualitative analysis, or as a theory in its own right that can be used outside of the study in addressing the social problem identified (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020; Oktay, 2012). The function and aspects of these re-coded core categories will be reviewed in section 4.3.1.

3.12.3 Theory Saturation

Theoretical saturation is a core component of grounded theory and is reached when "no new information emerges during coding" (Oktay, 2012, p. 9). For this study all four interviews were recoded following the identification of the core categories in order to identify dimensions and properties of these categories. The interviews were recoded into "units" which represent systemic and personal practices, roles, and cultures, and "aspects" which relate the data to the core categories through categorical relationships (for example, labelling hierarchies in school leadership) or emotions (Becker, 1998; Oktay, 2012). Time restrictions, as discussed in the limitation section 5.4, meant that this research was not able to engage in another round of data collection following the identification of the core categories to fully saturate the final grounded theory. Thus, the final results of this saturation process represent a preliminary grounded theory.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter outlines the results of the constructivist grounded theory qualitative analysis including the preliminary categories, core categories, and the grounded theory that is the final result of this research. Results from youth participants and staff participants were analysed separately and then combined in each section to demark the specific results of each group, as well as the categorical overlap where the final grounded theory was identified. The final three core categories which will be explored in this chapter were sexual violence stigma in Nova Scotia, resource allocation as value statement, and sexual violence prevention as social-ecological norm development, with rurality and identity as experiential spectrums. Dimensions and properties of the final grounded theory will also be listed in this chapter.

4.1 Preliminary Categories

The following collections of category groups were identified as repeated high-level codes or preliminary categories. These initial results were used to narrow the scope of selective coding processes and define the core categories which will create the grounded theory. Youth participants and staff participants preliminary categories were coded separately and then compared during axial coding to create the core categories listed in section 4.3.

4.1.1 Preliminary Categories and Category Groupings from Youth Interviews

Figure 7 represents the coded categories from youth participants which were sorted into thematic subject areas and colour coded. These preliminary categories were the result of open and axial coding and were used to inform the conclusive core categories of this study as well as the final grounded theory.

Figure 7

Youth Interview Descriptive & Thematic Categories

Stigma, safety, invisibilisation of sexual violence
Sexual Violence prevention curriculum, education dosage, early intervention for SV, teacher training, role of teacher, role of school
Relationships, peers, community, connectedness, social networks, belonging
School climate, rurality, confidentiality, supportive student-staff relationships, LGBTQ not reflected in curriculum or discussions of relationship violence or sexual violence, sexual harassment, extra-curricular involvement, dress-code, gender policing, positive school climate
Racial Identity, sexual identity, coming out, sexual identity and sexual violence experience
Value of sexual violence prevention, reaction versus prevention, curriculum, student/peer education, perceived lack of resources, perceived lack of sexual violence prevention

4.1.2 Preliminary Categories and Category Groupings from Staff Interviews

Figure 8 represents the coded categories from staff participants which were also sorted into thematic subject areas and colour coded. Differences and similarities can be noted between the two groups, reflected in similar colour coding. These preliminary categories were the result of open and axial coding and also informed the conclusive core categories of this study and final grounded theory. The differences and similarities visible between the group identified the ways in which thematic codes operated in participants experiences of their school climates and informed the development of the dimensions and properties of the final results.

Figure 8

Staff Interview Descriptive & Thematic Categories

Norm setting, disclosures, language, gender, feminism, gender analysis
School climate, norm setting, narrow view of sexual violence, student-led initiatives, rape culture, student experience, identification of violence, confidentiality, rural Nova Scotia
Stigma, rape culture shame, victim-blaming, discomfort, Seeing sexual violence prevention as inappropriate/too sexual for schools
Staff support, resource allocation, burnout, demands of the role, role satisfaction/feeling like you're able to fully meet student needs, institutional distrust, perceptions of value assignment, emphasis on traditional learning outcomes, workload of sexual violence prevention education
Time constraints, range of schools, distance, travel, inconsistent staff presence, time allocated to different issues, scarcity of time/resources, values perceived through time and resources allocated,
Curriculum reach, curriculum delivery, curriculum design, curriculum dosage, curriculum design theory
Supporting students, knowledge of resources, resources for staff, communities of practice, professional communities, knowledge of supporting safe sexual violence disclosures, support staff integration into school culture, in-group/out-group, relationships, staff culture/board culture
Role of Admin, perceived institutional support, role clarity, retention, institutional approach, support, staff feeling disempowered, value, support from administration, administrative leadership, community resources, teacher support
Identity (racial, sexual, gender, socioeconomic), "passing" (racially, sexual identity) and being "out" to fellow staff, staff identity, staff sense of belonging, full self as staff member, what is/is not welcome in schools

4.2 Core Categories

Sexual violence stigma in Nova Scotia, resource allocation as value statement, and sexual violence prevention as social-ecological norm development were the final core categories of this grounded theory study, with rurality and identity functioning in the data as experiential

spectrums. These categories function as descriptive outcomes of grounded theory on their own and operate as the pillars of the final grounded theory.

4.2.1 Sexual violence stigma in rural Nova Scotia

This is defined within the data as the observed discomfort of adult staff members surrounding sexual violence discussions or education efforts, and from the perception that administration or institutional powerholders would enact consequences upon staff members discussing the issue of sexual violence. Silence around the issue of sexual violence may relate to the rural belief that sexual violence and domestic violence are a private or personal matter and not one to be addressed by the community at large. Victim-blaming behaviors, such as negative social consequences for the victim/survivor of sexual violence or harassment instead of the perpetrator(s) further propagate stigma and minimize the prevalence of sexual violence in rural communities. Fear of victim-blaming impacts whether survivors report their assaults to authorities in-school or via the justice system and creates a further culture of stigma when discussing sexual violence by placing the onus for prevention on the victim instead of the perpetrator (Navarro & Clevenger, 2017). Examples of stigma and victim blaming are exemplified by these participant quotes:

> **Alicia:** We talked about options [for reporting sexual violence], but you know, a lot of fear around where that would lead to and people finding out that that had happened to her, and then what the backlash would be on her rather than the perpetrator of the violence.
>
> […] In rural Nova Scotia, we're not the best at talking about those things in a formal educational way. I think that our culture and our nature is to shy away from those types of conversations.
>
> **Dawn:** I could go to the cops, but where am I going to get with that? We know where, then my name is the one that gets drug through the mud. […] Are you

going to make a big stink about it? And now everybody knows, and now you're
the problem?

4.2.2 Resource allocation as a value statement

Students and staff perceived the allocation of time, curricular resources, program funding,

and professional development by administration and centre for education decision makers as

indicative of their position on the importance of sexual violence prevention. Curriculum design

and delivery regarding sexual violence prevention was described as time allotted, number of

sessions (dosage) of prevention programming, whether programming was mandatory, and the

moral position of the curriculum (i.e., whether it was developed through a feminist or anti-

oppressive lens for sexual violence prevention. An example of some of the data coded as related

to resource allocation is provided under Figure 9.

Figure 9

Preliminary category and concept coding sample: Resource allocation

"that's a big part of it in terms of like, if it feels as though there's value placed on learning outside of traditional curriculum – specifically to do with healthy relationships, emotions, that sort of thing" "certainly, that's a big thing for me – if I feel as though admin and staff take that [sexual violence prevention] seriously" "I proposed something [regarding relationship violence] but was told "we can't take away that much instructional time" "It's really frustrating when staff are like "yeah, we want to do this consent workshop" and then never talk about it again." "at one school I did get a chance to do some PD with them, but it was an hour. Everybody was super engaged, lots of questions, but it was an hour in the whole school year. So that speaks to how busy people are, what priorities are given to that."	- Who chooses what is important? - Time allocated to different issues - Scarcity of time/resources - Values - Morals - Staff training/Professional development - Priority	Perceptions of administration Training and time as reflective of the importance of sexual violence prevention	Curriculums as moral documents Time allocation as value statement Resource allocation

Data from students and staff alike related resource allocation to their perception that their school

climate was one that took sexual violence prevention seriously, aligning with the literature

review of school climate (see section 2.2) and primary sexual violence prevention operating as a

function of norm-setting within schools. Within this research, resource allocation influenced

participants' views of whether there is the need for broad and systemic programming regarding

sexual violence prevention and whether this is a value of the administration, regional centre for

education, and provincial Department of Education.

4.2.3 Sexual violence prevention as social-ecological norm development

Safety and belonging are impacted by student and staff experiences in their school

climates. Safety is connected to feeling supported by peers and staff, knowing where to seek

resources, feeling your identity is valued as a student or staff member, and feeling that your

values are reflected within your school environment. Basile et al. (2018) also reported that

perceptions of sexual violence and sexual harassment as normalized or non-normalized

behaviours influenced students' belief in rape myths, gender norms, and sexual violence. Sexual

violence prevention within schools impacts whether students and staff believe sexual violence

impacts their communities and encourages them to set norms of consent and respect in their peer

cultures.

4.3.4 Rurality as spectrum

Amber: You feel that stigma where you can't talk to them because everybody knows
each other. Or like, you think you're safe because you know everybody so you kind of let
your guard down.

Emily: It's such a small community. Like, one person does something, and everybody knows about it. So, I think it's very discrete and people don't want to go to the school about it [sexual violence]. Small town gossip, I guess… it goes around really fast.

Amber: From a glance you'd think our school was a big family, because it was such a small school. Everybody knew everybody.

Rurality exists as a contextual spectrum for students and staff members in Northeastern Nova Scotia. Perceptions of safety, belonging, and resource access are filtered through the rural context of students and staff members. Rural experiences are also navigated differently based on identity factors such as race, class, sexuality, and gender. Sexual violence stigma presents in rural areas as a perceived lack of confidential and safe methods for disclosing or reporting sexual violence, lack of resource access, and misinformation about the prevalence of sexual violence in small communities. One student, Amber, also reflected on the paucity of support staff in her region, some of whom were only available one or two days per week to meet with all students regarding a variety of issues, and that her ideal school would have a dedicated space and staff member to respond to sexual violence.

Amber: I guess having a space for anybody that has been assaulted in any way or like, needs to report anything, having a safe space for them that they know about and having somebody there that can help you. 'Cause I know we say that our guidance counsellor should be the one we go to for stuff like that, but a lot of the time like, I know in rural schools the guidance counsellor is often busy with like, grad stuff or course selections and stuff like that, so they don't really have time for any of those issues that you want to bring forward regarding your own personal safety or health.

This statement offers insight into perceptions students have of their rural school staff holding multiple service roles within one school, and that there is not always a clear understanding of where to report violence or seek services within their rural school environments. Resource availability in rural Nova Scotia is impacted by economic conditions in these communities, and

students and staff members are impacted by scarcity of resources and austerity approaches to

rural staff allocation and educational supports.

Rurality was further explored by staff participants in terms of travel requirements,

professional development availability, and staff support or burnout.

> **Dawn:** You don't stay in those positions sometimes… because of burnout, because of doing all of that travelling, and all the work isn't compensated properly, you don't feel like you're meeting needs. There are just so many issues. It's not consistent in terms of healthcare, mental health support, yeah, a lot of different things.

Staff participants perceptions of school climate were contextualised by their experiences of

rurality and shaped by resource allocation within their Department of Education and regional

centre for education (school board). Staff members experiences of rurality in this study were

more often representative of a view of rural resource scarcity as the result of deliberate decision-

making by political or educational power holders in provincial and regional areas.

4.3.5 Intersectional identities

Participants in both groups reflected on their own racial, sexual, gender, and class

identities as impacting their experiences within their school climates, within rural Nova Scotia,

and on their perceptions of resource availability or allocation. As outlined in section 1.5.2,

overlapping structures of oppression impact how individuals from different identity groups

navigate their worlds, and impact how resources are allocated through policy and practice

(Crenshaw, 2020). Participants identified these structures and their bearing on their school

climate experiences as another contextual spectrum within rural Nova Scotia. Cairn's work

(2013) covered briefly in section 2.1, outlined how rural Canadian communities are often

(mis)categorised as monocultures of whiteness and straightness. One youth participant, Emily,

identified as a straight white woman and reflected on her own position of relative power within

her school, and her awareness that they may experience school climate differently than their non-

white peers:

> **Emily:** I think they need to do a better job of making everyone feel safe. Like, it's great
> that I feel safe, but that's because I'm involved and like, I'm not in one of the minorities.
> I don't feel like an outcast. I think they need to do a better job making everyone feel
> included, and I think they do need to bring better attention to things like sexual violence
> and violence in general to make people feel safe.
>
> […] I'm really involved in stuff so I just think of [my school] as very inclusive, but it
> could be perceived different from other people.

Alicia, a staff member who identified as LGBTTQI+ and as a member of a minority racial group

in Nova Scotia, discussed the impact of her identity on her navigation of school climates, and on

how that impacts how she views herself as a staff member in high schools in rural Nova Scotia:

> **Alicia:** So, I identify as pansexual, and I am multi-racial, and I guess those are the two
> biggest things. But I also think it's important to note that I come from a lower
> socioeconomic class growing up and I certainly think that frames how I work, and how I
> support students, and how I view the world.
>
> **Erin (Interviewer):** Yeah, of course it does, that makes sense for sure. And like, living
> in those identities and moving through rural Nova Scotia and moving through these
> schools, is there anything you want to note about those things? [Alicia laughs, Erin
> laughs] I know, that could be like, a full day's discussion –
>
> **Alicia:** It's interesting, let's just put it that way. […] when it comes to my sexual identity,
> a lot of people don't know unless they ask, and so that conversation's not usually
> happening at schools, but I also think it contributes to my perspective in a lot of ways.
> I'm – I don't even know how to explain it, maybe just more radical than a lot of people I
> work with, and then also my racial identity. Again, there's a lot about, for me, there's a
> lot about how people read me, and so I never really know that until a specific
> conversation might happen. [Alicia shared an example of acknowledging her racial
> identity amongst other staff], and the room just goes silent every time. So, navigating
> those kinds of situations I think that I do have a different experience because of that,
> yeah.

It is clear from participant responses that where students and staff are situated on various spectrums of access, identity, and power within the institution of public education functions as another contextual spectrum which impacts school climate. Prevention and responses to sexual violence in schools and community were identified as connected to race, sexuality, gender, and class. The implications of this context will be discussed further in section 5.3, theoretical approaches to sexual violence prevention.

4.3 Grounded Theory

The grounded theory developed through this study is that *resource allocation within educational institutions functions as a value statement to staff and students*. Resource allocation was defined by participants through comprehensive curricular approaches, extra-curricular or cross-curricular programming in schools, professional development for staff, time allocated to sexual violence prevention, dosage of sexual violence prevention, and quality of sexual violence prevention programming or educational materials. In the interviews undertaken for this research, students perceived time and attention spent on sexual violence prevention as indicative of its prevalence in their communities, as illustrated through the following youth participant's reflection on her understanding of the differences between prevention at city schools and rural schools:

> **Emily:** I feel like [city schools] do it [sexual violence prevention] more there and do a better job, maybe because they have more experiences of sexual violence. But at the same time, people don't talk about it here so it might be the same, I don't know. They don't do a very good job at covering it, and I think it's because they're like "It's a small town, nothing bad can happen" so they don't need to worry about it. Whereas in bigger cities, they probably cover it more because it is something that's more common."

Coded categories from staff members indicated that they felt that resources allocated to sexual violence were insufficient, and this resource deficit was perceived by staff as a lack of

value placed on prevention initiatives by their administration or centres for education (school boards). Staff reported feeling worried that they would be "in trouble" for talking about sexual violence prevention, consent, or sexual health, and that there was inadequate time and professional development spent on preparing staff for these discussions with students. As evidenced in the literature by Laverty et al. (2020), instructor comfort, bias, and education greatly impact the delivery and quality of sexual violence prevention and sexual health information in schools in Canada. This research was reflected by staff and student assertions that instructor comfort was a barrier in sexual violence prevention in their schools, and that they further read this discomfort as indicative of lack of professional development or training opportunities. Staff were more likely to perceive resource allocation as reflective of the value placed on sexual violence prevention, whereas student's responses indicated that they viewed resource allocation as indicative of the value of sexual violence prevention and as reflective of whether there was a need for sexual violence prevention in their schools and communities.

4.3.1 Theory Dimensions and Properties

Because sexual violence stigma impacts resource allocation by administrations and centres for education, the powerholders in these institutions further perpetuate stigma when students and staff perceive little or no sexual violence prevention initiatives within curricula or school programming. The compounding contexts of rurality with sexual violence stigma creates further invisibilisation of sexual violence through lack of resource allocation. "I don't hear about it [sexual violence] a lot around here. But maybe that's because we don't bring awareness to it" (Youth Participant Quote). This impacts students' and staff perception of sexual violence, their experiences in their school climates, and norm setting around sexual violence prevention.

Student and staff experiences in schools are navigated through the contexts previously indicated, and they evaluate their administration and institution's values through how and where resources are allocated within their schools. In the area of sexual violence prevention, prevention initiatives are perceived as embedded curricular experiences (defined by reach, dosage, design, and delivery of a sexual violence prevention curriculum) or education and norm setting programs within schools. Factors that impact staff's perception of ability to undertake sexual violence prevention initiatives include school time allocated to sexual violence prevention programming, professional development and training, and clarity from their superiors in their roles within the school surrounding sexual violence prevention education.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis research was to explore student and staff experiences in their schools in rural Nova Scotia to develop a grounded theory from those experiences that would enhance the understanding of primary sexual violence prevention. The results of this research were a theory of resource allocation as value statement within school systems in rural Nova Scotia, developed from the three core categories and two contextual categories from the data (see section 4.2) which were sexual violence stigma in Nova Scotia, resource allocation as value statement, and sexual violence prevention as social-ecological norm development, with rurality and identity as experiential spectrums. In this chapter, the research questions will be revisited and explored with the results of the research. Findings will be discussed in relation to current literature. and the contributions of this study on the field of research will also be examined. Implications for policy and practice in sexual violence prevention initiatives are outlined in this chapter, as well as limitations of the study.

The fist research question focused on the experiences of staff and students in rural Nova Scotia within their school climates related to sexual violence, and the second was focused on ideal-world questions of what could be imagined for future strategies for prevention. These questions will be explored using the four core categories and the grounded theory developed through the analysis of participant data, to provide both descriptive responses from the data coding, and a theoretical review of the questions from the resource allocation theory. Quotes may be used to provide participant voice and illustrate the type of data coded related to this discussion of the results but are not intended to simplify or replace the comprehensive coding and categorisation approach. Both research questions are listed here for reference:

1. In what ways do students and staff in rural Nova Scotian high schools experience school climates that challenge or prevent sexual violence while navigating the specific barriers of stigma and access surrounding sexual violence in rural Nova Scotia?

2. What do students and staff in high schools in rural Nova Scotia envision as future or potential strategies for the prevention of sexual violence?

5.1 School climate, sexual violence prevention, and participant experience

Participants in this study reported a variety of impacts on their experiences in schools in rural Nova Scotia. Staff participants described the regional travel requirements as a barrier to job satisfaction and as a barrier to youth resource access. Youth reported feeling safe and comfortable in their rural communities, but still having fears as to how their peers would respond to non-normative gender or sexuality presentation, or to sharing their experiences with sexual harassment and violence. The core categories of this study, as well as the concepts and in-vivo data points, indicated that students and staff felt more needed to be done within their school climates to create norms of consent and respect, and to challenge sexual violence.

School climates were perceived to be inclusive by their resource allocation within the school, as indicated by all four participants. Some discussed programs in place for LGBTTQI+ youth, such as GSAs and education campaigns. Others talked about specific resources for Mi'kmaq students or African Nova Scotian youth, and noted that "that makes me very proud of my school". For each resource discussed, the resource allocation of staff positions, time for student and staff groups to meet, transportation, and gathering space were identified as showing that their schools valued inclusion.

Time as a resource in schools was repeatedly mentioned by both participant groups. Students indicated that having teachers or support staff take the time to chat with them, facilitate student groups, or discuss issues relevant to them in class time led to students feeling more supported and safer within their schools. Staff participants were more focused the constraints of time on their work and on their colleagues and administrators, and that they felt time was rarely allocated for work on sexual violence prevention, as it was viewed as outside of the traditional curriculum. Time as a resource, and whether staff felt they had enough of it dedicated in professional development and classroom time for sexual violence prevention, was viewed by staff as a reflection of administration's priorities in their schools.

Students and staff alike both spoke of their experiences in their school climates as marked by special and impactful relationships between students and staff. For the staff members, these relationships and their care for the students they serve impacted their belief in the importance of sexual violence prevention within their schools. For students, having a teacher or staff member they could "go to with anything" made them feel safe in their schools, and were indicated as important relationships for resource and support seeking.

> **Emily:** She's so involved […] like she does a lot of stuff out of school to help you build a relationship with her. She's one of those teachers who always knows if there's something wrong or something you need help with. She's the first one who would be like "Hey are you okay? Is there something wrong or something I can do for you?" which is really nice. And there's a couple other teachers like that too, a couple that stand out.

Positive student-staff relationships are integral to school connectedness and belonging, and impact how students relationally engage with other adults and their peers (Allan et al., 2016; Jain et al., 2018; Thapa et al., 2013). This is promising when considering the social-ecological approach to sexual violence prevention, which may be supported by positive teacher-student relationships. The ability of staff members to take this time to build relationships is indicative of

a type of resource allocation as well, and staff members reflected that their roles were more fulfilling when they were able to spend direct time building supportive relationships with students.

Sexual violence stigma was also coded throughout the interviews as a marked context for how students and staff members navigated their institutions. Staff members felt that it was rare for teachers or support workers to receive training on sexual violence prevention, and that the biases and stigma of adult staff members was impacting students' conceptions of sexual violence. The lack of a common language or understanding of the spectrum of sexual violence was coded throughout the interviews as an issue for staff, as was a desire from staff members to receive more targeted training on the issue. Students saw this phenomenon as well, noting that teachers and staff varied broadly in their understanding and approach to sexual violence, and that students saw that reflected in issues like dress code comments to predominantly female students, and health class instructions that never mentioned non-heterosexual relationships.

> **Amber:** So, I feel it [dress code] matters to me because clothing is a way of self-expression and like, our bodies shouldn't be a distraction anyways. […] Why is a teacher trying to decide what I wear? Is it because they think it's distracting? Because they shouldn't be seeing a student like that.

These school climate markers for students relate to sexual violence by fostering environments that may reinforce harmful gender norms, shown in section 2.3 to connect to sexual violence. Additionally, attitudes of keeping sexual harassment in school "hush-hush" or "sweeping it under the rug" also indicated the stigma surrounding sexual violence, and the lack of comprehensive direct prevention strategies.

5.2 Identified future possibilities in sexual violence prevention

Participants were all asked, "in an ideal world, what would you like to see as further supports for sexual violence prevention in high schools in rural Nova Scotia?" with several following prompts. This question led to an exploration of prevention strategies that would be particularly suited to rural areas, as well as differentiating any approaches currently in place from approaches the participants viewed as ideal. Resource allocation repeated here as a primary theme once more, with all participants indicating that they felt there was not enough sexual violence prevention in their schools, and that they would prefer to see robust programming with greater dosage built into their schooling and delivered from younger ages. Additionally, all four participants reflected on staffing as reflective of resource allocation for sexual violence prevention.

The first identified approach by participants was curricular, reflecting the work of Laverty et al. (2020) in sexual health class or comprehensive sexual health lessons across various classes as primary sexual violence prevention. Curricular approaches were identified by discussions of "in-class" learning, and were defined by dosage, reach, framework, and delivery by trained staff. Dosage refers to the number of classes or lessons, reach to whether the prevention programming is mandatory and how many grades it is delivered in, gender analysis and feminist analysis were desired as curricular frameworks, and professional development or staff training were mentioned to ensure quality program delivery. This ideal world approach is reflective of a perceived lack in the current curriculum to address sexual violence prevention at the level desired by students and staff. Participants indicated that it was also important that sexuality was formally discussed not solely from a negative lens, but that it fostered the development of positive sexual identities through discussions around consent, pleasure, and

respect in romantic and sexual relationships. Students also identified that it was "unfair" to expect teachers to come up with lessons that were not contained within their provincial curriculums, and that those responsible for curriculum development should ensure sexual violence prevention and comprehensive sexual health (including sexual ethics) are included.

The second major ideal world concept in sexual violence prevention in rural areas was the creation of a staff position for the centres for education (school boards) dedicated to sex education, sexual violence prevention, and sexual violence response located within their schools. This was discussed as a prevention strategy taken by many universities in the area, and as a response to the increased demand for comprehensive sexual health and prevention approaches from youth.

> **Alicia:** What I want to see is [sexual violence prevention and sexual health] be a part of our education. There should be, in my opinion, sexual health teachers that are just like math, just like English, just like social studies. We should not be having our music teacher or our Phys [sic] ed teacher being thrown this course that they don't want to teach, that they're uncomfortable with, that they don't have the knowledge of.

The potential role for this staff member was as educator for youth, prevention program implementor for school climate initiatives outside of the classroom, and a trainer for professional development for staff. Amber and Emily both spoke of not knowing a specific staff role they could go to report sexual violence (although they both had teaching and support staff they identified they reported feeling close to) and that their friend groups were more likely to report or "deal with" sexual violence outside of school. The identified need for a trustworthy and supportive staff member charged with responding to sexual violence in high schools and providing prevention programming was also perceived as impacted by their rural realities. Amber reflects here on her understanding of her university friends' experiences in urban settings, compared to her own in a small-town primary to grade twelve community school:

> **Amber:** With the small-town thing, it's like, it [reporting sexual violence] can be used like blackmail. If you tell anybody, they'll know. You've got to keep it hush-hush because everybody knows everybody, and everybody's in each other's business. But in big cities it's not so much the case. And like, in bigger cities, I know my friends talk about how they had like, three guidance counsellors in their school. Whereas my school only has the one, so if they [city friends] had any issues they've got a specific guidance counsellor to go to for those issues. And that's just not a thing in my town.

A staffing initiative is a promising approach for creating social-ecological change in school climates and would reflect a resource allocation representative of the importance of sexual violence prevention in rural Nova Scotia. Participants in this study all reflected that sexual health and sexual violence prevention initiatives, when occurring, are undertaken in addition to other staff roles, and often only when engaged and passionate staff elect to undertake these initiatives. This is reflected in Laverty et al. (2021), where it was found that instructors of sexual health in public schools in Canada greatly impacted the quality and quantity of education received by students, based on their own training and perceptions of their job. Dedicating resources to the development of a staff position for sexual health and sexual violence prevention in schools in rural Nova Scotia would support primary prevention through education, resource building for the community of other staff in the school and provide ongoing dosage of such programming throughout students' educational careers in secondary education. Additionally, universities in Canada are increasingly creating positions for sexual violence response and prevention on their campuses in response to high numbers of assaults in post-secondary institutions (Quinlan et al., 2017; Works et al, 2019). These positions often combine response and education initiatives that could also be implemented for adolescents in high schools in order to expose them to primary prevention efforts before they enter the university sphere. For students in rural areas, this also

allows those who will not continue on to universities to receive exposure to sexual violence prevention.

Finally, professional development and training was coded repeatedly throughout the study for teachers, staff members, and teachers in training in Nova Scotia. Staff members ideal world responses included training at the university level for teachers on discussing issues of sexual violence and addressing gender bias and gender impacts on education. Reach and dosage were once again dimensions of this ideal world response, with students and staff indicating that all teaching and support staff should be mandated to receive training on sexual violence prevention, and that it should be an ongoing education in lieu of a "one-shot". Participants indicate that training resources and professional development opportunities for staff would reflect the value of sexual violence prevention in rural schools in Nova Scotia and would assist in preventing stigma and discomfort around the issue of sexual violence.

5.3 Theoretical Approaches to Sexual Violence Prevention

The final theory of this study and the core categories, in combination with the experiential spectrums identified, indicate that students and staff perceive resource allocation as a reflection of the value placed on sexual violence prevention and the need for interventions and programming, and that these perceptions are rooted in their experiences of rurality and identity. Curricular primary prevention approaches were identified as a core approach participants wanted implemented, as was the amount of programming or lesson-time dedicated to the issue. Staff and teacher training, ongoing professional development, and the use of competent, effective instructors for sexual violence prevention were also viewed as reflective of the value of sexual violence prevention. To that end, the theory of resource allocation as value statement could be

used as an analytical tool to further examine health and sexual education curriculums, holistic

approaches to primary prevention initiatives in school climates, and training initiatives across

school boards and teacher education programs in Nova Scotia.

5.4 Implications for Policy and Practice

The particular context of rurality, and approaches specific to rural youth, were identified

in the data as impactful on student and staff experiences of sexual violence prevention and

response. Therefore, effective sexual violence prevention programming in these areas that is

tailored to the experiences and needs of rural youth, in lieu of applying programming developed

in the Halifax-centered Department of Education to all youth in Nova Scotia, would be an

effective programming approach. Curriculum development in sexual health pertaining to

violence prevention and GBV which reflects the realities of young people in rural areas and

responds to the particular needs and barriers presented by rural life is a promising approach for

primary social-ecological violence prevention. Teacher training in Bachelor of Education

programs in Nova Scotia, as of 2017, did not offer specific training on teaching in rural areas,

despite the demographics of the province (Corbett, 2017). To be effective and comprehensive for

the communities targeted by this study, teacher education and staff professional development

should develop responsive training regarding rural contexts, including an analysis of the needs

and barriers faced by students in these communities, tailored lesson plan development to reflect

rural experiences in their classrooms, and sexual violence prevention education grounded in

intersectional theory and specific to rural areas. Professional development initiatives posited by

the participants in this study included consent education, training for teachers around gender

analysis, LGBTTQI+ inclusion training, and opportunities to attend programming about sexual

violence prevention work and school climate initiatives with youth.

Participant's racial, ethnic, gender, sexual and socioeconomic identities also impacted

how they navigated their schools and felt about sexual violence prevention. As indicated in the

literature, Black students, Indigenous students, and students of colour face different educational

barriers than white students and are more likely in Canada to experience sexual violence in their

lifetimes (Gladu, 2017; Government of Canada, 2020). Students who are male are more likely to

commit acts of sexual violence (Government of Canada, 2020). Prevention programming and

curriculum approaches must cover the impacts of these systems of oppression and privilege to

address sexual violence through social-ecological norm change (Dunne et al., 2020; Willis &

Germann, 2016). Education regarding sexual health and sexual violence prevention in rural Nova

Scotia that includes a feminist analysis of gender, racial power structures, and the colonial legacy

of the settler-nation of Canada is therefore a promising primary prevention approach. As

McCauley et al. (2019) argue in their review of sexual violence prevention research:

> Comprehensive efforts to address sexual violence require an intersectional focus
>
> that not only incorporates structural, cultural, and sociohistorical contexts, but also
>
> integrates strategies that promote social justice (Collins & Blige, 2016; Rosenthal,
>
> 2016; Smith, 2012). Efforts to remediate sexual violence must not focus narrowly
>
> on cisgender women or on a single ethnic minority community. Instead, intersectional
>
> social justice strategies to address sexual violence must consider the ways in which
>
> oppression is simultaneously shaped by gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability,
>
> and other aspects of identity. […] If we want to develop effective response systems and
>
> prevention strategies that truly respond to the varied needs of survivors, researchers must

consider and incorporate the unique experiences of survivors with multiple intersecting

identities.

(p. 1913)

This form of intersectional approach was reflected in the results of the grounded theory study

and indicated that developing a thorough understanding of intersectional systems of power can

create social-ecological change in school climates and communities in rural Nova Scotia. The

research outcomes of this study support the stance that sexual violence prevention programming

that is informed by intersectional theory and gender analysis is an effective practice in primary

prevention.

5.5 Contribution to Sexual Violence Prevention Research

In addition to policy and practice implications, the core categories, experiential

spectrums, and preliminary theory developed in this study lend themselves to the literature on

sexual violence prevention by developing the understanding of sexual violence prevention in

rural areas in Canada. Rural youth and staff in public schools in Nova Scotia are an under-

researched population in the field of sexual violence prevention, and the impact of school climate

on prevention efforts has not been broadly studied. The qualitative results of this study indicate

that social-ecological understandings of violence are influenced by the quality, quantity, and

comprehensiveness of sexual health and sexual violence prevention programming. As social-

ecological change in understanding is a core factor in primary prevention efforts for sexual

violence, this research expands the literature exploring rural student and staff experiences within

their school climates. The theory of resource allocation as value statement can be used by

researchers to analyse perceptions of various social justice issues through programming and curricular approaches.

5.6 Implications for Future Research

School climate studies provide a basis for understanding how students and staff members navigate their education, communities, and lives. By using school climate research in tandem with sexual violence prevention, researchers can develop more effective and comprehensive prevention strategies. The categories and theory developed throughout this thesis indicate a need for comprehensive policy and education analysis on sexual health curriculums and staff training or professional development initiatives surrounding sexual violence. An examination of student experiences in rural areas related to sexual violence and sexual identity development in their school environments would enhance the understanding of effective prevention efforts. Additionally, staff members in this research indicated that they and their peers need further training, more dedicated in-school time, and resources to deliver sexual violence prevention initiatives. Future research examining staff empowerment to deliver this form of programming, and its efficacy when delivered by different groups of teaching and support staff would be a promising avenue for sexual violence prevention researchers interested in primary prevention approaches in rural areas. Finally, an exploration of the perceived paucity in primary prevention initiatives in public schools from the perspective of administrators and Department of Education curriculum designers could enhance the understanding of barriers to resource allocation. A thorough understanding of perceived barriers, likely influenced by the stigma of sexual violence in rural Nova Scotia, would assist researchers in developing future programming.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

This study operated throughout the 2020 to 2021 Covid-19 Pandemic, which impacted recruitment and data collection methods. Due to the increased demands on teachers, students, and administrators to cope with the pandemic, the planned partnerships developed in 2019 with the school boards in the regions studied were no longer able to be accommodated and researchers were not allowed entry to any schools in Nova Scotia during the 2020 to 2021 school year when data collection was taking place. This likely impacted the number and age range of student participants who were exposed to the recruitment materials and who were able to take part in the study. Additionally, staff members who may have been interested in other school years were potentially overburdened with the additional workload of the 2020 to 2021 school year.

The original research study was also designed to engage students in focus groups and arts-based exploration methods around themes of their school climates and sexual violence prevention approaches. The safety restrictions from the McGill Research Ethics Board (REB) enacted in response to the pandemic did not allow for in-person methodologies at the time of interview bookings, and therefore the methods for student participants were changed to single participant in-depth open-ended interviews via phone or web. These sampling and time constrictions limited the number of "rounds" of data collection, meaning the final grounded theory was internally valid, but was not explored using negative case analysis or a "repeated spiral model" to test whether the theory was generalizable across a variety of settings, as recommended by Chiavotti & Piran (2003).

5.8 Closing Remarks

Students and staff members navigate a variety of challenges that come with rural living in Atlantic Canada, but they also cited a sense of belonging and community as the strongest attribute of their experiences here. There are active and engaged citizens in every municipality who care deeply about sexual violence prevention, gender equity, and creating a safer Nova Scotia and it is in support and honour of these efforts that this research took place. Developing a robust understanding of rurality, identity, and the contextual experiences of students and staff may lend itself to curriculum and training approaches that are responsive to the needs of youth in these areas. Additionally, the three core categories of sexual violence stigma in Nova Scotia, resource allocation as value statement, and sexual violence prevention as social-ecological norm development provide a foundation for prevention efforts. In particular, the preliminary theory of resource allocation as value statement can be used as a policy and curriculum analysis tool in exploring sexual violence prevention in public education settings – or in a variety of circumstances. Public schools in Nova Scotia reach thousands of students each year, and the experiences they have in their school climates shape how they view sexual violence. Educators, community members, and those who care about gender equity and violence prevention should be empowered to provide experiences for these students that enable them to challenge oppression and violence, wherever they call home.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Youth Participant Interview Protocol

Time: 1 hour (60 minutes) approximately
Location: Virtual or via telephone

Pre-Interview Call
The primary researcher will review the consent documents with the participants and welcome questions about the consent process in a pre-interview call. This call will also serve to schedule the interview at a time that the participant will have access to the most privacy in their home or would be able to take the interview from somewhere outside of the home. Duty to report, technology requirements or questions, and any further inquiries from participants will be answered during this pre-interview call.

Open-Ended In-Depth Interview Prompts

Overview of terms: School climate, sexual violence, harassment, administration, policy.

1. Can you describe how you feel in your school climate on a typical day?

2. Could you describe how you feel supported as a student in your school?

3. Are there any ways you feel unsupported as a member of the school community?

4. What are some ways you feel students have improved your school climate?
   a. Staff members?

5. Could you tell me what sexual violence prevention looks like in your school?

6. What would you change in your school to support sexual violence prevention? What would you keep the same, or like to see more of?

7. In an ideal world, what would a totally safe school look like to you? How would it operate?
   a. In day-to-day, on the ground ways?
   b. What would be some policies?

8. If you feel comfortable doing so, could you tell me whether you identify as a member of a marginalized group? This could mean gender, sexuality or LGBT2QI+ identity, race, ability, or class – or any mix of those. You can opt out of this question if you'd like.

9. Are there any topics we chatted about you would like to talk about further?

10. Is there anything else you would like to add about your school, sexual violence prevention, or in general?

During the interview, the researcher may follow trails of inquiry brought up by the participant, or ask questions not highlighted on this script. Due to the open-ended methodology being used, the researcher may ask follow-ups to the prompts listed above in order to seek further understanding, context, or information about a participant's answer.

Following the Interview
Contact information will be shared at the end of interview, and the community resource list will be texted, emailed, or Direct Messaged (DMed) to the participant. The researcher will wait for verbal confirmation
that the participant has received these resources before ending the call.

The participant will be etransfered their $10.00 participation compensation.

Teacher and Support Staff Interview Protocol

Time: 1 hour (60 minutes)
Location: Virtual or via telephone

Time: 1 hour (60 minutes) approximately
Location: Virtual or via telephone

Pre-Interview Call
The primary researcher will review the consent documents with the participants and welcome questions about the consent process in a pre-interview call. This call will also serve to schedule the interview at a time that the participant will have access to the most privacy in their home or would be able to take the interview from somewhere outside of the home. Duty to report, technology requirements or questions, and any further inquiries from participants will be answered during this pre-interview call.

Open-Ended In-Depth Interview Prompts

Overview of terms: School climate, sexual violence, harassment, administration, policy.

1. Can you describe how you feel in your school climate on a typical day?

2. Could you describe how you feel supported as a staff member in your school?

3. Are there any ways you feel unsupported as a staff member?

4. What are some examples of student-led or staff-led actions or initiatives that you feel have improved your school climate?

5. Could you tell me what sexual violence prevention looks like in your school?

6. What might be some common phrases I would hear about the issue of sexual violence amongst school staff?

7. In an ideal world, what would you like to see as further supports for sexual violence prevention in high schools in rural Nova Scotia?
    a. In day-to-day, on the ground ways?
    b. From administration? School board? Department of Education?
    c. On a policy or structural level?

8. If you feel comfortable doing so, could you tell me whether you identify as a member of a marginalized group? This could mean gender, sexuality or LGBT2QI+ identity, race, ability, or class – or any mix of those. You can opt out of this question if you'd like.

9. Are there any topics we chatted about you would like to talk about further?

10. Is there anything else you would like to add about your school, sexual violence prevention, or in general?

During the interview, the researcher may follow trails of inquiry brought up by the participant, or ask questions not highlighted on this script. Due to the open-ended methodology being used, the researcher may ask follow-ups to the prompts listed above in order to seek further understanding, context, or information about a participant's answer.

Following the Interview
Contact information will be shared at the end of interview, and the community resource list will be texted, emailed, or Direct Messaged (DMed) to the participant. The researcher will wait for verbal confirmation
that the participant has received these resources before ending the call.

The participant will be etransfered their $10.00 participation compensation.

APPENDIX B: Participant Recruitment Materials

Instagram & Facebook Recruitment

Text included with each Instagram image:

What are your thoughts on your experience in rural NS schools?

How do you feel about sexual violence prevention in your schools and communities?

What would you see as an ideal sexual violence prevention program in your area?

This project is seeking students and staff in rural Nova Scotia (Pictou, Antigonish, or Guysborough counties) to take part in a one-hour interview process by phone or web. We're researching how students in Grades 10-12 and the staff who work with them impact their school climates around the issue of sexual violence. If this sounds like something you're interested in, find full information at the website below:

ewynnresearch.wordpress.com

Text included with each Facebook image:

Seeking Student and Staff Participants in Rural NS!

This research study is interested in exploring the lived experiences of teachers, support staff, and high school (grades 10 – 12) students within their schools in the area of sexual violence prevention, student and staff leadership, and ongoing efforts to make school climates safer and more inclusive.

Participants will be led through an open-ended interview in order to understand their perceptions of school climates in rural Nova Scotia, staff and student-led sexual violence prevention methods, and to brainstorm potential ideas to improve school climates at rural schools across the province. It is the longer-term goal of the research to support provincial efforts to prevent sexual violence.

Principal Investigator: Erin Wynn, M.A. Candidate in Educational Psychology and Counselling. McGill University, Montreal QC.

Research Supervisor: Dr. Jessica Ruglis (PhD, MPH, MAT), Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling. McGill University, Montreal QC.

Visit: https://ewynnresearch.wordpress.com/ for more information on the study and how to get involved!

Instagram recruitment images:
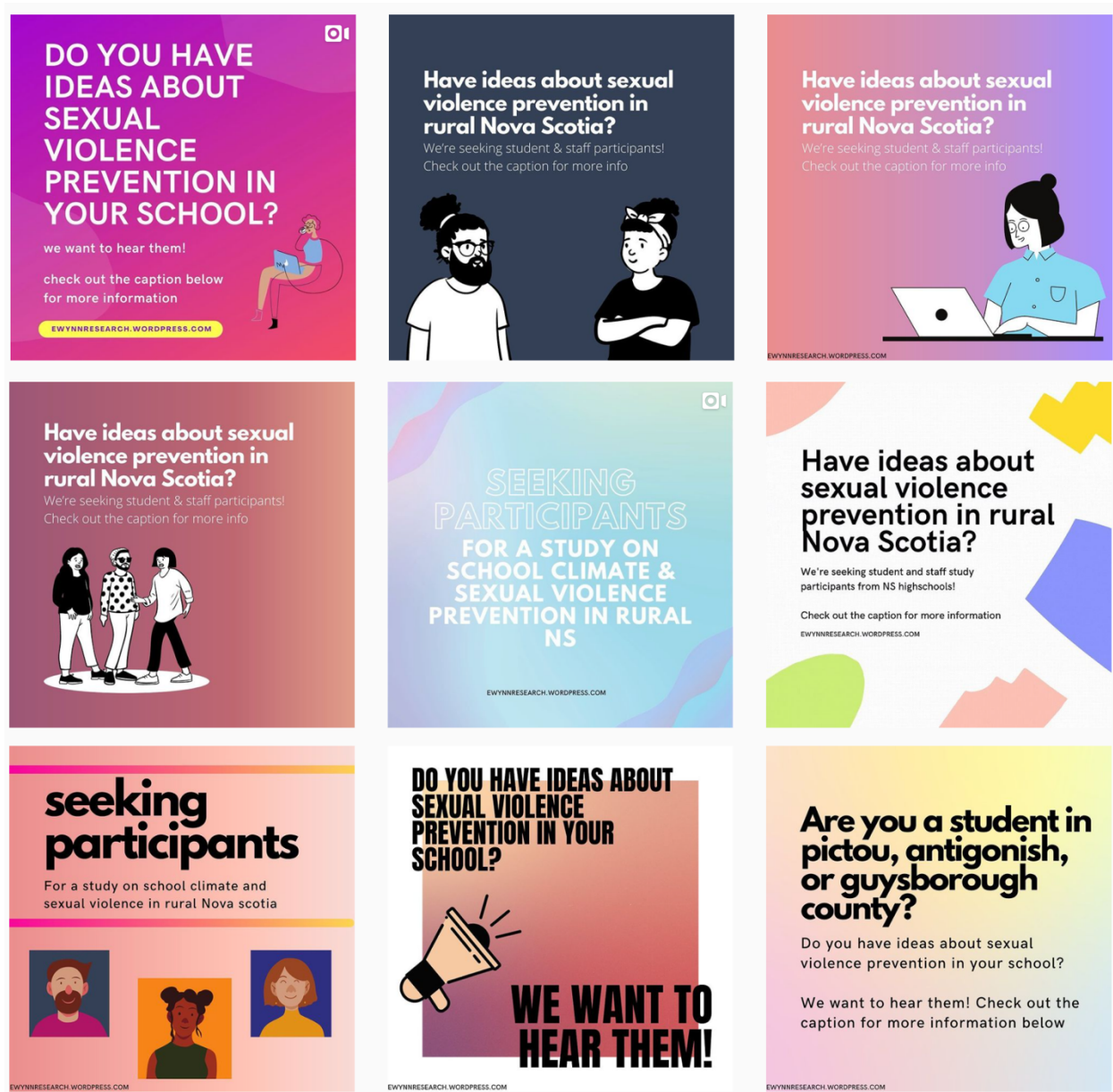
Website address: ewynnresearch.wordpress.com

Website Text

Home Page

Header: NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL CLIMATE STUDY

Links to Pages: Home, About, Student Participants, Staff Participants, Consent and Assent Forms, Contact

A study on school climate and sexual violence prevention conducted by Erin Wynn, M.A. Candidate in Educational Psychology & Counselling at McGill University

Interested in Participating?

All participants must be located in Antigonish, Guysborough, or Pictou County schools in Northeastern Nova Scotia. Students must have been in Grades 10 to 12 in the 2019-2020 school year, and staff participants must work with the Grades 10 to 12 student population.

More Information for Student Participants (link to Student page)

More Information for Staff Participants (link to Staff page)

Consent and Assent Forms (link to forms page)

Thank you for your interest!

You can find out more about the study here: Learn More (linked to About Page)

About Page

A qualitative exploration of student and staff experiences in rural Nova Scotia

This research study is interested in exploring the lived experiences of teachers, support staff, and high school (grades 10 – 12) students within their schools in the area of sexual violence prevention, student and staff leadership, and ongoing efforts to make school climates safer and more inclusive.

Participants will be led through an open-ended interview in order to understand their perceptions of school climates in rural Nova Scotia, staff and student-led sexual violence prevention methods, and to brainstorm potential ideas to improve school climates at rural schools across the province. It is the longer-term goal of the research to support provincial efforts to prevent sexual violence.

Who are we?

Principal Investigator: Erin Wynn, M.A. Candidate in Educational Psychology and Counselling.

Erin will be hosting the interviews and creating the final research documents, including a Master's thesis, from the study data.

Erin is originally from Nova Scotia and worked in rural education programming across the Northeastern region. She is deeply interested in educational design, sexual violence prevention, and school climate research.

Research Supervisor: Dr. Jessica Ruglis (PhD, MPH, MAT), Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling.

Dr. Ruglis will be supporting Erin in the development of the study and overseeing her research progress as her supervisor.

Dr. Ruglis' work centers on participatory, critical race/ethnic, social justice, feminist, and inclusive approaches to research and teaching in the areas of public education, public health, justice, and youth development.

Information for Student Participants

More information for students in Grades 10-12 who would like to participate!

Principal Investigator: Erin Wynn, M.A. Candidate in Educational Psychology and Counselling. erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca
Research Supervisor: Dr. Jessica Ruglis (PhD, MPH, MAT). jessica.ruglis@mcgill.ca

WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We are looking for high school students who were in Grades 10-12 in the 2019-2020 academic year who live in Antigonish, Guysborough, and Pictou county to take part in a study on school climate, student and staff leadership, and sexual violence prevention.

Participation would be entirely voluntary and would involve taking part in one (1) individual interview with the researcher, for approximately one (1) hour. Interviews will be conducted via telephone or the web platform of the participant's choice.

Participating in this study is expected to help us explore the roles of students and staff in Nova Scotia as active leaders in sexual violence prevention, identify what students are seeing as positive and effective prevention methods and what responses they would like to see from their schools and governments to address sexual violence in rural Nova Scotia.

All participants will be compensated $10 for their time.

HOW CONFIDENTIAL IS THE PROCESS?

Audio-recordings taken during the interview would be solely used by the researcher, accessed only by the researcher and her supervisor, and the recordings will not be disseminated to the public. All data will be kept either in secure locked files physically or digitally secured and encrypted, accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor and will be destroyed after seven (7) years.

To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals such as a member of the Research Ethics Board may have access to your information.

If the participant elects to use a web-based platform, it should be noted that as with any communications over the internet, there is always some risk of information transmitted via the internet being intercepted by a third party.

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?

First, check out and complete the Consent Form for Student Participants (linked here). *If you are under 18 your parents will have to sign a form as well*, it's linked here.

Then, contact Erin at erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca or via phone at 1(902)331-1074 to set up a time for your interview!
If you have any questions or want to know more about the consent process, please feel free to reach out.

We would love to hear from you about your experiences as a high school student in rural Nova Scotia and thank you for your interest in this study.

Questions? Contact (Links to Contact page)

Information for Staff Participants

Heading: More information for teaching or support staff who would like to participate!

Side Bar:
Principal Investigator: Erin Wynn, M.A. Candidate in Educational Psychology and Counselling. erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca
Research Supervisor: Dr. Jessica Ruglis (PhD, MPH, MAT). jessica.ruglis@mcgill.ca

WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

This study is interested in the experiences of teaching and support staff working with Grades 10 to 12 in Antigonish, Guysborough, and Pictou County. Participants would take part in a research study on school climate. sexual violence prevention, and student and staff leadership.

Participation would be entirely voluntary and would involve taking part in one (1) individual interview with the researcher, for approximately one (1) hour. Interviews will be conducted via telephone or the web platform of the participant's choice.

Participating in this study is expected to help us explore the roles of students and staff in Nova Scotia as active leaders in sexual violence prevention, identify what teachers and staff are seeing as positive and effective prevention methods and what responses they would like to see from their schools and governments to address sexual violence in rural Nova Scotia.

All participants will be compensated $10 for their time.

HOW CONFIDENTIAL IS THE PROCESS?

Audio-recordings taken during the interview would be solely used by the researcher, accessed only by the researcher and her supervisor, and the recordings will not be disseminated to the public. All data will be kept either in secure locked files physically or digitally secured and encrypted, accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor and will be destroyed after seven (7) years.

To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals such as a member of the Research Ethics Board may have access to your information.

If the participant elects to use a web-based platform, it should be noted that as with any communications over the internet, there is always some risk of information transmitted via the internet being intercepted by a third party.

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?

First, check out and complete the Consent Form for Staff Participants (linked here). Then contact Erin at erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca or via phone at 1(902)331-1074 to set up a time for a call! If you have any questions or want to know more about the consent process, please feel free to reach out.

We would love to hear from you about your experiences as an educator or support staff member in rural Nova Scotian high schools and thank you for your interest in this study.

Questions? Contact (Links to Contact page)

APPENDIX C: Participant Consent/Assent Forms

Participant Consent Form

Researcher: Erin Wynn, Master of Arts student, McGill University, Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling (Human Development), 1(902)331-1074, erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Jessica Ruglis, McGill University Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, 1(514)690-4636, Jessica.ruglis@mcgill.ca

Title of Project: Student and staff experiences of school climate and sexual violence prevention in rural Nova Scotia: A qualitative exploration

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to explore how students and staff in rural Nova Scotian high schools experience and create school climates, and to identify any possible challenges related to school climates and sexual violence in rural areas. This study will also help outline possible barriers and solutions reported by students and staff and will result in documents and reports for government and school boards to better support sexual violence prevention in high schools across our province.

Study Procedures: Each volunteer participant (you) will take part in one (1) in-depth open-ended interview that will last one (1) hour over phone or online audio or video call. If via internet, the researcher will use the platform of the participant's choice. Participants will be guided through interview questions and prompts on topics pertaining to school climate, sexual violence prevention, and staff support. This interview will be audio-recorded for transcription, but all identifying information will be coded or anonymized.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any question, and may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason. The decision to participate, not participate, or withdraw at any time has no impact on your role as a school staff member. If you withdraw from the interview any data already created will be removed from the study and destroyed, unless you give permission otherwise. You will be able to withdraw your information for up to one (1) month following the interview, at which time the codes identifying information will be destroyed and your individual data would no longer be able to be withdrawn. All participants will still receive the $10 compensation, even in the case of withdrawal.

Potential Risks: There are minimal anticipated risks to you while participating in this research. These may include discomfort reflecting on experiences in your workplace, and you may be concerned about possible professional repercussions of participating in the study. To mitigate this risk, remember that your participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any question or prompt you are uncomfortable with. Additionally, please not that you are not expected to divulge personal experiences of violence and will not be asked directly about those experiences by the researcher. The interview process is intended to emphasize your role as knowledge holder and to learn about school climates and is intended to be an empowering experience. Additionally, you are welcome to contact the researcher in the one (1) month following the research to add, expand upon, or remove any information

you feel was misrepresented in the initial interview. Local, telephone, text-based and online resource lists will be given to you at the end of the interview.

Potential Benefits: The researchers cannot guarantee benefits to any participant, but it is hoped that the findings will inform future prevention efforts in your school and within the regional school board/centre for education.

Compensation: Participants will receive $10 in compensation via digital e-transfer or registered mail.

Confidentiality: Audio-recordings taken during the interview would be solely used by the researcher, accessed only by the researcher and her supervisor, and the recordings will not be disseminated to the public. All data will be kept either in secure locked files physically or digitally secured and encrypted, accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor and will be destroyed after seven (7) years. To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals such as a member of the Research Ethics Board may have access to your information.

If the participant elects to use a web-based platform, it should be noted that as with any communications over the internet, there is always some risk of information transmitted via the internet being intercepted by a third party.

Questions: Any questions about this research project can be directed to Erin Wynn, available via phone at 1(902)331-1074 or email at erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca, or her supervisor Dr. Jessica Ruglis at 1(514)690-4636 or Jessica.ruglis@mcgill.ca.

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the McGill Ethics Manager at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Please sign below if you have read the above information and assent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

McGill

Participant Consent Form: Parent/Guardian Consent Form for Student Participants

Researcher: Erin Wynn, Master of Arts student, McGill University, Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling (Human Development), 1(902)331-1074, erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Jessica Ruglis, McGill University Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, 1(514)690-4636, Jessica.ruglis@mcgill.ca

Title of Project: Student and staff experiences of school climate and sexual violence prevention in rural Nova Scotia: A qualitative exploration

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to explore how students and staff in rural Nova Scotian high schools experience and create school climates, and to identify any possible challenges related to school climates and sexual violence in rural areas. This study will also help outline possible barriers and solutions reported by students and staff and will result in documents and reports for government and school boards to better support sexual violence prevention in high schools across our province.

Study Procedures: Each volunteer participant (your child) will take part in one (1) in-depth open-ended interview that will last one (1) hour over phone or online audio or video call. If via internet, the researcher will use the platform of the participant's choice. Participants will be guided through interview questions and prompts on topics pertaining to school climate, sexual violence prevention, and student support. This interview will be audio-recorded for transcription, but all identifying information will be coded or anonymized.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and the participant may refuse to   participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any question, and may withdraw from the study at any   time, for any reason. The decision to participate, not participate, or withdraw at any time will not affect their grades or their participation in any school programming in which they may take part. If the participant withdraws from the interview during the process, all data created by the individual will be removed from the study and destroyed unless they give permission otherwise. Participants will be able to withdraw their information for up to one (1) month following their interview, at which time the codes identifying information will be destroyed and an individual participant's data would no longer be able to be withdrawn. All participants will still receive the $10 compensation, even in the case of withdrawal.

Potential Risks: There are minimal anticipated risks to your child while participating in this research. These may include the potential emotional discomfort of discussing barriers to positive school climate surrounding sexual violence, or barriers to student action towards these issues, as well as the potential for instances of sexual violence or school violence to be brought into discussion. Students are not expected to divulge personal experiences of violence and will not be asked directly about those experiences by the researcher. Students may be reminded throughout the interview of the intention to focus on school climate, and not any specific personal instances of violence or harassment.

Local, telephone, text-based and online resource lists will be given to each participant at the end of the interview, as well as school and community-based supports.

Potential Benefits: The researchers cannot guarantee benefits to any participant, but it is hoped that the findings will inform future prevention efforts in your child's school and within the regional school board/centre for education.

Compensation: Participants will receive $10 in compensation via digital e-transfer or registered mail.

Confidentiality: Audio-recordings taken during the interview would be solely used by the researcher, accessed only by the researcher and her supervisor, and the recordings will not be disseminated to the public. All data will be kept either in secure locked files physically or digitally secured and encrypted, accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor and will be destroyed after seven (7) years. To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals such as a member of the Research Ethics Board may have access to your information.

If the participant elects to use a web-based platform, it should be noted that as with any communications over the internet, there is always some risk of information transmitted via the internet being intercepted by a third party.

Additionally, as with any work with young people there is the potential for "duty to report". As stipulated in the Children and Family Services Act of Nova Scotia, "Duty to report" legally requires reports of abuse or neglect of a person under the age of 19 to the Department of Child Services. In the event of a disclosure during the research interview, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as the participant would have to be guided to a support resource and the interview ended. Any data created by a participant in this circumstance would be withdrawn and destroyed. **Questions**: Any questions about this research project can be directed to Erin Wynn, available via phone at 1(902)331-1074 or email at erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca, or her supervisor Dr. Jessica Ruglis at 1(514)690-4636 or Jessica.ruglis@mcgill.ca.

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the McGill Ethics Manager at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to your child's participation in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participant's Name: _____

Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

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Participant Consent/Assent Form

Researcher: Erin Wynn, Master of Arts student, McGill University, Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling (Human Development), 1(902)331-1074, erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Jessica Ruglis, McGill University Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, 1(514)690-4636, Jessica.ruglis@mcgill.ca

Title of Project: Student and staff experiences of school climate and sexual violence prevention in rural Nova Scotia: A qualitative exploration

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to explore how students and staff in rural Nova Scotian high schools experience and create school climates, and to identify any possible challenges related to school climates and sexual violence in rural areas. This study will also help outline possible barriers and solutions reported by students and staff and will result in documents and reports for government and school boards to better support sexual violence prevention in high schools across our province.

Study Procedures: Each volunteer participant (you) will take part in one (1) in-depth open-ended interview that will last one (1) hour over phone or online audio or video call. If via internet, the researcher will use the platform of the participant's choice. Participants will be guided through interview questions and prompts on topics pertaining to school climate, sexual violence prevention, and student support. This interview will be audio-recorded for transcription, but all identifying information will be coded or anonymized.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and the participant may refuse to participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any question, and may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason. The decision to participate, not participate, or withdraw at any time will not affect their grades or their participation in any school programming in which they may take part. If the participant withdraws from the interview during the group itself, all data created by the individual will be removed from the study and destroyed unless they give permission otherwise. Participants will be able to withdraw their information for up to one (1) month following the interview, at which time the codes identifying information will be destroyed and an individual participant's data would no longer be able to be withdrawn. All participants will still receive the $10 compensation, even in the case of withdrawal.

Potential Risks: There are minimal anticipated risks to your child while participating in this research. These may include the potential emotional discomfort of discussing barriers to positive school climate surrounding sexual violence, or barriers to student action towards these issues, as well as the potential for instances of sexual violence or school violence to be brought into discussion. Students are not expected to divulge personal experiences of violence and will not be asked directly about those experiences by the researcher. Students may be reminded throughout the interview of the intention to focus on school climate, and not any specific personal instances of violence or harassment.

Local, telephone, text-based and online resource lists will be given to each participant at the end of the interview, as well as school and community-based supports.

Potential Benefits: The researchers cannot guarantee benefits to any participant, but it is hoped that the findings will inform future prevention efforts in your child's school and within the regional school board/centre for education.

Compensation: Participants will receive $10 in compensation via digital e-transfer or registered mail.

Confidentiality: Audio-recordings taken during the interview would be solely used by the researcher, accessed only by the researcher and her supervisor, and the recordings will not be disseminated to the public. All identifying information will be removed and replaced with a code immediately following the interview. The code key will be kept in a secure locked file accessible by only the researcher and destroyed one (1) month after the interview takes place. All data will be kept either in secure locked file cabinets or digitally secured and encrypted, accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor and will be destroyed after seven (7) years. To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals such as a member of the Research Ethics Board may have access to your information.

If the participant elects to use a web-based platform, it should be noted that as with any communications over the internet, there is always some risk of information transmitted via the internet being intercepted by a third party.

Additionally, as with any work with young people there is the potential for "duty to report". As stipulated in the Children and Family Services Act of Nova Scotia, "Duty to report" legally requires reports of abuse or neglect of a person under the age of 19 to the Department of Child Services. In the event of a disclosure during an interview, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as the participant would have to be directed to school support staff. Any data created by a participant in this circumstance would be withdrawn and destroyed.

Questions: Any questions about this research project can be directed to Erin Wynn, available via phone at 1(902)331-1074 or email at erin.wynn@mail.mcgill.ca, or her supervisor Dr. Jessica Ruglis at 1(514)690-4636 or Jessica.ruglis@mcgill.ca.

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the McGill Ethics Manager at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Please sign below if you have read the above information and assent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. A copy of this assent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participants Name: _____

Participants Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D: Coding Protocol

Coding Protocols for Development of Constructivist Grounded Theory

Based on the work of Charmaz and Thornberg (2020), Oktay (2012), Mirriam and Tisdell (2015), and Corbin and Strauss (2015).

Memoing is to be used throughout the coding procedure

Study Design
1. Identified subject area
2. Reviewed relevant literature
3. Identified participant group/location
4. Design of open-ended interview questions/format

Data Collection & initial open coding
5. Recruitment of participants
6. Interviews: Audio recorded via phone with field notes
7. Transcribed
    a. Initial coding with transcription
    b. Used each interview to inform what was asked in the next
    c. Interview staff first, then youth participants

Open Coding
8. Coded participants' answers into in-vivo data points
    a. First staff
    b. Then youth
    c. Then both
9. Coded in-vivo data points into concepts
    a. First youth (switched to go from personal to system)
    b. Then Staff
    c. Then both
10. Coded concepts identified into thematic categories
    a. First youth
    b. Then Staff
    c. Then Both

Axial Coding
11. Combining all categories from both sets of participants into one group
12. Identifying the variety of conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences associated with a category

13. Relating a category to its subcategories
    a. Looking for clues in the data about how major categories might relate to each other

Preliminary Identification of Core Categories

14. Review axial codes and open coding to identify the most common themes and category interactions
15. Further narrow the axial codes into their core categories

Selective Coding

16. Use preliminary core categories to review all four interviews "clean" (with open coding removed). Code the interviews in relation to the preliminary core categories
17. Remove preliminary categories that are not supported by the data
    a. These can be identified as context, dimensions, or properties of the final core categories
18. Diagram the remaining core categories to examine their interactions amongst one another
19. Identify final core categories and their subcategories, dimensions, and properties

Saturation of Core Category

1. Use core categories to review all four interviews "clean" (with selective coding removed). Code the interviews in relation to the core categories
2. Use all data to define new units and aspects of the core categories
3. Complete when the data review adds no new information to the categories

List of Abbreviations

SMY - Sexual Minority Youth

SVP – Sexual Violence Prevention

CSHE - Comprehensive Sexual Health Education

IPV - Intimate Partner Violence

LGBTTQI+ - Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Two-Spirit Queer Intersex (Plus)

SIECCAN - Sex Information & Education Council of Canada

CWF – Canadian Women's Foundation

WHO – World Health Organization

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

GTM – Grounded Theory Method