

**FROM HARM TO HEALING:
CO-DESIGNING A FRAMEWORK FOR ANTI-CARCERAL FEMINIST GENDER-
BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION WITH MEN**

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By

MADDIE BROCKBANK (SHE/HER), H.BSW, MSW
Honours Bachelor of Social Work (McMaster University)
Master of Social Work (McMaster University)

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DESCRIPTIVE NOTE

McMaster University DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2025) Hamilton, Ontario (Social Work)

TITLE: From Harm to Healing: Co-Designing a Framework for Anti-Carceral Feminist Gender-Based Violence Prevention with Men

AUTHOR: Maddie Brockbank (she/her)
Honours Bachelor of Social Work (McMaster University)
Master of Social Work (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Saara Greene

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Dr. Ameil Joseph
Dr. Jordan Fairbairn

EXTERNAL EXAMINER: Dr. Liza Lorenzetti

NUMBER OF PAGES: i-xi, 1-327

LAY ABSTRACT

This project explores men's participation in preventing and ending gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV). Drawing on anti-carceral feminist theory and feminist participatory action research (FPAR) methodology, I brought twelve men postsecondary students together to co-design a framework that would support other men in participating in anti-GBSV prevention work. This project was overseen by a Community Advisory Board (CAB) composed of current anti-violence service providers. The goal of this project was to better understand what would elicit and sustain men's engagement in GBSV prevention, while also considering what anti-carceral feminist approaches (i.e. imagining solutions to GBSV outside of the criminal legal system) could offer prevention work with men. This project contributes to the growing body of research on community-led responses to addressing GBSV before it happens.

ABSTRACT

Gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) is a leading concern on postsecondary campuses, with a 2019 survey indicating that 63% of student respondents had experienced some form of sexual violence while attending an Ontarian postsecondary institution (CCI Research, 2019). Of those who had experienced sexual assault, 87% of perpetrators were identified as men (CCI Research, 2019). Institutional responses to the prevalence of GBSV have focused on individualized and retroactive approaches, such as increasing security measures, post-assault supports, and mandated intervention for those found in violation of the institution's policy, rather than attending to the structures facilitating this violence. These approaches have been critiqued for assuming that individual and reactive responses are sufficient in addressing GBSV, which fails to pursue prevention efforts that stop this violence before it happens and interrogate men's roles in these issues.

This project draws on anti-carceral feminist theory and feminist participatory action research (FPAR) methodology to co-design a framework to engage men in GBSV prevention. Specifically, I invited twelve men postsecondary students into a series of focus group discussions about GBSV and its interpersonal and systemic causes and experiences, the efficacy of existing and emerging intervention and prevention efforts, and what anti-carceral approaches could offer the broader project of engaging men in these spaces and finding solutions to GBSV outside of the criminal legal system. Overseeing this work, I also brought together a group of seven anti-violence service providers who are currently working with men as a Community Advisory Board (CAB). Together, we generated, analyzed, and mobilized the themes from our discussions into a framework for engaging men in anti-carceral feminist conversations about GBSV and its prevention.

The key themes emerging from this project explore men's disengagement and dislocation from GBSV prevention work, the communication of misogynistic ideas despite men's best intentions while participating in anti-GBSV spaces, the possibilities of anti-carceral feminist thinking in reimagining prevention, and the significance of men's participation in co-design of this work.

This research contributes to the wealth of scholarship on community-based solutions to the issue of GBSV and men's roles in participating in the feminist anti-GBSV movement. Put simply, this project seeks to shift toward community accountability that recognizes how everyone has a unique role to play in challenging and ending GBSV.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am sitting here reminiscing on my decade at McMaster University. I started as a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed eighteen-year-old in 2015 in the Faculty of Social Sciences. I dreamed of doing my PhD and making a difference in my community. It is strange (and sentimental) to think of that version of myself now as a twenty-eight-year-old who is embarking on a new start at the University of Windsor. I don't know how to *not* be a Marauder at this point. It's almost like coming back to the start.

There are so many people to thank, so many people who played such a significant role in getting me to where I am now. I think that listing them all would rival the page count of this dissertation. Nonetheless, I will try my best.

First, I want to sincerely thank the twelve men postsecondary students and the seven Community Advisory Board members who participated in this study. Your engagement, enthusiasm, care, passion, and commitment were inspiring. I had so much fun building the framework with you and learning from you. I hope that this dissertation reflects the breadth and depth of what you shared and dreamed.

I am indebted to the wonderful, compassionate, and strong organizations in my community that continue to work toward a future free from violence. I have learned so much from them and have had the privilege of being even a small part of their work. I'd like to especially recognize Interval House of Hamilton, where I spent three amazing years as the Manager of Gender-Based Violence Prevention Training in the MentorAction program. Being a part of that team is reflected in every bit of this dissertation and was such an honour. I'd also like to recognize SACHA, Students for Consent Culture Canada, the Women Abuse Working Group of Hamilton, the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, and the Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre; thank you for all that you do and all that you've taught me.

I am also so grateful for every survivor and every anti-carceral feminist dreamer who have shaped my thinking. I hope that this dissertation contributes to the ongoing work toward a better and safer world for everyone.

To my supervisor, Dr. Saara Greene: I don't even think there are words that can capture how much you have done for me and how much you have meant to me. It sounds wholly inadequate but thank you for everything. Since I was nineteen years old, you have been a teacher, a mentor, a sounding board, a support system, an inspiration, and a friend. You are so warm, passionate, caring, brilliant, and truly foundational to the School of Social Work and beyond. I feel so very lucky to have spent the past ten years under your wing. Shall we do it for another decade?

To Dr. Ameil Joseph: thank you for pushing me to be more critical, thoughtful, and courageous. Ever since I took my first class with you in 2016, you have inspired me to forever learn and unlearn and be as active as I can in my community. It has been such a privilege to work with you and learn from you. You are truly one of the brightest people I have ever known. Earning the occasional chuckle from you will always be a highlight.

To Dr. Jordan Fairbairn: you have been such a joyful and important addition to my committee! You are so intentional, thoughtful, supportive, and brilliant. Reading your comments on my

chapters was a wonderful experience (and not many academics can say that reading feedback is a good time). Thank you for being a part of this journey. I can't wait to work together again!

To my external examiner, Dr. Liza Lorenzetti: thank you for your care, attention, critical thought, and support in evaluating my work. Your insight was invaluable, and your presence at the defence was such a delight; it felt like a celebrity was there! Cheers to you and the exciting possibilities of future work together.

To every single person in the School of Social Work: thank you. The third floor of Kenneth Taylor Hall is filled to the brim with the loveliest people you can find. It has been a home away from home for so long. Shoutout to Dr. Stephanie Baker Collins, Dr. Ann Fudge Schormans, Dr. Allyson Ion, and Jennie Vengris for being such a big part of the journey. And a special thanks to Tammy Maikawa, Darlene Savoy, and Lorna O'Connell – you are the backbone of the school, and we are all so grateful for you. Please don't revoke my access to the lounge, okay?

To my PhD cohort, Alexe Bernier, Jeff Black, Rochelle Maurice, and Aaron Li: what a ride! We started this PhD online and didn't meet in person until eighteen months in. But that WhatsApp group chat, the Zoom calls, the memes, and the laughs got me through to this point. You are all truly exceptional researchers, educators, and people. I have been most fortunate to be in this canoe with you (never forget). And a special shoutout here to Renata Hall, our honorary cohort member and a friend for the ages. Thank you for being the other half of the dream team.

To my family (oh, wow, I almost started sobbing writing that): you have been there with me every step of the way. From the early days as a child where I declared that I wanted to do my PhD, you have done everything you can to support and uplift me. Mom, you have always been willing to talk through my ideas, listen to my rants, inspire me to keep going, and offer an encouraging word (or a cake that reads "Get It Done" in icing). Dad, you have refilled my water bottle, cooked me a meal, and asked me how I'm doing as the steady and unwavering presence that you've always been. Kate, my best friend and sister, you have always made me laugh, been a safe place to land, and served as a dream travel partner when it's time to get away. And my Dexter, you are a snuggly, sweet, slightly evil demon dog who sat reliantly at my side through the thousands of words I wrote for this thing. I love you all so much.

To my friends: there are too many of you to list! Thank you for cheering me on, making me laugh, and roasting me when the time calls for it. You are all incredible, and I am endlessly grateful for you.

I wish that I could deliver a personal, handwritten note to every single person at McMaster, in Hamilton, and beyond who have been a part of my life and a part of this journey. Since I simply cannot do that (hello, I wrote thousands of words for this thing?!), please know that I am bursting with love and appreciation for the lot of you. To quote the great philosopher Winnie the Pooh, "how lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."

Funding Acknowledgement: This work was funded by the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, the H.L. Hooker Sr. Fellowship, the Ontario Graduate Fellowship, the Wilson Leader Scholar Award, and the SSHRC Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When I first began talking to men and boys about gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV), I met a young man named Max. He was studying business in university, maintained good grades, still played hockey recreationally after years of playing competitively, and had remained friends with the same group of men since he was a child.

We sat down for an interview for my undergraduate research project about his perceptions of consent, sexual violence, and men's engagement in prevention. While he appreciated getting the chance to speak with me about these topics, he insisted that this conversation was not meant for him. Max said that he was a "good guy" who would never perpetrate violence against a woman. He had women in his life that he cared about, including a girlfriend and a mom who had both experienced GBSV. While he admitted that his group of friends occasionally engaged in "locker room talk" and that nothing was considered "too far" in terms of the jokes and comments that they made privately, he was firm in his assertion that GBSV were not issues that he or his friends needed to think about. His participation in the project was solely to provide a man's perspective and help make GBSV prevention work more engaging for the people who needed it.

About a year after we sat down to chat, I got an e-mail from Max. He told me that one of his lifelong friends had sexually assaulted a woman at a university party. Max was reeling. He expressed that he did not know what to do, believe, or think. He felt helpless. While he cared deeply for his friend, he was horrified by his actions and his refusal to see them as harmful. Max told me that he had tried to talk to another friend, Ben, about what they had learned. During this conversation, Ben disclosed that he, too, had been sexually assaulted as a teenager by a former competitive hockey coach. When Max asked him why he had never told any of the guys before,

Ben replied, “Everyone always jokes about this stuff, so I didn’t think that any of you would take me seriously.” Max ended his e-mail with a solemn reflection: “I feel like I didn’t think about any of this until it was too late.”

Throughout my near decade of research, practicing, and community organizing around GBSV prevention with men, I have met many different men who have spoken about experiences that are similar to Max’s. Men have talked about seeing consent posters in their university student centres and decidedly looking away, dismissing it as something that did not apply to them because they were the “good guys.” They have spoken about rape jokes, misogyny, anti-queer, anti-trans, racist, and ableist comments being every day and commonplace when they are among other men. They have commented that “the line” between acceptable and unacceptable jokes and comments is consistently blurred and pushed when they are with other men, and they go along with it regardless of their personal comfort levels. Whether or not they had been criminalized for GBSV, they insisted that they were not the problem or not “as bad” as the vague image of the *actual* perpetrators of GBSV who were frequently identified as “weird” and “creepy” strangers hovering namelessly and facelessly on the peripheries of their communities.

I share Max’s story here because it feels like an apt example of why men need to be part of the feminist movement to end GBSV. Too often, we rely on reactive responses after violence has happened. As Max said, we don’t think about it until it’s too late. I became interested in and passionate about GBSV prevention with men because I was tired of seeing how men disengaged from it and evaded responsibility for thinking about it when every woman in my life has been affected by it. I was frustrated by men needing to see or experience it firsthand for them to believe that it was real. I was entangled in cultures and systems where GBSV were prolific and unaddressed. Ultimately, I wanted better for my community.

Situating the Researcher on Colonized Lands

I am an uninvited settler on Treaty 3 territories, which refers to the Between the Lakes Treaty that was signed in 1792 between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit to purchase approximately three million acres of land, including what is now known as Hamilton (Talking Treaties, n.d.). My parents were born in these territories and are the grandchildren and children of settlers from England and Ireland; there is much that I do not know about my familial history and how we arrived here due to estrangement and trauma. However, settler colonization is an intrinsic part of my history as a young, white, cisgender, university-educated, able-bodied woman and third generation Canadian; our arrival here was inherently and unquestionably an extension of colonial imperialist rule that displaced, dispossessed, and violated Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples and their lands. As a white woman, I must be constantly attentive to the history of white women in the white supremacist, colonial institution of social work, where we often designed, implemented, led, benefitted from, and upheld violent interventions that removed Indigenous peoples from their communities, forced them into assimilating and colonial “services,” and often resulted in various physical, emotional, social, cultural, sexual, spiritual, intergenerational, and other harms (Haggis, 2017; BlackDeer & Ocampo, 2022).

McMaster University, where this research was conducted, sits and meets on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, with lands protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt. This agreement commemorates the relationship between the Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee Confederacy and is centred on the shared responsibility for caring for and sustaining the lands and resources (Talking Treaties, n.d.). While this commitment is specifically designed and upheld by Indigenous peoples, I am appreciative of how it has shaped my epistemological approach to my research and praxis regarding axiology

and community accountability. Specifically, the emphasis on building and sustaining relationships via participation, care, and a focus on connection is intimately linked with the objectives of my study, which are interested in creating space for men to imagine, co-design, and openly discuss responding to GBSV via more humanizing and community-driven approaches. Furthermore, Indigenous epistemologies are deeply connected to abolitionist visioning; the exploration of community accountability through anti-carceral feminist ideas in this project is rooted in Indigenous worldviews and approaches toward restorative and transformative justice via decolonial, anti-racist, and community-based imaginings and praxis (Cunneen, 2023; Alder, 2025). I am very wary of (mis)appropriation of Indigenous epistemologies and approaches as I have not done sufficient work in connecting with Indigenous peoples in my community. However, I give immense credit to decolonial scholarship that has been foundational to the abolitionist dreaming that is central to this project.

The Story So Far

Over the course of the last ten years of my undergraduate and graduate education, I have been engaging in scaffolded and complementary research, practice, and community work in the areas of GBSV prevention with men. In my undergraduate research project, I undertook a phenomenological approach to interviewing university-aged men about their understandings of sexual violence and its interrelated concepts, including consent, prevention work, and how gender scripting around cisheteronormative, white, hegemonic masculinity shapes these experiences. This small pilot study provided me with sound foundational knowledges about the limitations of anti-violence work in meaningfully reaching, engaging with, and being integrated into men's lives, thus reifying cisheteropatriarchal myths about GBSV and facilitating a disconnect between men and anti-violence efforts (Brockbank, 2019). Namely, I was compelled

by the earnest belief expressed by my participants that GBSV prevention was not meant for them as they were “good guys” who did not require these conversations in the ways that “bad” people (e.g. perpetrators of GBSV) do, which then led to many of them feeling disengaged from anti-violence work on campus.

My graduate research has sought to continue exploring the narrative elements shaping men’s (dis)engagement from GBSV and its prevention, while also examining the more mechanical aspects that focus on how we overcome barriers to involving men in this work. My MSW thesis used a focus group to invite men to consider the gaps, limitations, and areas of promise provided by existing anti-violence efforts on postsecondary campuses (Brockbank, 2020). This study garnered similar thematic takeaways that my undergraduate project did, which identified an absence of relevant and informed messaging in these programs/campaigns facilitating the observed disconnect between men and their participation in anti-violence work. My doctoral pilot project in SOCWK 772 (Qualitative Methods for Social Work) sought to interrogate this reality from the position of service providers offering a range of GBSV intervention and prevention programs in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, where I found that many programs rely on carceral discourses and perspectives of GBSV in a way that reifies the “good guy v. bad guy” dynamic underpinning non-criminalized men’s disengagement from GBSV prevention. These findings reflected my own experiences in facilitating GBSV intervention with criminalized men and anti-violence public education with non-criminalized people, where hyperfocus has been placed on individual decision-making, knowledges, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours rather than situating people in relationship with broader systems. Many of these programs evade structural analyses out of concern that personal accountability for causing harm will be dodged in ways that absolve responsibility and reflexivity; however, such

perspectives perpetuate carceral logics about shame, accountability, and individual responsibility and reify power within service providers to decide what programming should look like and who is deserving of absolution, independent of the experiences of people engaging in these services.

In sum, my research and practice over the past decade have been based on the foundational belief that we must involve men in the creation and development of GBSV intervention and prevention efforts. Specifically, I believe that men must see themselves, their experiences, and their concerns intentionally reflected in anti-violence programming to incite their sustained investment and engagement in GBSV as a social issue. Men are significantly overrepresented as perpetrators of GBSV (CCI Research, 2019; Sutton, 2023; Conroy, 2024). Men are also more likely to be representatives of cisheteropatriarchal institutions (e.g. government) that lead responses to GBSV and/or that resist feminist movements to end violence (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2021). I think it is significant to implement informed, gender-transformative, and critical programming that does not shy away from recognizing that men have a unique role in ending GBSV and that they have perspectives that should be honoured, challenged, and collectively reimaged.

As I now complete my doctoral thesis, this foundation has remained significant to framing how I approach the research. However, I also seek to disrupt the history of microlevel intervention and individualization that frame violence prevention work as an interrogation of personal pathology, deficit, and/or behaviour. My experience in facilitating GBSV intervention and prevention thus far has suggested that these programs frequently rely on challenging and changing individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, with particular focus on personal accountability, often out of fear that an emphasis on structural causes of violence will deter service users from accepting responsibility for the ways they have caused harm. In this process,

service providers have decided what programming should look like and what its central messaging should be, independent of the experiences, needs, and insights of men accessing these services. I wonder about if and how a sociostructural analysis of GBSV could be more readily integrated into violence prevention efforts in a way that does not perpetuate what Benibo and briond (2019) dub “the mythological dichotomy” between “good” (non-violent, healthy) and “bad” (violent, toxic) demonstrations of masculinity. Further, I am curious about how the disruption of such discourses could shape men’s engagement in anti-GBSV work, where we shift away from individualization and toward community accountability for ending GBSV and where our gaze is firmly situated on what bell hooks (2000) names white, colonial, capitalist, imperialist, cisheteropatriarchal state violence.

With this commitment in mind, I imagined this dissertation as an anti-carceral feminist participatory action project that understands critical analysis and consciousness-raising as an important piece of men (re)imagining their roles in GBSV prevention. While I know that creating a framework for violence prevention remains situated within microlevel praxis, I believe that engaging men in participatory development of a framework that better reflects their needs, goals, experiences, and hopes is an entry point into centring structural analyses of GBSV and its prevention. Drawing upon my previous research and practice experiences, I aim to inform this project with principles of co-design, collaboration, and (re)imagination of existing anti-violence approaches to shift toward community accountability and structural analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The central purpose of my doctoral thesis is to support ongoing efforts in scholarship and activism to explore and address the roots of GBSV and men’s roles in anti-violence efforts more broadly. I view my research as a necessary expansion of existing foundational work by applying

foundational concepts in a slightly different context. For example, while anti-carceral feminist thinking about violence is well-developed in Black feminist scholarship, Indigenous worldviews, and in supporting racialized survivors and criminalized persons, I aim to respectfully engage with and apply its central concepts and values in working with non-criminalized men students to disrupt everyday discursive carceral logics governing their (dis)engagement in anti-violence work. Part of my dissertation attends to the tensions involved in applying Black feminist and anti-carceral feminist thinking in working with men, particularly with those who are in proximity to whiteness and cisheteronormativity. The purpose of such efforts is to invite men into imagining how we can disrupt men's apathy, dismissal, and/or defensiveness around being involved in GBSV prevention as people who have not been criminalized for violence.

I view the central purposes of my thesis as two-fold. Namely, I hope to meaningfully contribute to burgeoning efforts to prevent GBSV via involving men actively in the process and co-producing a tangible tool/framework for imagining such work. Further, I am interested in conceptualizing the work through an anti-carceral lens, which attends to the structural dynamics shaping GBSV and disrupts the discourses that distance men from the issue via hyperindividualization and pathologization of violence. Second, I integrate an analysis of the discursive values of FPAR as they relate to the anti-carceral feminism. In this, I view my thesis as maintaining the potential to make a methodological contribution to the application of FPAR's principles in engaging men in anti-carceral (re)imaginings.

Objectives

The primary objectives of my doctoral research are to contribute to the developing scholarship on anti-carceral feminist approaches to addressing GBSV and to co-design a GBSV prevention framework with men postsecondary students that would be applicable in adjacent

spaces (e.g. schools, community settings, anti-violence work at large, etc.). Specifically, this research seeks to expand critical feminist approaches to GBSV prevention by challenging carceral logics that allow non-criminalized men to distance themselves from conversations about GBSV and evade structural understandings of the issue. Instead, a focus would be placed on shifting away from individual responsibility and toward community accountability through centring men's roles in prevention efforts and attending to broader factors shaping GBSV. As Kaba et al (2021) summarize, anti-carceral projects “focus, in part, on building a society where it is possible to address harm without relying on structural forms of oppression or the violent systems that increase it” (p.3).

Three key objectives guide this project. First, I aim to offer a tangible framework for anti-carceral GBSV prevention with and for men that has been co-designed by those it is attempting to engage. Second, I seek to involve men postsecondary students in the process of imagining what GBSV prevention could look like by and for men in a way that challenges apathy, disinterest, and/or defensiveness. And third, I apply an anti-carceral feminist analysis to this work, which is often considered in projects with criminalized men in reactive services and not non-criminalized men in allyship spaces. The central questions that this research aims to answer are: what would support/sustain men's engagement in taking an active role in anti-carceral GBSV prevention? What would anti-carceral, structurally oriented approaches to addressing GBSV look like? What can FPAR offer projects that involve anti-carceral (re)imaginings?

Why Men and Why Not Survivors?

What truly drew me to FPAR was the idea of flipping the feminist script that is frequently deployed when talking about GBSV. When I was presenting my undergraduate research at a community event, I remember using that exact phrasing: after witnessing firsthand and engaging

extensively with literature on GBSV that depicted how people of marginalized genders are tasked with preventing and avoiding victimization, I was infinitely curious about where men were situated in this discussion. If they are overrepresented as perpetrators, why are they not involved in discussions of GBSV? If violence intervention and prevention programming is concerned with stopping people from using violence, why are the subjects of such programming not involved in imagining, developing, and evaluating these efforts? As I alluded to, most projects that have used FPAR around GBSV have focused on women's experiences of violence (see Cahill & Torre, 2007; Dupont, 2008; Weber & Thomas, 2021), which I view as perpetuating the concern of allegedly participatory projects merely addressing symptoms of social problems and not their root causes. In other words, only focusing on survivors' and women's experiences of GBSV might (re)entrench the notion that they are responsible for ending GBSV, thus instilling an individualized framing of the issue and removing it from its structural orientation in white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy (hooks, 2000).

While I believe firmly that survivors' voices, insights, perspectives, and goals should be readily integrated into anti-violence work, I feel troubled by continuously tasking them with communicating these ideas, imposing expectations on them to lead liberatory movements, and retraumatizing them with research that asks about their experiences of violence when it is already well-documented and extensively covered. A central critique of anti-violence scholarship and practice tends to be in how stories are collected and told, such as merely documenting data to "prove" that GBSV is happening in our communities. Additionally, research and practice related to tertiary intervention – that is, programs and services offered after violence has happened to survivors and those criminalized for violence – has been extensively covered in the literature. I did not want the focus of the project to be on survivors undertaking the labour of imagining

GBSV prevention when many are actively in our communities advocating for social change, nor did I want the focus to be on those who are criminalized for violence and deemed “abusers” by the criminal legal system. Rather, I was interested in going beyond the known prevalence of GBSV and the binary of “survivor” and “perpetrator” to reframe responsibility for prevention as a community endeavour.

Engaging men in an FPAR project, initially, might read as a potential cause for concern, particularly when considering the history of feminist movements being (mis)appropriated by oppressors. For example, Goldrick-Jones (2004) documents examples of men claiming allyship in anti-GBSV spaces while systematically pushing women out of feminist projects to end violence. However, I think it offers an opportunity to trouble discursive constructions of power, identity, and voice that frequently rely on static categories or binaries. As hooks (2000) tells us, there is nuance within identity categories and within experiences of oppression; while women have been historically understood as a marginalized gender, the failure to sufficiently attend to whiteness, affluence, ability, and cisheteronormativity within the experience and construction of womanhood has alienated racialized, disabled, poor, queer, and trans women from feminist movements. Further, there is nuance within how we construct and understand the identity marker of “man” as men have differing relationships with cisheteropatriarchal masculinity depending on their proximity to systems of domination (hooks, 2000; Bernard, 2012; Lorenzetti & Walsh, 2022). Troubling the dichotomy between “the oppressed” that should lead transformative praxis and “the oppressors” that cause these dynamics is part of this puzzle; reducing men to oppressors that possess and enact power fails to meaningfully engage with understandings of power as productive and exercised contextually (Freire, 1974; hooks, 2000; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Frisby et al, 2005). As FPAR is explicitly interested in viewing power as dynamic and subject to

negotiation within the research relationship, it lends itself well to inviting men into liberatory projects to end GBSV.

I also want to note that I chose to specifically engage men who are current students in postsecondary education. As GBSV is a dire issue on postsecondary campuses in Canada and beyond, setting the research within this context felt like an important gateway to understand and interrogate the disproportionality of the issue in higher education. Furthermore, I chose to engage men students as I believed that they were well-positioned and primed to discuss GBSV based on their mandated engagement with institutional initiatives, including consent education, bystander intervention, and open conversations about sexual violence that most universities must facilitate as a part of their alignment with Bill 132's mandate to develop, implement, and evaluate standalone sexual violence policies Ontario. As they likely have a rudimentary understanding of these issues and what they look like on campus, engaging them in a participatory project felt like an accessible way to draw men who are ready for these dialogues into the project.

Defining Key Terms

As I prepared to write this thesis, it felt like an important opportunity to consider how I conceptualized and understood the key concepts that have guided my work thus far. Since beginning this work, I have been deeply interested in the interrelationship between constructions of masculinity and gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV). I present two visual aids – collages that I made during the project – to guide these reflections and definitions.



Figure 1: My collage about masculinity.

Throughout this thesis, I use the term “men students” to describe participants. While “men” is often not considered a prefix descriptor, I deliberately have chosen to avoid using the term “male.” As my collage depicts, constructions of manhood and masculinity are socially mediated and imposed. The term that appears on the right side of the collage – “Rules to Live By” – aptly summarizes my conceptualization of how masculinity is constructed and imposed. Reliance on biologically essentialist discourses that present the gender binary as fixed and natural perpetuates some of the central concerns of involving men in GBSV prevention. I align with the analyses and reflections of queer and trans scholars, activists, and practitioners, which view gender as a personal identification that is distinct from sex assigned at birth. As such, using the term “men students” both respects how participants chose to describe and identify themselves without making assumptions or exclusion criteria that are based on sex assigned at birth.

Similarly, I choose to use the term “cisheteropatriarchal” to talk about the state and its systems that are responsible for oppression, marginalization, and violence. Here, we acknowledge various facets of patriarchy beyond the pseudoscientific constructions of the gender binary that present categories of “men” and “women” as absolute and biological. Specifically, “cis” identifies the privileges of identities where sex assigned at birth and gender align and the subsequent violence against those who are trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and/or gender expansive. “Hetero” recognizes the privileging of straight relationships between cisgender people and the marginalization of queer relationships between both cis and trans people. Using the term “cisheteropatriarchy” also invokes an analysis of the interconnected nature of all systems of oppression. As many have written about, cisnormative, heteronormative, and patriarchal practices are entwined with colonialism, racism, and ableism, particularly in how the gender binary is a product of western imperialism (Evang, 2022; Owis, 2024). When I use the term “cisheteropatriarchy” here, I am referring to the white supremacist, colonial, carceral, capitalist, imperialist state as a whole. Within the white supremacist, cisheteropatriarchal, carceral state, I frequently choose to discuss the postsecondary institution – or “PSI” – as an extension and system of the state.



Figure 2: My collage about violence.

Throughout this thesis, I also use the term “gender-based and sexual violence” or its moniker “GBSV” to discuss violence that is perpetrated against people on the basis of their gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation and/or is carried out through sexual means. This term is expansive as it recognizes harms outside of those solely deemed physical or tangible, such as assault or sexual assault. As my collage above alludes to, GBSV is usually constructed and defined through the operations of the criminal legal system, which I argue draws stark lines between what we see as “legitimate” or “real” kinds of violence requiring intervention and what we see as “illegitimate” or nonsensical. Historically, GBSV was considered a private concern that feminists worked tirelessly to redefine as a public issue, which continued to evolve into considerations of its interrelationship white supremacy and state violence (Hanisch, 1970; Crenshaw, 1991; Espanioly, 1997). While the criminal legal system continues to adapt definitions and responses to GBSV, it remains evident that such constructions fail to account for, address,

and prevent the continuum of violence and the conditions that facilitate it. I expand further on these constructions later in this dissertation.

Lastly, when considering the spectrum of violence prevention as described by Lee et al (2007), this thesis focuses on primary prevention, which refers to initiatives and interventions that happen *before* GBSV has happened. These services might include consent education, bystander intervention workshops, and men's allyship groups. It is important to note that aspects of this dissertation also engage with both secondary and tertiary forms of violence prevention. Secondary prevention refers to interventions that focus on "at-risk" populations and occur in response to emerging concerns about GBSV, such as education sessions for fraternities, student athletes, and men-dominated academic programs where GBSV is known to be heightened. Tertiary prevention, which tends to be the most funded form of intervention, refers to services offered in the immediate aftermath of GBSV, such as counselling for survivors and mandated programs for criminalized persons (i.e. the Partner Abuse Response Program or treatment for people who have caused sexual harm). The spectrum of violence prevention and its services are often offered dichotomously, meaning that criminalized persons are rarely engaged in primary prevention while non-criminalized persons are not mandated to participate in tertiary prevention. Nonetheless, they intersect in critical ways that inform how I approached this dissertation and imagining a framework for meaningful response.

Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized as follows:

In Chapter 2, I review the relevant literature on the state of GBSV and its prevention on postsecondary campuses. I synthesize research on the prevalence of carceral logics in developing and administering GBSV prevention and the implications of such approaches on students'

experiences of state violence. I recognize best practices for engaging men in GBSV prevention and the possibilities of introducing anti-carceral feminist considerations into this work.

In Chapter 3, I offer my epistemological approach to the project. I begin with a brief retrospective of my feminist evolution over the past ten years of doing anti-GBSV work with men. I then draw in Foucauldian, postmodern and critical feminist, and anti-carceral feminist theory to describe my theoretical grounding for this project, with particular attention to key concepts of accountability, the “good/bad” binary, and the postsecondary institution as state violence. I link this epistemology to considering my methodological approach to the project.

In Chapter 4, I discuss my methodology and methods for the dissertation. I explore abolitionist methodologies and forge a bridge to feminist participatory action research (FPAR). I then describe the processes and procedures of recruitment, data collection, and data analysis, with consideration of the ethical tensions of anti-carceral feminist and participatory action approaches to working with men around GBSV.

In Chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8, I explore the four major themes emerging from the project, including (1) the state of men’s (dis)engagement from GBSV prevention work and how we can (re)conceptualize men’s participation, (2) the tensions of men students participating in feminist anti-GBSV work in reifying and perpetuating misogynistic rhetoric despite their best intentions, (3) the possibilities of anti-carcerality in (re)imagining GBSV prevention work, and (4) the technical implications of participatory co-design in GBSV prevention with men.

In Chapter 9, I discuss the findings and link them back to key literature on GBSV, prevention, and anti-carceral feminist considerations of the work. I identify where this project aligned with, deviated from, and expanded on existing work to offer an innovative perspective on

engaging men in GBSV prevention. I consider the limitations, strengths, and implications of this research on future work in this subject area.

In Chapter 10, I conclude this dissertation with my personal reflections on being a woman and a feminist in anti-GBSV work with men. I reflect on where I was positioned in this work in the context of my decade of experience and its implications for feminist researchers working with men and boys. I end with a consideration of what anti-carceral feminist thought can offer sustaining the anti-GBSV movement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Existing work in gender-based and sexual violence intervention and prevention has grappled extensively with understanding and enacting best practices for engaging men and boys. What continues to emerge are considerations of factors beyond men's individual participation, including how messages about GBSV are prioritized and communicated, who is facilitating these spaces, and where this work could happen to maximize potential positive impact. Furthermore, it is important to examine how the state's construction of GBSV and assertions of best practices potentially perpetuate and reify the very issues anti-violence work is attempting to address. Such analyses are significant to designing a project that both honours the breadth and depth of foundational work in this area, while also imagining and expanding to consider what participatory approaches to working with men in anti-carceral feminist way could offer. I begin with a necessary, albeit brief, interrogation of "primary prevention" and the paradox of "stopping violence before it happens." Then, I review four key themes from the literature: (1) the state of GBSV and its prevention on postsecondary campuses in Ontario and Canada, with particular focus on what has been identified as missing or lacking; (2) the carceral logics and discourses that underpin and inform current anti-violence efforts, namely the colonial roots of GBSV, campus control, institutional betrayal, and complicity; (3) the best practices for engaging men and boys in this work that maintain the potential to fill identified gaps and challenge carceral logics; and (4) the anti-carceral possibilities that could improve and enhance GBSV prevention.

Troubling the Concept of "Primary Prevention"

Throughout this dissertation, I make continued reference to "primary prevention," which indicates programs and initiatives that seek to "stop violence before it happens." This lens is derived from public health models of research and practice that make distinctions between types

of intervention based on when they happen, which is often invoked to argue that most anti-violence services are *reactive* rather than *proactive* (Lee et al, 2007). I am appreciative of this lens as it reflects much of my experience in the field, where my work in primary prevention contexts was notoriously underfunded, poorly attended, and seldom given the attention, resources, and time that it deserved. Simultaneously, when I was working in tertiary violence intervention programs – which focused on mandated and criminalized persons after they had been arrested for using violence – I found that these programs had consistent funding and mandatory attendance; however, they were riddled with issues concerning high turnover of service providers, inflexible program content that had not been adapted in years, and severely limited methods of evaluating the efficacy and experience of the service by service users, providers, and the broader community. Based on these experiences, I found that using the language of “primary prevention” was a helpful lens for designating what kind of intervention I was talking about.

However, it is important to interrogate and challenge the notion of “stopping violence before it happens” as it dismisses the stark reality that colonial, imperialist, and state violence has been happening for centuries and continues to persist. I turn to the writings and teachings of Sharon Goulet, a Métis social worker and leader; in her work where she was tasked to create a GBSV prevention framework that specifically focused on Indigenous communities, she expressed deep concerns about the impossibilities of preventing violence when it has already happened via colonization (Goulet et al, 2016). Abolitionists have similarly noted that attempts to prevent violence often obfuscate and erase long, complex, and ongoing histories of state violence. For example, in our imagining of “preventing” violence, we frequently invoke police

presence in communities to participate in public education, thus dismissing the reality that police presence, in itself, is a historical and current violence (Battle & Powell, 2024).

As such, using the lens of primary prevention is limited *and* limiting. As I endeavour to shift away from the individualism that drives anti-GBSV work, I perpetuate the overemphasis on interpersonal iterations of harm, often at the direct expense of naming, confronting, and challenging the colonial, imperialist, white supremacist, state violence that governs these relations and underpins virtually all our social life. While I continue to draw on the literature that relies on this framing, I am considerate of the future of GBSV prevention work and how our language must necessarily shift away from referring to a “before” violence to, instead, identify how violence is embedded within the fabric of western, colonial society; put simply, any and all of our intervention is “after” and “during” violence.

GBSV and its Prevention on Postsecondary Campuses in Ontario/Canada

Gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) remain some of the most significant issues on Canadian postsecondary campuses. Research on the prevalence, factors, and experiences of sexual violence on postsecondary campuses has spanned decades, with DeKeseredy and colleagues publishing some of the first major studies on the subject in a Canadian context in 1993. This early work indicated that rates of sexual violence in Canadian universities are comparable to those in the United States, with one in four women experiencing some form of sexual violence in stranger, dating, and intimate partner contexts on campus and men being more likely to perpetrate sexual violence (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Tait, 1993). While this data was limited in respondent populations being predominantly white, middleclass, young women, it provided a foundational snapshot of GBSV on Canadian postsecondary campuses and inspired ongoing research, advocacy, and service related to

response and prevention since (e.g. see Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997; Quinlan, Clarke, & Miller, 2016; Sheehy & Gilbert, 2017).

Most recent data suggests that such trends persist (Senn et al, 2014). A 2019 study of sexual violence on Ontarian postsecondary campuses indicated that 63% of student respondents had experienced sexual harassment and 22% had experienced sexual assault during their student tenure (CCI Research, 2019). Of those who had experienced sexual assault, roughly 87% of perpetrators were identified as men (CCI Research, 2019). This data inspired action from the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Education, a pattern that has been replicated from previous incidences (e.g. Kathleen Wynne's 2015 action plan against sexual violence, titled "It's Never Okay"). In 2019, the Ministry pledged to invest further in security and campus infrastructure to bolster safety (e.g. better lighting and cameras) and consent education for staff, students, and faculty. Again, these commitments have been repeated on the institutional level in response to GBSV on postsecondary campuses, such as the action plan launched by Western University in 2021 after there were reports of a series of sexual assaults during their orientation week (Ogden, 2022). However, such decisions are met with criticism from students, survivors, service providers, and activists who identify government and institutional responses as remaining steeped in myths and assumptions about GBSV that further individualize the issue, centre and fund only reactive services, and frame carceral interventions as most effective (Bloom et al, 2023; Salvino, 2024; Ostridge, 2025).

Historically, GBSV intervention and prevention programs on postsecondary campuses have been divided. For those who have been found to be in violation of their institution's GBSV policy, they might be mandated to attend counselling, barred from accessing specific parts of campus, suspended, expelled, and/or have their case handed over to the criminal legal system in

instances where severe and imminent risk is identified (Lee & Wong, 2019; Magnussen & Shankar, 2019). For those who have not been found to violate their institution's GBSV policy, prevention services tend to be optional and voluntary, short-term, generalist, and focused on capacity building as bystanders (Colpitts, 2019; Tavcer & Dobkins, 2023; Prieto, 2025). Examples include: asynchronous consent modules (Mesenbrink, 2022); self-defence workshops (Beaujolaïs, 2023); synchronous or in-person consent education presentations offered during orientation week and periodically throughout the academic year (Cleroux, 2023; Tavcer & Dobkins, 2023); bystander intervention workshops provided for student leadership (Jouriles et al, 2018; Pfaff, Jönsson, & Muhonen, 2024); posters and social media campaigns (Lee, Bouchard, & Wong, 2023); and population-specific services, including men's allyship circles (Ray et al, 2024), spaces for queer and trans students (Bloom et al, 2022), and student- and survivor-led organizations (Harris, Karunaratne, & Gutzwa, 2021).

While postsecondary institutions are required to have staff positions dedicated to responding to and preventing GBSV on campus, they may be supported by partnerships with local sexual assault and rape crisis centres, although those tend to be precariously funded and may change depending on institutional leadership (Lalonde, 2015; Levine, 2018; Carlson et al, 2020; McMahon et al, 2021). Despite community-campus partnerships being identified in the literature as best practices for addressing GBSV, institutions may choose to centre internal services out of self-protection and/or minimization of spending. For example, McMaster's partnership with the Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton and Area was abruptly severed in 2019 without explanation to the broader campus community (Bonilla-Dampney & Wilder, 2019). Following significant student, staff, and faculty advocacy and the expansion of the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO), it was reinstated a few years later, although

new concerns emerged in 2025 when two key staff members of the SVPRO were terminated without cause and, again, without explanation to the broader campus community (Brockbank et al, 2025; Rosas, 2025).

Much of this existing prevention work on campuses across Ontario has been criticized for not meaningfully and deliberately addressing the concerns identified by survivors. Furthermore, despite significant research on the subject (see Schwartz & DeKeresedy, 1997; Lambert & Black, 2016; Casey et al, 2018), current efforts are not seen to comprehensively contend with men's overrepresentation as perpetrators of GBSV or the systemic causes of the issue. Agender consent education – delivered on a broad scale to a large group of incoming students during orientation weeks – and bystander intervention programming for student leaders, as examples, maintain the potential to be generalist, individualized, and presented merely as the institution's attempt to “check a box” rather than attend to students' needs about the intervention in and prevention of GBSV.

While these efforts maintain the potential for positive impact (e.g. Jouriles et al, 2018; Mennicke et al, 2021; Mujal & Taylor, 2021), there is also evidence that these approaches perpetuate ongoing concerns and issues. Generalist approaches have been observed by participants in anti-violence programming as failing to facilitate personal connection to the issue, particularly in how they do not connect the content or messaging to the lived experiences of those they are attempting to engage (Kania & Cale, 2021). For example, there is often a perceived misrepresentation of students' lived experiences in consent workshops and bystander intervention sessions, such as failing to depict scenarios where alcohol or drugs are involved, power imbalances are present, and the context is specific and nuanced, among other gaps (Leone, Haikalis, & Parrott, 2018). Furthermore, in these spaces, students are continuously and

predominantly framed as witnesses to or victims of harm and not as potential facilitators and perpetrators, thus obfuscating the role of those who cause harm (Linder, 2018; Brush & Miller, 2022). When these dynamics are present, participants are able to then selectively opt-out of prevention efforts, often informed by the belief that “good” people do not have to participate in anti-violence efforts (Powell & Henry, 2014; Burrell, 2023).

Recent research has also considered the structural and epistemological challenges of anti-violence programming. In particular, there has been a documented absence of intersectional perspectives on responses to GBSV, such as recognizing how bystander behaviours are negatively affected by racism, classism, ableism, and anti-queer and anti-trans attitudes and beliefs (McMahon, Burnham, & Banyard, 2020; Brush & Miller, 2022; Riggs & Yoshimura, 2023). When generalist programming only alludes to these dynamics in an abstract way, such as discussions of disproportionality or the bystander effect, the content remains impersonal and removed from its interrelationship with the white supremacist, colonial, carceral state. What this facilitates further is individualistic understandings of what anti-violence work needs to accomplish. For example, existing prevention work tends to rely on the assumption that students merely need to gain knowledge, skills, and understanding of consent as a sufficient way to address GBSV. Such discourses fail to recognize the impacts of power imbalances, deliberate exercise of choice and control, and systemic causes and factors (Linder, 2018; Beres, 2020; Porat et al, 2024). When services and supports are internal and tasked to both respond to and prevent GBSV, we see these assumptions proliferate as campus security, police, the criminal legal system, and the institution work together to sustain the carceral gaze and eschew analyses that would implicate them in causing or facilitating GBSV (Rentschler, 2017; Brush & Miller, 2022; Brockbank, 2023). While those offering these services are often constricted by limited funding

and resources and might maintain good intentions, prevention work is further complicated by institutional liability and the prioritization of the institution's reputation, which I discuss later in this chapter.

These concerns are consistent with anti-violence programming at-large. Most services are constituted as tertiary prevention (Lee et al, 2007), with the focus being on mandated interventions for criminalized persons *after* violence has happened (e.g. Partner Abuse Response Programs or institutionally led programs for students found to be in violation of their institution's GBSV policy). Consequently, these programs tend to subscribe to individualized perspectives of GBSV that frame violence as stemming from personal deficit, moral failure, lack of knowledge or understanding, and/or individual pathologies, thus evading attentions to structural factors shaping the issue (Gottzén, 2013; Powell & Henry, 2014; Taylor, 2019). When GBSV is individualized in this way, carceral interventions such as arrest, sanction, or other forms of penalization, are framed as necessary solutions to control deviant subjects or "problem people" (Ahmed, 2013; Levine & Meiners, 2020; Brockbank, 2023). Subsequently, these interventions fail to meaningfully address violence before it happens and further stigmatize, marginalize, and Other those identified as perpetrators via racist, sanist, ableist, and classist imagery. The consequences of these dynamics are the reification of the carceral state's power via how its systems rejects systemic analyses of GBSV (Ahmed, 2013; Gottzén, 2013; Taylor, 2018; Jacobs et al, 2021).

Returning to the Ministry's decision to invest in security as a key example of these dynamics, such responses demonstrate reliance on rape myths that frame GBSV as something that police and campus security sufficiently address and prevent, which fails to reflect the realities of what GBSV looks like on postsecondary campuses (Powell & Henry, 2014;

Brockbank, 2021, 2023). Installing more security cameras and better lighting is a direct reflection of rape myths that frame GBSV as something perpetrated by strangers in the dark in public spaces on campus. In reality, GBSV is more likely to be perpetrated by someone known to the victim in private residences (Rotenberg, 2017; Burczycka, 2019). Further, investments in institutionally led consent education programs assume that GBSV is perpetrated on the basis of personal deficit (e.g. a lack of knowledge or understanding of violence) rather than something that is both knowingly perpetrated and is a symptom of structural violence (Linder, 2018; Beres, 2020; Porat et al, 2024).

Carceral Logics and Discourses in Anti-Violence Work

Expanding further on the critiques of existing prevention efforts on postsecondary campuses, it is important to examine the carceral logics that permeate anti-violence programming in both reactive and proactive contexts. As postsecondary institutions (PSIs) maintain the ability to develop and administer their own standalone GBSV policies, procedures, and prevention initiatives, their responses and interventions reflect carceral and neoliberal values, including the protection of the university's interests over student safety and justice, hyperindividualization of the issue via punishment of "bad apples," and the erasure of systemic and structural understandings of GBSV (Colpitts, 2019; Lee & Wong, 2019). Here, positioning the PSI as a "safe campus" has become marketable and desirable to attract consumers and bolster public and private funding, whereby notions of "safety" are constructed in deeply carceral, racist, ableist, classist, and sanist ways (Quinlan, 2017; Page et al, 2019; Students for Consent Culture Canada, 2021). For example, "safe campus" imagery is accompanied by fulsome security services and foot patrols for walking students home safely at night, which implies that threat of GBSV comes from strangers/Others lurking on the peripheries of campus who are not part of the

campus community. The consequences of such dynamics include students' underreporting particularly when their experience contradicts the popularized assumptions in rape myths, feelings of mistrust, fear, and anger toward the PSI, and the perpetuation of binary thinking that is reflective of carceral logic regarding GBSV (Quinlan, 2017; Bloom et al, 2023; Christl et al, 2024). I explore four key iterations of carceral logics and discourses in anti-violence work within the PSI: the colonial roots of GBSV, campus control, institutional betrayal, and complicity.

Colonial Roots of GBSV

To identify the carceral logics imbued within responses to GBSV, we must first understand GBSV as a symptom *of* white, colonial, capitalist, carceral cisheteropatriarchy. Namely, as Black, abolitionist, critical race, and Indigenous scholars have documented extensively, sexual violence has been used as a tool of control, power, and oppression against enslaved, indentured, and colonized persons (Razack, 2005, 2016; Smith, 2015; Jordan, 2021). For example, enslaved Black men in 19th century America were sexually violated, assaulted, abused, publicly ridiculed, and coerced into reproduction by white men (Hartman, 1997; Foster, 2011, 2019; Sharpe, 2016; Aidoo, 2018). Slavery also significantly shaped how Black women define and understand their sexuality and gender; Black women's simultaneous experiences of sexual violence, reproductive coercion and commodification, hypermasculinization, and hypersexualization led to an "ungendering" of Black women that both denied them access to their children *and* deemed their fertility as owned by white men (Goodwin, 2020; Omowale, 2021; Massey, 2024). Sexual violence is, here, a weapon and technology of colonial and imperial conquest, whereby racialized persons' bodies are subjected to the same violence and control that colonizers inflict upon their lands, languages, communities, and cultures (Meari, 2015; Smith, 2015; Razack, 2016).

Black, Indigenous, and racialized men have been subjected to specific violence that, as Razack (2005) notes, is a deliberate “colonial repertoire designed to construct racialized men as violable, emasculated, and conquered” (p. 348). Inherent within this violence is the intent to violate, terrorize, and humiliate racialized men via sexual degradation and spectacle, such as through public mockery (Hartman, 1997; Foster, 2011, 2019; Sharpe, 2016; Aidoo, 2018). The denial of sexual integrity and agency, alongside the goal of public humiliation, is a deliberate invocation and (re)establishment of colonial authority and rule. Put simply, it is used to depict white men as powerful and masculine and racialized men as vulnerable, weak, and effeminate, thus reinforcing the racial order of white supremacy (Aidoo, 2018). Similar themes are observed in the violence against Black, Indigenous, and racialized women throughout history, in that the intent is to deny sexual agency and reinforce white supremacist authority (Meari, 2015; Smith, 2015; Massey, 2024). When tracing the genealogy of public humiliation around GBSV, we can see how these histories of colonial and imperial sexualized violence have shaped the prevalence of “rape jokes” and mockery of GBSV that tend to rely on misogynistic, anti-queer, and anti-trans discourse, which remains a salient theme in GBSV prevention work with men.

Expanding on this understanding, the carceral state continues to inflict this violence via the criminal legal system. As Sharpe (2016) aptly summarizes, “[t]he afterlife of slavery is lived in the constant exposure of Black bodies to regimes of spectacle and humiliation, where surveillance and vulnerability reenact the sexual violence of the hold” (p. 21). Within the police and prison systems, GBSV is used as a tool of punishment and control, such as in strip searches, sexual assault, and public sexual degradation that frequently expresses anti-queer and anti-trans sentiment (Gilmore, 2007; Rowell-Cunsolo, Harrison, & Haile, 2014; Sharpe, 2016; Boyer et al, 2019). The ritualized humiliation of Black, Indigenous, and racialized incarcerated persons via

sexual violence “reproduces the racial logics of slavery” (Gilmore, 2007, p.88) and reveals the roots of the carceral regime in the white supremacist, colonial, and imperialist state. The carceral state works to construct Black and racialized men as “violent,” “strange,” “dangerous,” and “Other” to justify their incarceration and subsequent state violence inflicted against them within the criminal legal system, which then characterizes them as weak, vulnerable, and powerless to the white, cisheteropatriarchal state.

While this history is not the focus of my dissertation, it is important to identify and name these dynamics as they provide essential, foundational context to engaging men in GBSV prevention work. In particular, universalizing men’s experiences within cisheteropatriarchy erases how marginalized men are uniquely positioned in these conversations. For men who have been historically and systemically impacted by carceral, colonial, and imperialist violence, understanding their perspectives and experiences of GBSV requires attention to these invisibilized histories and their current impacts on how men engage with this issue.

Campus Control

Imbued within institutional responses to GBSV is the prioritization of the institution’s status, reputation, and risk of liability. By positioning itself as an alternative and internal method of redress in cases of GBSV, the institution is framed as both a *site* where GBSV could happen and a *state* that necessarily intervenes in and responds to instances of GBSV to provide support, justice, and redress (Hamer & Lang, 2015; Brockbank, 2021, 2023). Despite the purported intention of the PSI’s internal adjudication processes being to provide survivors with a pathway beyond the criminal legal system, it replicates its dynamics in concerning ways, including tenuous investigations, gag orders, threats of punishment for claims deemed “vexatious,” and long, arduous, inaccessible, and time- and resource-consuming processes (Salvino, Gilchrist, &

Cooligan-Pang, 2017; Colpitts, 2020; Ostridge, 2025). The goal of preserving the institution is also reflected in the construction of increasingly technical policy and procedures, the concentration of sexual violence services being allocated within and overseen by legal departments, and students' reported experiences of being silenced, dismissed, invalidated, fearful, and disappointed during the disclosure and reporting processes (MacKenzie, 2019; Magnussen & Shankar, 2019; Salvino, 2024; Jones, 2025).

In their analyses of the United States' Title IX legislation – which is federal law that prohibits “sex-based discrimination” (Baker, 1994, p.271), including GBSV, Shepp, Callaghan, and Kirkner (2023) argue that these policies are indicative of “campus control” (p.14), which refers to practices that the university enacts to ensure its protection and reify its power. These actions include mandatory reporting procedures, invasive investigative practices, and an inattention to the systemic and structural factors and causes of GBSV. As they write, “the investigatory body of the university does not position itself to identify whether or not harm occurred but rather is focused solely on whether or not a policy was violated” (Shepp, Callaghan, & Kirkner, 2023, p.14). They argue that such an approach propagates carceral logics “in a way that individualizes harm and focuses on punishment rather than restoration” (p.5) through the pursuit of “bad apples” deemed responsible for GBSV and the implicit discouragement of the broader campus community in reporting GBSV via the intimidating and inaccessible report procedures. As they conclude, campus control's goal of protecting the institution's reputation is reflective of its deeply neoliberal, white supremacist, and cisheteropatriarchal foundations and values, whereby notions of “justice” are impossible to accomplish within the PSI (Shepp, Callaghan, & Kirkner, 2023).

While Title IX is different than the standalone policies and procedures that Ontario universities are mandated to develop, they maintain similar approaches and perspectives (Sheehy & Gilbert, 2015; Lee & Wong, 2019; Ostridge, 2025). Universities remain committed to maintaining pristine public reputations to obtain and sustain funding for their operations, including high numbers of student applications and enrolments, grants, donations, sponsorships, and investments, among other forms of social and financial capital. Despite their purported responsibility for responding to GBSV and protecting their communities, PSIs refuse to recognize their complicity in GBSV out of concern that doing so would implicate them in harm and result in social and financial consequences that would affect their neoliberal operations (Phipps, 2020). As Ostridge (2025) writes:

The culture of a university employing neoliberal logics also means that there is a climate of fear, precarity, and secrecy that enables the university to engage in institutional airbrushing. Ruling relations, working through activated texts, control all aspects of the institutional course of action, which is designed to regulate individuals rather than address the systemic problem of sexual violence. (p.50)

Here, campus control facilitates an “airbrushing” of GBSV incidences in favour of preserving the university’s reputation, status, and neoliberal interests. Such dynamics can then explain why, in both on campus and criminal legal proceedings around GBSV, formal reports are low, cases are more often dismissed than fully adjudicated, and student mistrust of these systems remain significant (MacKenzie, 2018; Gorsak, 2019; Marques et al, 2020; Ostridge & O’Connor, 2020).

As it pertains to GBSV prevention services, these values are present in how the institution relies on individualized and interpersonal analyses of GBSV and might only reference the systemic and structural causes in abstract ways (McMahon, Burnham, & Banyard, 2020;

Brush & Miller, 2022; Riggs & Yoshimura, 2023). For example, bystander intervention workshops often mention intersectionality, disproportionality, and how systems of oppression affect our intentions to intervene in instances of GBSV; however, the focus remains on *individual* or *interpersonal* bias and stigma, such as how our social identities affect our experiences, beliefs, decisions, and behaviours (McMahon, Burnham, & Banyard, 2020; Brush & Miller, 2022; Riggs & Yoshimura, 2023). What is missing from these services is a recognition of how the PSI is both a perpetrator of harm and complicit in harm as a system of oppression, an understanding that will never be offered when prevention programs are institutionally designed and led (Phipps, 2020; Colpitts, 2022; Carey et al, 2022). Furthermore, consent education examines only how it is negotiated and discussed in interpersonal interactions while obfuscating or erasing how consent is frequently violated through institutional reports, investigations, and adjudications (Prior & de Heer, 2021; Jones, 2025). Here, we see how campus control dilutes, deradicalizes, and individualizes anti-violence services within PSIs to limit risk of liability, pursue the “bad apples,” and airbrush broader community concerns about GBSV (Lee & Wong, 2019; Phipps, 2020; Carey et al, 2022; Ostridge, 2025).

Institutional Betrayal

As Dufour (2024) notes, institutional responses to GBSV can be both short-term and immediate, such as supports provided to students after disclosure, and long-term, such as how they review, amend, and evaluate their GBSV policies and implement prevention initiatives. As I have noted, PSIs’ approaches to violence intervention and prevention have been critiqued for centring the needs, interests, and goals of the institution, thus risking sanitization, dilution, and/or mainstreaming of messaging in a way that detracts from systemic analyses of state violence and the institution’s role in perpetuating GBSV (Brockbank, 2021). To expand on these analyses, the

carceral logics imbued within processes of campus control facilitate troubling impacts on the broader campus community beyond silencing survivors and punishing “bad apples.” Namely, policies and procedures that enact gag orders and refuse to publicly share information about adjudications can make those not directly affected also feel a sense of mistrust, unease, fear, and/or anger (Quinlan, 2017; Shariff, Bellehumeur, & Friesen, 2020; Salvino, 2024).

For example, a publicized investigation into alleged sexual violence at McMaster University in 2020, which resulted in the arrest and eventual termination of employment of a professor, did not provide a fulsome report to the broader campus community despite calls for transparency and accountability (Polewski, 2020; Mitchell, 2021). While a summary was offered, many students, staff, and faculty were left in the dark about the harms that happened and the steps taken for resolution, although the Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour department’s culture was dubbed “toxic” in the review (Polewski, 2020). A similar dynamic was critiqued by student activists when McMaster’s Equity and Inclusion Office abruptly terminated the employment of two staff dedicated to sexual violence prevention and overall program direction in 2025 and refused to share why this decision was made and a comprehensive and clear plan for maintaining these services (Brockbank et al, 2025; Rosas, 2025).

Institutional betrayal is rooted in behavioural trauma theory to describe “institutional actions that failed to take appropriate steps to prevent an interpersonal trauma from occurring and/or respond adequately after a trauma occurred” (Christl et al, 2024, p.2798). Institutional betrayal can stem from both direct and indirect acts, including those in omission, such as failure to intervene or be transparent about processes, and those in commission, such as creating policies that perpetuate harm via inaccessible and punitive frameworks (Dufour, 2024). Identifying and naming how institutions “actively and passively contribute to harming those who depend on

them” (Christl et al, 2024, p.2798) is important for understanding the “long-term consequences of violated trust” (Dufour, 2024, p.3904). Research indicates that half of survivors report one or more experiences of institutional betrayal within PSIs, which could include academic penalization, covering up or dismissing the report, making the reporting procedures more difficult, and failing to implement effective and proactive responses (Quinlan, 2017).

As Dufour (2024) also notes, institutional betrayal is a product of the PSI’s structure and culture, particularly in its hierarchal and cisheteropatriarchal systems of power. These dynamics could manifest in refusing to remove and/or protecting those in positions of authority who have caused harm, which usually sees abuses of power by those in positions of privilege, status, and protection (i.e. professors, administration, student athletes, etc.). As GBSV is a symptom of the interconnected structures of carcerality, white supremacy, and cisheteropatriarchy, these harms are softened, euphemized, erased, justified, and protected via popularized discourses that position consent as inherent, power imbalances as flattened, and marginalized persons as unbelievable or non-credible (Linder & Harris, 2017; Page et al, 2019; Higgins & Banet-Weiser, 2023). Students for Consent Culture Canada, a student- and survivor-led organization, has documented these instances in both their grading of standalone GBSV policies (Salvino, Gilchrist, & Cooligan-Pang, 2017) and their Open Secrets Project that documents GBSV perpetrated by university faculty against students and how institutions cause further harm through both their action and inaction (Students for Consent Culture Canada, 2021). In this, the cisheteropatriarchal state causes, perpetuates, and justifies these harms and dismisses experiences of institutional betrayal. The harm extends beyond the binary of survivor and perpetrator and into the broader community who is also affected by the institution’s secrecy, self-protection, and betrayal.

Complicity

Campus control and its consequent experiences of institutional betrayal create the conditions for and sustain both systemic and individual complicity. Here, complicity refers to how both the state and the broader community eschew responsibility for addressing and redressing GBSV via invoking binary discourses of “good/bad” and “innocent/criminal,” regardless of how violence is endemic to the everyday operations of the state and the systems that we live and work within. As Durazo (2011) writes,

We live, breathe, exist in, and help to create communities that are saturated with rape and violence. We are all affected and learn, model, ignore, and advance violence either consciously or unconsciously, even while we are simultaneously surviving it [...]

Enunciated in, for, and through structures and relations of dominance, violence is the architect of the social, inescapably constituting even love and intimacy. (p.165)

The state normalizes violence via its operations and constitutes such practices as normal, necessary, and effective, particularly when it is seen as an intervention against individuals who are pathological, immoral, deviant, and Other. As I have noted above, because the state is cisheteropatriarchal in its foundations, its systems are enabled to protect and support people who cause harm and who are in positions of power and privilege, which then normalizes, euphemizes, and justifies GBSV (e.g. by framing it as consensual, insignificant, deserved, etc.). Contrastingly, and expanding on Durazo’s commentary, Heiner and Tyson (2017) note that the carceral state treats “non-state violence as individual pathology that calls for the incapacitative disappearance or rehabilitative reformation of criminalized subjects, rather than as a social practice connected to state violence” (p.16). Here, we see how certain forms of violence – as in those of the state – are normal and necessary, whereas other forms – as in those outside of the state – are deemed

abnormal and unnecessary. Violence that is aligned with the carceral state's conceptualizations, even when perpetuated by individual actors, is then normalized, excused, justified, and, in some cases, lauded (Brockbank, 2023; Bravo, 2024).

The carceral logics of complicity can be individually mediated, internalized, and practiced. Put simply, if the institution is complicit in state violence, then those in proximity to power and those who are state actors can enact complicity in an individual capacity as well. In formative works on constructing masculinities, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe complicit masculinity, which refers to “[m]en who receive the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance” (p.832), although they also claim that “[a] degree of overlap or blurring between hegemonic and complicit masculinities is extremely likely if hegemony is effective” (p.839). Here, even those who do not perform or embody hegemonic masculinity – which is usually characterized by the dominant culture that facilitates men's explicit power and control over women and people of marginalized social positionings (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) – can be complicit in cisheteropatriarchal violence via inaction and reaping its benefits.

There has been emerging research to trace the relationship between complicit masculinities and GBSV. For example, Jordan et al (2022) explore “lad culture” to reveal how self-identified “good guys” are still entangled in and in collusion with the proliferation of rape culture and misogyny. Specifically, men in their study invoked hegemonic masculine discourses even in their distancing from lad culture through framing “real men” as protectors of women, in control of their sexual urges, and not needing to be violent to gain sexual favour with women. As they conclude, “disapproval of sexual violence may not mean less willingness to perpetrate and othering narratives may instead facilitate GBV” (Jordan et al, 2022, p.712), thus “allowing men

to preserve their identity as non-rapists” (Pascoe & Hollander, 2016, p.70). Burrell’s (2023) work expands on these concerns further as he examines men’s defensive responses to naming their complicity in GBSV, such as through naturalizing violence as an inevitable part of men’s biology and pointing to “other” men as the problem.

While lad culture – and other similar iterations of examining hegemonic and complicit masculine norms – can create a relevant and valuable pathway into these conversations, “the relative palatability of the concept may be because it enables attention to be placed ‘elsewhere,’ rather than on men’s practices more broadly” (Burrell, 2023, p.351). Carian’s (2024) research comparing feminist and incel men’s conceptualizations of gender equity work explored similar themes, whereby men who self-identified as feminists positioned themselves as better, smarter, and more authentic men than those who were open about their misogyny. Such a dynamic paradoxically re-entrenches essentialist ideas about gender and positions men’s participation in these spaces as a product of their natural predispositions for leadership, which is often juxtaposed against women’s docility and need for rescue (Jordan, 2019). As Burrell (2023) concludes, “men cannot simply detach themselves from these structures of gendered power, no matter which ‘forms’ of masculinity they put into practice” (p.351).

While complicity must be carefully examined and challenged, anti-GBSV scholars and practitioners must also avoid falling into penal responses as it might limit our analyses to the individual and fail to confront the state in creating and sustaining these conditions. In particular, focusing only on calling out and punishing those who are complicit in GBSV might strengthen the state that facilitates this complicity and scapegoat those who have been shaped by it (Phipps & Young, 2015; Anitha & Lewis, 2018). For example, in 2014, the McMaster Engineering Society’s Redsuits (student volunteers responsible for promoting school spirit during Welcome

Week) were suspended after the discovery of a songbook that contained numerous chants that were sexually violent, misogynistic, anti-queer, and racist, despite the chants allegedly dating back to 2010 (Chapman & Ruf, 2014). The university was quick to condemn and punish the Redsuits by prohibiting their participation in Welcome Week for the following academic year; however, they did not appear to propose a resolution for moving forward, including supporting the majority of students within the society who did not know about and/or were affected by the songbook. Furthermore, such action did not engage with the culture of men-dominated departments and the cisheteropatriarchal foundations of the institution as a whole (e.g. men's overrepresentation in high-paid positions of power, underrepresentation of women in STEM programs, high rates of GBSV on postsecondary campuses, etc.). Here, we see how penalization of complicity by association can cause more harm and reify the power of the institution as their intervention is seen as effective and necessary and not as reactive and as an intentional distraction from its own complicity and violence.

Best Practices for Engaging Men and Boys

The bind of anti-violence work with men remains in navigating the delicate balance between avoiding punishment that hyperindividualizes GBSV while also refusing to replicate patterns of complicity that men can – and do – participate in. My previous research has delved significantly into important context around imagining feminist approaches to GBSV prevention with men, namely by exploring the factors shaping men's (dis)engagement in anti-violence work (Brockbank, 2019, 2020). Here, we define the scope of my dissertation project as examining primary prevention, which refers to activities that are facilitated with non-criminalized persons before GBSV has occurred and seeks to challenge the underlying causes of GBSV, including “cultural attitudes, values, beliefs, and norms about masculinity, sexuality, gender, and violence”

(Powell & Henry, 2014, p.3). Historically, it has been challenging to engage men in voluntary primary prevention work, with most men participating in secondary and tertiary interventions for people deemed “at-risk,” people who have been mandated, and/or people who have been criminalized, which also tends to be the most funded kinds of intervention. (Lee et al, 2007; Stathopoulos, 2013; Powell & Henry, 2014; Casey et al, 2018).

Several types of primary prevention have been demonstrated in existing research to bolster and sustain men’s engagement with tangible positive effects on reducing GBSV. These strategies include: facilitating spaces that are all-men, including men facilitators, peer educators, and participants (Pease, 2008; Foubert, Godin, & Tatum, 2010; Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Casey et al, 2018); the endorsement and support of these programs by other men in their personal networks and in leadership positions, such as student and professional athletes, celebrities, and other influential figures (Casey, 2010; Jaime et al, 2016; Mennicke et al, 2021); personalizing GBSV and connecting it to men’s lived experiences (Casey & Smith, 2010; Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Flood, 2020); exploring how the socialization and imposition of traditional masculinities harm men and facilitate GBSV (hooks, 2004; Pease, 2008; Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015; Flood, 2019); and deploying systemic and structural analyses to trace how GBSV is a symptom of white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy (Pease, 2008; Carlson et al, 2015; Linder, 2018; Applin, Simpson, & Curtis, 2022). Expanding on these strategies, others have noted that GBSV prevention programs need to be appropriately timed, sustained over time, comprehensive, situated within the systems that men participate in every day, and strengths-based by emphasizing their roles as active bystanders and allies (DeGue et al, 2014; Carlson et al, 2015; Flood, 2020).

The literature has identified three central tenants for best practices that have influenced the focus of my research and the questions I have developed that will build on this work: the successes of Indigenous-developed and -led programming, gender-specificity and transformation, and the balance between feminist and invitational approaches to GBSV prevention.

Indigenous Community-Led Approaches

It is important to first recognize and celebrate examples of Indigenous community and healing-centred approaches to GBSV prevention and intervention as there is much to learn from this work. Considering my earlier note about the impossibilities of “stopping violence before it happens,” Indigenous-led approaches often model how understandings of colonization are foundational to imagining violence prevention. Here, we see how “intervention” and “prevention” are not distinct; rather, integrating healing practices that recognize the harms of intergenerational trauma via the white supremacist, colonial, imperialist, capitalist, carceral, cisheteropatriarchy must happen alongside work that asks men to challenge their internalization and imposition of these ideas on women and girls.

Kaagegaabaw (2023) describes the Seven Grandfather Teachings as derived from the Iroquois tradition, whereby Deganawidah told the Iroquois peoples to think seven generations into the future during every deliberation and decision. These teachings span across numerous Indigenous communities within Turtle Island and are found in many of their histories, including in the teachings of the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin Initiative. Also known as “I Am A Kind Man,” this initiative seeks to engage Indigenous men and children in ending violence against Indigenous women and girls (Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, n.d.). First, this program applies Indigenous approaches to healing by recognizing how all Indigenous

peoples are uniquely affected by the histories and ongoing practices of colonization, such as through experiences of shared trauma. By applying a holistic approach, the program aims to take into account all aspects of creation to imagine healing across all facets of personhood and community. Second, Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin engages in public awareness campaigns across Turtle Island to raise consciousness among Indigenous men and boys about violence against Indigenous women and girls, specifically by focusing on creating safer spaces for men to understand their roles in this issue and come together to make collective change. And third, this initiative draws on the Seven Grandfather Teachings to guide a twelve-week group program for Indigenous men who remain committed to ending gender-based violence. Currently, Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin is offered in 26 different sites across Ontario and has been celebrated as a significant response to GBSV via interrogating white supremacist, colonial, cisheteropatriarchy and its ongoing harms through community-based healing and collaborative action (Anderson, Innes, & Swift, 2012; Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, n.d.).

The Moose Hide Campaign serves as another critical example of Indigenous-led projects to raise awareness about ending GBSV. The initiative was co-founded in 2011 by Paul Lacerte (of the Nadleh Whuten Band and belonging to the Carrier First Nation) and his daughter, Raven Lacerte (of the Lake Babine First Nation and belonging to the Bear Clan), while they were on a moose hunt near BC's Highway of Tears, where several Indigenous women and girls have gone missing along the stretch of Highway 16. Together, they decided to use pins made of small squares of moose hide to symbolize (re)connection to Indigenous tradition (i.e. how the moose hunt is a kind of knowledge passing between generations that the residential school system sought to erase) and the commitment to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls, much of which is happening on the Highway of Tears within their Carrier territory. The Moose

Hide has come to represent “[a] commitment to take action in honour of women and children everywhere, and a symbol of honouring Indigenous medicine and belonging that is here to stay” (Moose Hide Campaign, n.d., para.13). Since its inception, the campaign has grown to a nationwide initiative that engages Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the collective movement to end GBSV. The Moose Hide Campaign continues to demonstrate the significance of drawing on Indigenous medicine and healing practices alongside collective mobilization to name the interconnected forces of white supremacist, colonial cisheteropatriarchy and commit to meaningful action to address GBSV, colonization, racism, and its interrelated harms.

The Warriors Program from the Victoria Native Friendship Centre offers three iterations of its programming that seek to engage Indigenous men, women, and children in reflective conversations about the harms of colonization and their relationship with family violence. The Young Warriors program consists of six weeks dedicated to empowerment and six weeks dedicated to connection for Indigenous children aged seven to twelve to explore strong emotions, intervene in bullying, express boundaries, build and sustain healthy relationships, and connect to their Indigenous identities and communities. There are also two Awakening the Warrior Within programs, both of which are four-week programs for Indigenous women and men; both seek to aid Indigenous men and women in identifying, defining, examining, and confronting the cycle of family violence, gaining and (re)claiming a sense of self, connecting to their community, and collectively imagining what a community free from violence would look, sound, and feel like. These groups respect and honour Indigenous peoples’ experiences of family, intergenerational, and colonial violence, while also seeking to mobilize their imaginings to create and sustain futures without violence (Victoria Native Friendship Centre, 2025).

There are many other important examples of Indigenous-led approaches to violence intervention and prevention, all of which bring resurgence, decolonial, and transformative visionings to violence intervention and prevention. Many of these approaches are rendered marginal or alternative by western colonial institutions and worldviews, while they actually represent a significant departure from the punitive and binary thinking inherent within the white supremacist, colonial, carceral, cisheteropatriarchal state. Here, there is an appreciation of how we can both survive and enact the violence of the state, simultaneously and in contradiction, with a continued emphasis on how GBSV is a symptom of structural oppression and violence. There is continued risk and concern of such approaches being (mis)appropriated by non-Indigenous communities and institutions, which maintains critical concerns regarding deradicalization, sanitization, white-washing, and depoliticization of foundational teachings that seek to name and interrogate colonial violence. However, exploring the efficacy and importance of such initiatives demonstrates that what has been rendered “alternative” *should* be readily integrated into the mainstream as they are foundational to building communities free from violence.

Gender-Specific and Transformative

There is demonstrated efficacy in “gender-specific” and “gender-transformative” programming, which refers to those that both aim to explore the socialization of masculinity and the unique roles that men have in ending GBSV in their communities (Carmody, Salter, & Presterudstuen, 2014; Casey et al, 2018; Flood, 2019). This kind of programming operates under the assumption that, in order to facilitate men’s investment in the issue, anti-violence work must engage with and reflect their experiences, insights, concerns, and motivations and be relevant specifically to men. In line with primary prevention, gender-transformative approaches seek to examine and unpack how gender roles and expectations interact with individual attitudes, beliefs,

and behaviours to facilitate GBSV (Peacock & Barker, 2014; Carline, Gunby, & Taylor, 2018; Casey et al, 2018). They also critically analyze how social norms can be challenged and reimagined among men peer groups to facilitate more positive intentions to intervene when harm happens. Prevention efforts that critically explore the social construction of gender and its lived realities in western socialization and men's everyday social interactions, such as within Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, are more effective in shifting men's perspectives of GBSV than those that are generalist or agender (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015; Casey et al, 2018).

Casey et al (2018) describe that gender-transformative interventions can span across all stages of the program, ranging from initial outreach to sustained action after the program is completed. Attending to men's unique experiences – including what motivates *and* inhibits them from participating in anti-violence work – is an essential practice to elicit and sustain engagement. As many note, understanding and addressing men's defensive impulses and potential resistance to prevention work should be a central part of our approach to build spaces where men can be open, honest, and vulnerable (Pease, 2008; Casey, 2010; Casey et al, 2018). However, there remains an underlying tension between empathizing with these responses and appreciating men's unique roles in GBSV prevention while also avoiding decentering feminist goals of the group in favour of coddling men and the reification and perpetuation of biologically essentialist ideas that are reliant on positioning men as intellectually and physically superior and, therefore, more effective in preventing GBSV (Jordan, 2019; Flood, 2020).

The Feminist Tightrope

Expanding further on gender-specific programming, anti-violence work with men is shown to be more effective at eliciting and sustaining their engagement when it undertakes a

strength-based and allyship-driven approach (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Peacock & Barker, 2014; Sharma, 2019). Specifically, framing men as potential allies or bystanders with the potential to make a positive change, including messaging about men's roles in confronting GBSV, is better received and more likely to increase participation. Such approaches have been shown to bolster motivation and minimize defensive responses (Casey, 2010; Carmody, Salter, & Presterudstuen, 2014; Ray et al, 2024). As Casey (2010) claims, framing men as “part of the problem” (p.268) as opposed to part of the solution might counterproductively facilitate backlash, refusal to participate, and groupthink among other men that inhibits progress in programming. Contrastingly, maintaining an allyship framing – where men are embraced as necessary actors in GBSV prevention – can more readily connect them to broader feminist, social justice movements and inspire further participation beyond singular interventions (Flood, 2015; Casey et al, 2018).

I can appreciate the efficacy of this approach and the significance of invitational strategies to ensure that men enter and stay in anti-violence spaces. However, as I have written about elsewhere (Brockbank, 2023), there is an unresolvable tension between strengths-based approaches and ensuring that the work is accountable to feminist goals of GBSV prevention, including challenging misogyny and ending violence. I have named this the “feminist tightrope.” Aligned with this analysis, others have emphasized that gender-transformative work with men must be explicitly and continuously connected to the broader feminist project of gender equity by confronting the practices of cisheteropatriarchy (Pease, 2008; Flood, 2020). For example, a focus on applauding men's willingness to participate in allyship efforts and essentializing healthy “masculine” traits (e.g. leadership, strength, etc.) might lead to a refusal to recognize how men benefit from and perpetuate harm (Pease, 2008; Casey, 2010).

Anti-Carceral Possibilities

There is a growing demand for anti-violence work to maintain systemic analysis of the conditions that facilitate GBSV and divest from the carceral state and its operations in responding to GBSV (Kim, 2018; Taylor, 2018). What is significant in this literature is documenting and analyzing the possibilities that emerge from anti-carceral approaches, particularly in reframing GBSV as a symptom of white supremacist cisheteropatriarchy and, therefore, deploying more humanizing and compassionate responses that focus on care, community accountability, and prevention. For example, Godderis and Root (2017) deploy anti-carceral logics in their discussion of reframing GBSV as a collective responsibility with structural roots rather than an individual concern requiring penal interventions. While they and some others who have written in this way do not explicitly identify their work as anti-carceral, they emphasize the need for alternative, imaginative responses that recognize the influence of both systemic oppression and community accountability in GBSV and its prevention (Godderis & Root, 2017; Carey et al, 2022; Ostridge, 2025). However, there continues to be an apparent divide between works that identify collective accountability and those that deliberately identify and name men's unique positionings in GBSV prevention.

There are examples of anti-carcerality being theorized and practiced by scholars, activists, and service providers within the context of anti-GBSV work with men. For example, Ilea (2018) offered a decarceral approach to working with people who have used sexual violence in the Circles for Support and Accountability (CoSA) program, which centres the prevention of recidivism via holistic, multi-systemic, and integrated supports, like housing, mental health, income, substance use, peer support, and other community services. Many primary prevention initiatives for men enact the same principles via meeting men where they are at in the various

systems that they interact with daily (e.g. schools, athletics, workplaces, etc.), integrating systemic analyses of cisheteropatriarchy and how they affect our beliefs and behaviours, and demonstrating solidarity with interconnected social justice issues for the purposes of pursuing collective liberation (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Casey et al, 2018; Flood, 2020). As Pease (2008) notes, such work requires a commitment and accountability to its feminist origins, which then creates pathways for more humanizing, empathic, and narrative approaches.

Heiner and Tyson (2017) aptly summarize the best practices and most effective strategies for comprehensive violence prevention, which includes:

Envisag[ing] the accountability of (1) the individual aggressor(s); (2) the community at large for the practices and discourses that cultivate a climate conducive or productive of gender violence (including rape culture, everyday misogyny, and the denial of leadership roles to women, transgender, and gender queer people); (3) violent, colonial, white supremacist, and [cis]heteropatriarchal social and state institutions; (4) the community accountability process itself; and (5) the survivor(s). (p.18)

While it appears to be a significant task, anti-carceral feminism is fundamentally concerned with and committed to creating communities where we all exercise responsibility for consent, care, accountability, and support. Here, the voices and perspectives of the community, the survivor, and the person who caused harm are all considered; simultaneously, a critical analysis of the carceral state and its violence is emphasized as an integral part of our response. Such approaches are deeply rooted in Indigenous epistemologies and restorative justice, which are responses to social issues and interpersonal harms that centre community accountability and healing (Stubbs, 2009; Hewitt, 2016). Accountability – a tenuous concept that is often synonymized with

punishment in the carceral state – is then reimagined as a collective labour of care, community, and community-building.

Gaps in the Literature

In my engagement with the literature on the best practices for engaging men in GBSV prevention programming, I have observed a gap in the effective integration of explicitly anti-carceral and structural perspectives within primary prevention efforts with men. What tends to be missing from the research on best practices for engaging men in GBSV prevention is an interrogation of the carceral state's violence and imagining solutions to the issue outside of its operations. Namely, even in our efforts to create spaces aligned with best practices – such as those facilitated by and for only men – we might perpetuate the misogynistic dynamics that allow GBSV to thrive (Pease, 2008; Casey, 2010). For example, men's continued assertions in the research that men facilitators and men co-participants are preferred is a logical argument for creating the conditions where men can speak openly and honestly (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2018; Casey et al, 2018). However, it simultaneously suggests that men would not value, appreciate, or support women's participation, which is often rooted in misogynistic perspectives of women's believability, knowledge, and skill (Tyagi, 2006; Dheensa et al, 2024; Seymour, Wendt, & Goudie, 2025).

Furthermore, attending to men's unique experiences, concerns, and roles in this work requires both a systemic analysis of the structures that facilitate violence *and* an understanding of how men embody and enact oppression in their everyday experiences, including during their participation in feminist anti-violence work. Some have grappled with these tensions, particularly in thinking about how GBSV prevention must attend to interrelated experiences of racism, classism, ableism, and anti-queer and anti-trans sentiments (e.g. Lorenzetti & Walsh,

2022; Edwards et al, 2023; Sutherland et al, 2024; Wright, Falek, & Greenberg, 2024). bell hooks (2004) is often credited for introducing analyses of the harms of patriarchy against men and the need for more attentive and compassionate understandings of how the white supremacist, colonial, capitalist state has hurt men. However, there is space for further discussion of these dynamics within the context of the carceral state and how men can be both state actors and victims (Levine & Meiners, 2020). This tension has evoked ongoing questions for me about how to merge the individualized praxis of GBSV prevention with more structural analyses of the issue. Further, I wonder about reframing accountability within this programming; rather than depicting it as an individualized practice whereby men in these programs need to confront their complicities in GBSV, how can it be framed as a community responsibility that still attends to intersectional perspectives and the gender-transformative themes of this work?

While it has been explored in the literature, there continue to be gaps in best practices for striking the balance between accountability-driven and strengths-based approaches in anti-violence work with men. As I have written about before (Brockbank, 2023), I worry about how excessive focus on men's experiences of harm within the carceral state might facilitate a space where men are unwilling to or uninterested in interrogating their own complicity with the state and its symptom of GBSV. Some notable efforts have been documented to caution this practice and call out this dynamic, although the carceral state is not centred in the analysis (e.g. Flood, Dragiewicz, & Pease, 2020; Burrell, 2023; Ging et al, 2024). Returning to this examination of complicity, I am curious about how the literature can expand to be more vigilant about how prioritizing men's comfort over feminist analyses of GBSV can counterintuitively design and facilitate a space where men are reluctant to reflect, be challenged on their internalization and practice of misogyny and violence, and consider how the carceral state protects and facilitates

complicity on systemic and interpersonal levels. Simultaneously, avoiding deterministic or fatalistic analyses that position men as inevitably harmful can allow for collaborative reimagination and exploration of community accountability, care, and building spaces where GBSV is not normalized (Pease, 2008; Flood, 2020).

As I wade into my dissertation project, I am inspired by the works of anti-carceral feminists and aim to give credit to their foundational imaginings of what violence prevention is and could be. While it is not often explicitly discussed in the literature labelled as abolitionist, anti-carceral feminist theorizing is deeply concerned with prevention and has been pivotal to imagining alternative approaches that seek to get to the root of GBSV, implicate the community in response, and ultimately stop violence before it happens (Kim, 2018; Taylor, 2018; Davis et al, 2022). Put simply, anti-carceral feminism's vision for violence prevention deliberately shifts away from individual responsibility and pushes us toward community and collective accountability where we share the pursuit for liberation and creating a better world. Simultaneously, I intend to offer an expansion and bridging of this work to engaging men and boys in primary prevention efforts via feminist participatory action work within the western, colonial, cisheteropatriarchal postsecondary institution.

In my engagement with the literature, anti-carcerality and abolitionism are often positioned as decriminalizing efforts that specifically contend with police and prisons, while prevention literature is positioned as a public health and social intervention. Instead, I would like to name that prevention *is* an anti-carceral imagining, which some have explored in emerging research (D'Avolio, Cavalcanti, & Dadusc, 2023; Battle & Powell, 2024; Palmer, 2025). Furthermore, I would like to contribute to analyses of carceral logics, like campus control and institutional betrayal, to discuss how anti-carceral GBSV prevention work contends with and

combats these concepts in ways that could pave a better path for justice, safety, accountability, and community care. The possibilities of the collaboration between anti-carceral feminisms and gender-transformative GBSV prevention with men are numerous, including informed and effective approaches to challenging men's complicity within a violent state, filling identified gaps within existing service provision, and readily integrating the observations, concerns, and goals of men in anti-violence work to bolster and sustain men's engagement in feminist projects.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter summarized key themes from the breadth of literature on GBSV prevention with men within the carceral state. First, I provided a snapshot of GBSV on Ontarian and Canada postsecondary campuses, including how prevention efforts have been critiqued for perpetuating the very problems they aim to address. Second, I explored three carceral logics that permeate anti-violence work within PSIs, such as how campus control actively facilitates institutional betrayal and both systemic and individual complicity with GBSV. Third, I reviewed three best practices that have been discussed in the literature on engaging men and boys to ground the central commitments of my dissertation project and connect back to challenging carceral logics. Finally, I briefly outlined the anti-carceral possibilities that have been headed up by abolitionist feminists and how my project offers a pathway between this work and men's primary prevention programming. The purpose of this literature review is to credit and contribute to the significant work that has been done by feminist anti-violence scholars and practitioners, while also explicitly drawing the connection between anti-carceral feminism and violence prevention.

Chapter 3: Epistemological Framework

This chapter offers my epistemological approach to envisioning my dissertation research. I have been doing anti-violence work in my community for what feels like a very long time, and my dissertation is a scaffolded labour of love that has built on my ongoing commitments to GBSV prevention work with men. I have been pursuing feminist thinking since I began my education and have grown exponentially in my understanding of anti-violence work both in research, service provision, and community organizing. I begin with a brief review of my journey into feminist thinking, which has comprised of over a decade of formative experiences, epiphanies, and evolutions. I then shift into discussing how I approached my dissertation project in a way that reflects where I am currently positioned in my perspective of GBSV. I then explore three central theoretical lenses – Foucault, critical and postmodern feminism, and anti-carceral feminism – to describe the wealth of scholarship that informs how I imagined the project. I then discuss the application of these frameworks to my research, and I conclude with how they naturally bridge into articulating my methodological approach.

Chronicling My Journey of Feminist Thinking

As I complete my tenth year of consecutive postsecondary education, I find it prudent to briefly recall my journey toward and through various iterations of a feminist epistemology and politic. From my earliest memories, my mom named me her “little social justice warrior.” I have always felt compelled by the immense possibilities of social change and the necessity of maintaining a critical and sociostructural perspective of social problems. Of course, my lexicon and understanding has expanded significantly since I was a child, but what remains is a staunch commitment to challenging violence and oppression in its various forms and operations.

When it comes to the beginnings of my feminist journey, I do not ever remember explicitly proclaiming a feminist identity until high school and, even then, I hesitated to use the term. I believe that this is a shared experience for many young women who fear scrutiny, exclusion, hostility, rejection, and violence for self-identifying with feminist interests. I grew up in the suburban city of Burlington, Ontario, and I attended a high school located in an affluent neighbourhood housing predominantly white families. Throughout my high school student tenure, athletic, young, white men dominated the social chain, and gender-based and sexually violent ideas were deeply normalized. Every week for nearly four years, I heard rape jokes in the hallways. I overheard, in whispers deliberately spoken when teachers were out of earshot, the details of hazing rituals that the hockey team used yearly, one of which included an act that was demonstrably sexually coercive to young women. I was subjected to fairly consistent and harmful comments about my body, appearance, interests, perceived romantic and sexual experience, speculated sexual orientation, and social status, an experience in which many of my young women peers shared.

The moment that I can identify most clearly as my first step toward the work that I do now was in my twelfth grade English class. We were tasked to write a research paper on a topic of our choosing. Exhausted by the unchallenged social culture of my school, I wrote a paper titled “The LG Hunt: The Normalization of Rape Culture.” It was inspired by a trend that I had recently learned about as the head of a student mentorship program, where upper-year boys had dubbed the sexual pursuit of grade nine girls as the “little girl hunt.” Many of these boys were in leadership positions in the mentorship program and their own athletic teams and extracurricular clubs. They were hailed as popular, likeable, and attractive, and they were rarely challenged by school administrators for their behaviour. Such power was evidently being abused to, in what

they described, “prey” on younger students with less social influence, control, and power. I felt powerless; in my own leadership position, I felt like I was failing the girls under my supervision. My English teacher expressed her admiration for my paper, but by the time I had graduated, the rape culture that I wrote of had remained untouched and unchallenged. Administration continued to dismiss it under the adage of “boys will be boys” and as a natural product of teenage dating.

I tell this story to provide the context that served as a foundational for my journey into feminist thinking. I began from a place of outrage, an all-too-common experience for many budding feminists. I also maintained a desire for retribution; I was upset that the boys who had made my high school experience so uncomfortable and hurtful had walked away unscathed, unreflective, and unpunished. I was angry that women had to constantly think about, experience, and face long-lasting impacts of GBSV, while men seemingly did not have to think or care about these issues despite perpetrating, perpetuating, or failing to intervene and prevent them. Such an epistemological framing stayed with me as I entered my first years of undergraduate education at McMaster University. When taking a feminist social work course with Dr. Saara Greene in my second year, I was struck by labour that women were undertaking to lead feminist projects pushing for microlevel and macrolevel changes, as described by several guest speakers. I was incensed that men were seemingly absent from this conversation. I drew on the works of Jackson Katz to inform my ongoing frustration. When men are overrepresented as perpetrators of GBSV, why is GBSV framed as an issue for women to discuss, address, challenge, and solve?

During my Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA) project, I was motivated by an intense curiosity about how men perceive and understand these issues. Undertaking a generalist feminist theorizing, I published my first paper (Brockbank, 2019) on how men university student participants constructed a mythological “grey area” between consensual and non-consensual

sexual experiences, which was made murky by various factors, such as substance use, miscommunication, previous sexual history, and gendered scripting that position men as needing to be the one to negotiate and obtain consent. I wrote from the position that I describe above; I was deeply critical of their understandings and remained firm in an assertion that the myth of the “grey area” is deliberately invoked by men to distance themselves from practicing accountability for causing harm. However, I also began to think about what I later named “the feminist tightrope” in another chapter (Brockbank, 2023): as an emerging social work practitioner in anti-violence work, I wondered about how to navigate the perilous balance between framing interpersonal accountability for men around harm, while also recognizing and appreciating that they, too, are tangled up in the harms of cisheteropatriarchy.

As I progressed into my MSW thesis research, I brought new experiences that continued to (re)shape my feminist theorizing. I had just finished a fourth-year placement facilitating the Partner Assault Response (PAR) Program, where I became deeply jaded about the state of anti-violence services. I was unsettled by the framing that underpins mandated programming; I saw how shame-based tactics to service provision further alienated men from the work and counterproductively motivated them to resist practicing the accountability that we sought. Paired with my contrasting experiences in men’s allyship spaces, where the assumption was that the men participating had not caused harm and were to be celebrated for their engagement, my thinking began to shift. During my MSW research, I invited men into a focus group to unpack existing anti-violence efforts with the goal of understanding what engages and/or disengages men from conversations about GBSV. I was drawn to more participatory approaches to service provision and design as I felt that men needed to be included in imagining anti-violence work in order for it to have a wider reach and a more tangible impact on those it was trying to engage.

I arrive at my current theoretical position, again, carrying experiences and lessons that have evolved my perspectives further in the last five years since I finished my MSW. Since beginning my PhD, I have managed a public education portfolio for a VAW organization that engaged men of varying ages and locations, ranging from teenage hockey players to skilled tradesmen. I have been involved in community movements to defund, disarm, dismantle, and abolish the police, with a particular focus on how the criminal punishment system perpetuates the issue of GBSV while claiming to be the most effective solution. I have continued to write about GBSV and shift my feminist identity; in my doctoral course on theory, I engaged with Foucault for the first time, which led me to anti-carceral feminisms. I was particularly compelled by what such approaches offered my navigation of “the feminist tightrope,” where a necessary structural analysis of oppressive systems within white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy can occur at the same time as we (re)imagine approaches to addressing interpersonal harms.

It is interesting to offer a retrospective of over a decade of my feminist epistemological evolution. I still find myself angry at men’s violence (and often, frankly, I am angry at men), but I have moved away from a desire to punish as I have seen firsthand how it perpetuates the cycle of harm that anti-violence activists are trying to break. Instead, I recall how impactful it was to hear Angela Davis talk about how we can come up with more imaginative and caring approaches to social problems that do not focus on alienating people, locking them up, and/or punishing them. Imagining anti-violence work *as* prevention is deeply aligned with this frame of thinking and reaffirms my commitment to this work.

Approaching this Project

In imagining this dissertation project, I returned to what I felt most compelled by and curious about. I credit an article authored by Benibo & Briond (2019) that cites a “mythological

dichotomy” between “good” and “bad” men, a binary that underpins much of mainstream discourse around accountability, harm, and men’s relationships with systems of oppression. This dynamic mirrors that of the “bad apple” narrative frequently deployed within the carceral state to justify its violence, which intentionally frames any police violence deemed “unacceptable” as a result of individual officer pathology, moral deficit, or character failure and not as a result of operating within a violent system. When individuals are identified as deviant, abnormal, creepy, violent, or bad, the state’s role in creating the conditions for GBSV to occur on a microlevel is erased, thus allowing non-criminalized people to enact and benefit from the state’s gaze and the state to remain operating unchallenged. However, a historiographical account of GBSV would indicate that an overreliance on carceral dichotomies between “good” and “bad” do not actually contribute to changing and redressing GBSV and, rather, perpetuate central issues related to men’s ambivalence toward and rejection of their role in violence prevention.

As I embark on articulating a framework to guide my dissertation, my theorizing around GBSV has consistently sought to flip the “feminist script” that has taken up carceral, individualized approaches to violence, which has historically framed violence prevention as a concern for women to respond to. A formative quote for me around social change and social justice research is derived from the works of Susan George and paraphrased by Kirby and McKenna (2004): “research concerned with social change should focus on the rich and powerful and not those on the margins” (p.72). My research attempts to actualize this reflection by focusing explicitly on men’s overrepresentation as perpetrators and/or as agents of various forms of authority to emphasize how men often maintain the power to make material changes (Powell & Henry, 2014; Flood, 2019). Here, men cannot distance themselves from violence because their proximity to cisheteropatriarchy demands attention to the interplay between their everyday

experiences and the systems/structures that they are in relationship with that are actively facilitating violence (Benibo & briond, 2019; Flood, 2020; Burrell, 2023). However, a microlevel analysis is also insufficient; it requires a balance between also acknowledge the systems and structures that position men in these ways and perpetrate violence at a macrolevel, such as through policy, structure, organization, and service.

My theoretical perspective seeks to introduce critical and anti-carceral feminist imaginings into the research, where we push beyond our current frameworks to address GBSV and pursue alternatives that do not reify carceral power (Davis et al, 2022). In undertaking such an approach, I am (re)examining central concepts within anti-violence work, such as “accountability” and “allyship,” to challenge hyperindividualizing discourses that evade attentions to GBSV as a state violence. Situated within the context of doing a project with men postsecondary students, the academic institution is a cog in the machine of the carceral state; this conceptualization necessarily reframes our interrogation of primary prevention efforts on campus and introduces a critical perspective whereby men students can understand anti-violence work in context (e.g. the neoliberal institution as leading anti-violence work that is generalist, agender, astructural, etc.). Further, undertaking an anti-carceral feminist approach contributes to the wealth of foundational scholarship as it makes a clear connection between longstanding feminist understandings of cisheteropatriarchy and GBSV, while also carving out another approach that confronts existing tensions about gender, race, and the contentious histories of carcerality in feminist responses to the issue (Taylor, 2018; Terwiel, 2020; Brockbank & Greene, 2022).

Troubling White Womanhood and My Positionality

As I alluded to in the introductory chapter, there is rightful concern about white women in social justice projects and practices, particularly when considering the histories and ongoing

legacies of white women leading social work interventions that dispossessed, displaced, and violated Black, Indigenous, and racialized peoples from their families and communities. I credit the teachings and reflections of Stephanie Jones-Rogers in telling the history of white women as slaveholders of Black persons in the American South, Jane Haggis in noting how white British women missionaries in South India were agents of colonization, and Sam Grey in naming how global “sisterhood” via feminist organizing consistently essentializes, erases, and marginalizes Indigenous women and Native identities. These tensions inevitably position white women as fundamentally unsafe, violent, appropriative, and entangled in the white supremacist, colonial, carceral, cisheteropatriarchal state as agents and benefactors of the systems that continue to oppress, marginalize, and violate Black, Indigenous, and racialized peoples. Such a recognition does not erase white women’s experiences of GBSV under the state, but it does trouble the binary thinking that permeates much of our conceptualization of what “counts” as violence and who we see as (un)deserving of care or punishment.

As such, my engagement with anti-carceral feminist thinking necessitates a consideration of how my white womanhood has benefitted from and enacted carceral logics and the prison industrial complex. As Phipps (2016, 2021) notes, white women have frequently invoked innocence, danger, tears, and victimhood to extend, strengthen, and reify carceral technologies, such as through increasing penal responses to GBSV and fortifying laws against sex trafficking. I have written about this extensively in a previous work (Brockbank, 2023), where I identified how white women have contributed to the “Brute Caricature” of the “Other” who is responsible for GBSV that relies on anti-Black racist, colonial, sanist, classist, and ableist imagery. The criminal punishment system has been largely co-constructed and upheld by white women; the image of the innocent, white, feminine damsel justifies the perceived necessity of the carceral

state in responding to violence in order to “protect” white women, white children, and the white nuclear family.

Anti-carceral feminist thinking and imagining remains firmly rooted in Black women’s advocacy, many of whom are survivors of both interpersonal iterations of GBSV and the harm of the carceral state. As a white woman, it is troubling for me to readily engage with and apply abolitionist concepts as I represent much of the resistance to these ideals in my proximity to white cisheteropatriarchy and white women’s participation in its operations. I do not name these tensions to absolve myself or present a reason for why I deserve to use such an approach; rather, I think that this tension is unresolvable as my complicity is inevitable and intrinsic to my identity as a white woman. However, I respectfully engage with and honour anti-carceral feminist thinking as I do not view it as “alternative” or “marginal.” Instead, I aim to mobilize it into mainstream iterations of violence prevention work as it brings a necessary lens to recognizing the interrelationship between state violence and GBSV, while also readily identifying its origins in the white supremacist, colonial, carceral, cisheteropatriarchal state.

Starting with Foucault

What inspired me to pursue anti-carceral approaches to my research was wading into Foucauldian conceptualizations of the prison system and how feminists have taken up and challenged his work. Before I begin, I would be remiss to fail to acknowledge Foucault’s alleged sexual abuse of boys during his time in Tunisia. I credit a piece by Guesmi (2021), which provides this history, critically examines the erasure of these allegations at its intersection with dehumanization of the colonized, and recognizes that his foundational work remains significant in critical theorizing about power and sexuality. In a dissertation about GBSV, it is important to both name these harms *and* credit the work that informs my thinking.

Foucault asserts that the carceral system fails to rehabilitate prisoners and reduces criminal acts to those that are independent of social context, social positioning, and social mobility (Foucault, 1977; Taylor, 2019). However, Foucault also notes that prisons have become indispensable and useful to the biopolitical state. As Taylor (2019) describes in her analysis:

Foucault argues that taking an unruly population of occasional lawbreakers and turning them into recidivist, pathologized offenders, has depoliticized crime. Put otherwise, the rationale behind prisons has made crime a psychiatric and sociological issue, rather than a political issue. (p.123)

In the process of constructing criminality as an individualized, pathological concern, the state exercises a kind of disciplinary power; in an effort to avoid deviant labels, people learn to both police themselves and police others, thus framing the carceral system as efficient in separating those deemed “deviant” from those deemed “normal” (Foucault, 1977; Deveaux, 1994; Taylor, 2019).

These notions of disciplinary power and the construction of the abnormal criminal are especially relevant for some of my theorizing around men’s violence. As Foucault (1977) describes in his *Panopticism* chapter:

Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.). [...] All the mechanisms of power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to

brand him and to alter him, are composed of those two forms from which they distantly derive. (p.198)

Here, binary division and coercive assignment work in tandem: the dichotomization between “normal” and “abnormal” individuals determines who, where, and how a person is to operate within society. Those labelled as “abnormal” are incarcerated, alienated, and isolated from society under the claim that it is to keep society safer. Those who are constructed as “normal” are granted a kind of freedom and mobility that evades the abnormal; however, they are subject to a parallel panoptic gaze that facilitates the internalization of surveillance and the externalization of the disciplinary surveillance of others (Foucault, 1977). I would argue that, in these processes of disciplinary power, people learn to internalize the binary between “normal” and “abnormal,” thus propagating specific conceptualizations of what is “good” and what is “bad” as it relates to their own identities and choices (e.g. the “normal” individual determining what is “normal”).

To link this more intentionally to the discussion of men’s violence, men often position themselves as “non-violent” and, therefore, not “bad” regardless of their uses of violence (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Rich et al, 2010; Dagirmanjian et al, 2017). For example, Rich et al’s (2010) study, which surveyed men college students in the United States, indicated that participants tended to “Other” perpetrators of sexual violence and distanced themselves from perpetuating rape culture on campus despite their survey answers reading as quite supportive of and sympathetic to violence. For men who have been criminalized for violent offences, researchers identified various strategies that men deployed to justify, euphemize, explain, and/or construct their behaviour as unlike that of “woman batterers,” “child abusers,” “pedophiles,” or “rapists” (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Goodrum, Umberson, & Anderson, 2001; Stokoe, 2010; Roy, Châteauvert, & Richard, 2013; Dagirmanjian et al, 2017). For instance, men identified their

violence as a justified response to disrespect, provocation, loss of control, and/or feeling unsafe, or they placed blame on their intimate partners (or other victims) for the assault (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Goodrum, Umberson, & Anderson, 2001; Kelly & Westmorland, 2016; Dagirmanjian et al, 2017).

In this process, “normal” violence (whether that be physical or verbal) is framed as a necessary demonstration or performance of masculinity related to obtaining and retaining social status, respect, safety, control within an intimate partner relationship, and identity. Conversely, violence perpetrated against those deemed “deserving” of it is framed as a necessary intervention or a reflection of men’s instincts to protect and assert dominance or control. Contrastingly, physical and sexual violence against “innocent” women and children that is seen as without cause is deemed deviant, abnormal, and unacceptable (Goodrum, Umberson, & Anderson, 2001; Rich et al, 2010; Kelly & Westmorland, 2016; Dagirmanjian et al, 2017). The perception of “innocence” is an important distinction; women who are seen as violent, untrustworthy, dangerous, or provocative (physically and sexually) are often seen to be deserving of harm and “unbelievable” (Higgins & Banet-Weiser, 2023). Furthermore, Stokoe (2010) notes in her exploration of men’s responses to police interrogation for charges related to intimate partner violence, men claim that they are “not the abusive type [or] not a violent person” (p.60) regardless of their engagement with or perpetration of violence along its spectrum of varied belief, language, and behaviour.

While these contradictions are confusing and difficult to both differentiate and navigate, men’s desire to position themselves as unlike “woman batterers,” “rapists,” or “pedophiles” – the constructed, deviant, violent “Other” – reflects the kinds of disciplinary power that Foucault references as governing categorizations of normality and abnormality. As this relates to my

research with non-criminalized men, their impulses to self-identify as “good,” “normal,” and “non-violent” pose significant challenges to breaking down these redundant binaries between “good” and “bad” men. Violence is a spectrum that men, by virtue of their proximity to cisheteropatriarchy, contribute to and benefit from; it cannot be reduced to only physical or sexual manifestations of violence (Katz, 2006; Benibo & briond, 2019; Flood, 2019). It is comparable to anti-racist education that communicates how white people cannot distance themselves from the harms of white supremacy, which is a necessary comparison when considering GBSV as a project and product of white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy. Abolitionist scholars have necessarily called attention to these dynamics and the inseparable and interconnected nature of these harms (Kim, 2018; Davis et al, 2022; Davis, 2024). I have written about this relationship previously, where it is important to trace the genealogy of white supremacy as the foundation for GBSV as it permeates our perceptions and responses and re-entrenches carceral logics about how we understand the issue, including what “counts” as violence and who we see as “perpetrators” and “survivors” (Brockbank, 2023). In summary, by constructing themselves as “good” and “non-violent,” men simultaneously distance themselves and disengage from accountability for the issue of GBSV and perpetuate harmful conceptualizations these issues, which frequently rely on rape myths that depict perpetrators as criminal, pathological strangers and not as those that we often make and are in community with (Katz, 2006; Gottzén, 2013; Burrell, 2023; Carian, 2024).

Critical and Postmodern Feminisms

Postmodern feminism marks a necessary continuation of and deviation from Foucault’s work by seeking to challenge essentialism, binarism, and objectivism and introduce a necessarily gendered lens to the work. Foundational postmodern feminist thinkers that have waded into this

theorization have openly refused the idea of an innate, biological, and predetermined gendered nature (Hekman, 1990; Sands & Nuccio, 1992; Alcoff, 1997; Beasley, 1999). Instead, postmodern feminists challenge the biological essentialism of gendered identity constructions. They also urge us to examine differences between and among women via rejecting the often confining and dichotomous perspectives of cisheteropatriarchy and racism that permeate the feminist movement and present women as a singular, natural category (Sawicki, 1991; Ramazanoglu, 2002; Udayagiri, 2003).

Postmodern feminists reject the androcentric history of postmodern theorizing, particularly in its failure to meaningfully identify and attend to cisheteropatriarchal power (Hartsock, 1990; Hekman, 1990; Ramazonoglu, 2002). Postmodern feminists have indicated that postmodernism risks disembodiment of power and thus failing to recognize the interconnectedness between power, force, control, and domination within cisheteropatriarchal systems and men's identities (Hartsock, 1990; Deveaux, 1994; Taylor, 2019). As Deveaux (1994) notes in her critique of Foucault, "[t]o define male power as an inherently separable phenomenon from male force and domination, as Foucault would have us do, is to disregard the ways in which this power is frequently transformed into violence" (Deveaux, 1994, p.235). In this process, postmodern feminism urges us to consider the dynamic interplay between power and men's enactment of it, which is a material and lived experience for many women. Additionally, in identifying how power is frequently exercised by men via systems, patterns, and interactions of domination, postmodern feminists also seek to develop a theory of power *for* and *about* women (Hartsock, 1990; Hekman, 1990; Bordo, 1992; Deveaux, 1994; Lee, 2001). Specifically, they aim to understand the dynamics of violence and oppression both within men's power, control, and violence *and* between/among women along the axes of race, sexual orientation, ability, and

class. They urge us to consider the possibilities of women's resistance to power via the pursuit of alternative discourse, which they see as being a rejection of postmodernism's potentially fatalistic perspectives of subjugation (Hartsock, 1990).

We also turn to Black and critical feminisms that seek to explore and construct a historiographical account of what hooks (2000) called white, colonial, imperialist cisheteropatriarchy, which others have expanded to include "the afterlife of slavery" via the carceral state (Dillon, 2016; Collins, 2017). In other words, critical feminisms seek to challenge the sanitized dominant narrative centred in western history to reveal contested, partial, and hidden histories of racism, colonialism, cisheterosexism, and violence. These narratives can be understood at a personal and interpersonal level and at systemic and structural levels. Through rewriting these histories, critical feminisms construct alternative discourses and counter-stories to acknowledge difference, reclaim agency, centre identity and empowerment, and pursue collective mobilization for liberation from oppression (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; INCITE!, 2006; Roth & Chambers, 2019; Sheehy & Nayak, 2020).

Postmodern feminism and critical feminisms focus on challenging western, modernist histories that centre whiteness and cishet manhood and draw binaries between identity markers in order to understand the social and discursive construction of these categories (Williams, 1991; Hekman, 1990; Beasley, 1999; Dillon, 2016). Instead, both approaches seek to uncover and trace partial and hidden genealogies to explore how these binaries and linear accounts have had adverse implications for (marginalized) women by obscuring their unique experiences of violence and oppression. In dismantling grand narratives that reify prescriptive depictions of gender, race, and identity more generally, both theoretical approaches present the possibilities of counter-stories and alternative discourses as emancipatory politics and resistance to power

(Hartsock, 1990; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Dillon, 2016). In the context of my research, such counter-narratives would emerge from men's experiences in GBSV prevention work via an explicitly anti-carceral feminist lens. Both approaches seek to challenge hegemony and celebrate difference, identify and challenge interlocking systems of oppression, and emphasize how relationality is a key praxis that is necessary for the pursuit of liberation.

This approach is especially relevant and helpful for my theorizing as there is a close relationship between critical and postmodern feminisms and anti-carceral feminism in producing counternarratives. The understanding of men's enactment of power via violence is an essential analysis that underpins my approach to the research. Despite working with men in a participatory space to envision GBSV prevention in this project, it is essential to also focus on men's reflections about causing, experiencing, witnessing, benefitting from, failing to intervene in, and/or perpetuating harm. Walking "the feminist tightrope" remains an ongoing practice, where attention to the structural violence of GBSV cannot evade recognition of how men participate in this on a microlevel (Brockbank, 2023). I would argue that anyone participating in GBSV prevention work, including the men themselves, walk this tightrope despite being positioned differently within the discussion.

Furthermore, as Dillon (2016) articulates, the intimacy of abolition via Black and critical feminist theorizing is helpful for naming the types of marginalization that other modes of thought render unthinkable or unknowable. Critical and Black feminists seek to name and make visible the histories and operations of power enacted by interlocking systems of marginalization. Critical and Black feminism also extends postmodern thinking by imagining abolition as a material, epistemological, and intimate action that is necessary and possible through merging critical feminist and postmodern thought. Here, action is essential; critical and Black feminisms seek to

achieve liberation for all from the bottom through creating a new world. Anti-carceral feminism similarly sees transformation through the abolition of the interlocking systems of oppression that facilitate the carceral state and its violence as a shared commitment. This commitment is a central theoretical underpinning that informed the imagining of my doctoral project.

Anti-Carceral Feminism

Necessarily expanding on Foucault, anti-carceral feminism seeks to divest from the carceral state (the interconnected network of punitive systems governing our social lives) and invest in alternative solutions to address GBSV that are rooted in community and care (Kim, 2018; Taylor, 2018; Levine & Meiners, 2020; Davis et al, 2022). Anti-carceral feminism, which is led and imagined by women of colour and survivors of GBSV, has focused on critiques of the carceral state and how GBSV is a symptom of it. In this process, anti-carceral feminists continuously work to (re)politicize feminist anti-violence work, trace the genealogy of the carceral state in creating and sustaining the conditions for GBSV to thrive, and centre the lived experiences of survivors in responding to harm (INCITE!, 2016; Kim, 2018; Taylor, 2019; Davis et al, 2022). Anti-carceral feminists challenge carceral logics about GBSV by identifying state violence as a facilitator of and ineffective response to interpersonal and intimate partner violence (Taylor, 2018; Jacobs et al, 2021; Kim, 2020). For example, anti-carceral feminists have named how, despite being framed as a necessary intervention for GBSV, police often cause harm during their response via surveillance of poor neighbourhoods, dual arrest policies, use of force, separating families, and invoking mandated services (e.g. Children's Aid) that are disruptive and violent, among other issues (Maynard, 2017; Goodmark, 2018; Davis et al, 2022).

As Bergen and Abji (2020) note, anti-carcerality offers “a radical analysis that exposes the carceral logics of colonialism, anti-Blackness, and racism that make specific people and

communities expendable” (p.36). Here, carceral logics refer to constructed dichotomies between “goodness”/“normativity” and “badness”/“deviance” that frame GBSV as an individualized, pathological issue rather than one shaped by and shaping the entire community. While these approaches are framed as foundational to western notions of justice, anti-carceral feminists have argued that they perpetuate GBSV by suggesting that violence is a product of moral failure, individual pathology, evil, or personal deficit. Rather than recognizing how social structures – what bell hooks (2004) calls white, colonial, imperialist (cishetero)patriarchy – facilitate GBSV, carceral logics frame a subset of “deviant” or “criminal” individuals as responsible for violence, thus freeing allegedly “normal” community members from accountability for GBSV (Foucault, 1977; Ahmed, 2013; Taylor, 2018).

Anti-carceral feminism deliberately resists these discourses of GBSV and the implication that carceral interventions (e.g. surveillance and punishment) are effective and necessary responses to harm (Ilea, 2018; Taylor, 2018; Levine & Meiners, 2020). In its current applications, anti-carceral feminism has explored survivors’ and criminalized persons’ experiences of the carceral state, particularly in examining the racialized, gendered, and classed dynamics that shape experiences of and responses to GBSV (Kim, 2018; Taylor, 2018; Davis et al, 2022). However, anti-carceral feminism is emerging in recent scholarship as a necessary framework for examining the discursive carceral logics embedded within how we theorize and talk about violence, although it remains primarily interested in how perpetrators or criminalized persons are framed (Ilea, 2018; Levine & Meiners, 2020; Taylor, 2019).

Anti-carceral feminist theory is deeply concerned with mobilizing into social justice action via rejecting penal responses to social problems, unpacking what has uncritically accepted as “normal” by the state, and constructing alternative discourses that imagine responses beyond

our current frames of thinking (Lawston & Meiners, 2014; Kim, 2018; O'Brien et al, 2020; Leotti, 2021). This process is often a historiographical undertaking, whereby anti-carceral feminists identify and deconstruct the white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchal discourses that underpin mainstream discourse and thought in the west. Further, such an approach is committed to (re)constructing, (re)imagining, and creating counter-narratives, resistance, and partial or erased histories (Kaba, 2021; Davis et al, 2022).

Engagement with anti-carceral feminist approaches to men's violence prevention is a newer approach. Here, I draw on anti-carceral feminist theory to explore how GBSV programs are imbued with carceral logics that shape and/or dictate how we talk about violence and envision preventing it through men's engagement. Frankly, in my experience, the very structure of anti-violence programs tends to subscribe to carceral logics, whereby men who have been criminalized for GBSV are mandated to attend programming and engage in conversations about violence – often guided by the assumption that they have used any and all kinds of violence in their intimate relationships – while those who have never been criminalized are not. When we look at mandated and voluntary services, we also see how violence is differently conceptualized and discussed; however, what remains salient is that “good” men in allyship programs do not have to think about GBSV in the ways that “bad” men in mandated programs must. Within this dynamic, there is a failure to recognize how most perpetrators of GBSV are not arrested, prosecuted, sentenced, and, therefore, mandated to attend such programs (Johnson, 2012; Taylor, 2019). Furthermore, only certain kinds of harm through GBSV are criminalized. What about harm that falls outside of sociolegal construction? What about the everyday instances of harm that create the foundations for GBSV to be tolerated, normalized, excused, justified, and/or protected? Anti-carceral feminism meaningfully attends to these tensions by reframing GBSV as

a community responsibility that requires personalized, responsive interventions to various types of harm along the spectrum of violence.

Application to the Project

Critical, Foucauldian, and anti-carceral feminisms offered me much to consider when imagining my dissertation research. A salient finding within my previous research was how men position themselves in conversations about GBSV, and I was particularly struck by their continued (re)assertions that they, as non-criminalized men who had not perpetrated GBSV, were “good,” “allies,” “normal,” and, therefore, not the necessary audience for anti-violence work. Simultaneously, I was interested in how they seemed to want to be involved in conversations to (re)imagine anti-violence work, but they had little idea about where to start. While I had previously engaged with generalist feminist theory and critical masculinity studies, critical and anti-carceral feminisms feel like a significant and needed approach to navigate the complexities of recognizing men’s experiences of harm within white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy, while also creating space for them to think about how they have caused, perpetuated, and/or failed to intervene in GBSV-related harms and how they can be active parts of the solution and not mere bystanders. This tension is something that I named the “feminist tightrope” in an autoethnographic chapter detailing my experiences of being a woman in anti-violence work with men. As I approach my dissertation project, I want to briefly explore three key concepts from these theorizations to explore how they informed the co-design of the framework.

(Re)Framing Accountability

When imagining approaches to intervening in and redressing harm, accountability is credited as a central motif. In their critical genealogy of the concept, the Pinko Collective (2025), a coalition that publishes and archives scholarship on queer communism, offers historical

accounts of where the term originates in liberatory and progressive organizing as described by those actively involved in social justice movements. Namely, accountability can be traced back to Indigenous communities and Black radical organizing, particularly in opposition to the carceral state's obfuscation and misappropriation of the term as a means to justify punishment and incarceration. However, what is quite compelling about this work is that, even among those organizing together, accountability does not have a singular definition, nor is it accompanied by a tangible roadmap for "how" people can practice it. Nonetheless, these contradictions are not detractors from the importance of the term; rather, they push us to consider the purpose of its invocation, its limitations, and its impacts on our communities.

As the Pinko Collective (2025) reflects in the final section of the book:

Accountability can be a principled moral stance, a nebulous but inspired political vision of loving movements, a commitment to ending and transforming harms within our movement spaces [...] Accountability is a promise to commit ourselves to transforming and learning from each other, to becoming better comrades. (p.201)

Such an account is inherently hopeful and positions the concept as a collective endeavour that is, at times, messy, unspecific, and contextual. Aligned with commitments within transformative justice, abolitionists write about accountability as an active and shared process of reflection, care, connection, healing, and a deliberate resistance to punishment (Cullors, 2018; Mingus, 2019; Kaba, Rice, & Sultan, 2021). As Kaba, Rice, and Sultan (2021) describe, "When we're being accountable to ourselves, we're acting in a way that honors our values. We're acting with integrity by taking responsibility for who we are in the world and for living in alignment with our values [...] It is a gift" (para.9). This framing is a clear and intentional departure from and rejection of the dominant mainstream understandings of and dialogues about accountability for

causing harm, including GBSV, which tends to centre shame, control, punishment, and assignment of (im)morality, such as being “bad” or “evil.” However, as the Pinko Collective (2025) notes, it is quite difficult to imagine accountability to sexual harm, in particular, as it is often accompanied by pain, trauma, and a “rupture” (p.204) between the private and the public, especially when it more often happens between and among people we are in relationship and community with.

In this project, I draw upon the reflections of critical feminists and abolitionists, which posit that accountability is a collective labour of love rather than a practice that should only be practiced by those we deem to have caused harm. In resisting the scripting of accountability as a process of demanding shame, guilt, and remorse from individuals, accountability is instead framed as an interdependent praxis where we all simultaneously (a) recognize our roles in causing or perpetuating harm, (b) create space for reflection, healing, and connection, (c) imagine responses that centre humanity and care for everyone involved, and (d) maintain an analysis of and commitment to challenging systemic and structural violence creating the conditions for interpersonal harm to happen. This approach seeks to begin from an appreciation and understanding of complicity and a rejection of innocence and benevolence, which are paradoxically endemic to helping professions that are tasked with intervening in and preventing GBSV. This endeavour can often be a challenging one; I think back to how I used to view accountability as a demonstration of shame and an experience of consequences, and I have seen such impulses reflected by community members who have been harmed. However, this reframing is essential to my feminist epistemology and to, eventually, creating communities where violence does not happen. As it applies to this project, prevention of GBSV via men’s engagement is a tangible operationalizing of this conceptualization of accountability, whereby all

men are invited to exercise care, reflection, and ownership of responsibility for GBSV rather than only those who have been criminalized for causing interpersonal harm.

The “Good/Bad” Binary of Men’s Allyship

As mentioned previously, carceral approaches to GBSV propagate the mythological dichotomy between “good” and “bad” men, a binary which implicitly suggests that conversations about GBSV are only applicable to some (bad, Othered) men and not to those who self-identify or are identified as “allies” (Rich et al, 2010; Powell & Henry, 2014; Benibo & briond, 2019). This dynamic is one that I, and many, name as a carceral logic, an idea borne from the carceral state that internalizes and extends surveillance, control, punishment, and incarceration as natural and necessary interventions for public safety (Davies, Jackson, & Streeter, 2020; Coyle & Nagel, 2022; Lopez, 2022). In this view, carceral interventions for those we deem “bad” are seen as necessary and as a facilitator of public safety. However, in reality, “badness” is reserved and assigned based on a myriad of racist, sanist, ableist, and oppressive discourses (Ahmed, 2013) and is frequently evaded by those in proximity to white cisheteropatriarchy who also cause harm.

An example to demonstrate this dynamic is the implications of the 2016 Brock Turner case, where the white, cis, straight student athlete who sexually assaulted an incapacitated woman (Chanel Miller, who later publicly identified herself after being initially named a Jane Doe in the media), at Stanford University was deemed by Judge Aaron Persky as a promising young man who demonstrated “genuine remorse” and was not seen to be at risk of recidivism, thus justifying his decision to grant him probation (Levin, 2016). Simultaneously, for those ascribed “badness,” it is often a permanent affixture that perpetuates harms deemed “acceptable” by those who are deemed “good” against the individual, including experiences of violence within incarceration, lifelong criminalization that bars access and restricts movement, and being

subjected to ongoing public vitriol (Ilea, 2018; Levine & Meiners, 2020). Contrastingly, those deemed “good,” which is usually those who are in proximity to white, capitalist, colonial cisheteropatriarchy and are non-criminalized, do not see themselves as responsible for intervening in, preventing, or reflecting on causing, experiencing, and/or witnessing harm.

Aligned with critical and anti-carceral feminist thinking, deconstructing these carceral logics that dichotomize perpetrators and community members in ways that perpetuate the individualization and pathologization of GBSV is an essential practice. As Goodkind et al (2021) note in their exploration of critical feminisms:

Binary frameworks lead us to see things as opposite when their constructed meanings are in fact interdependent [...] [t]he decentering of binary assumptions presents evolving opportunities to query and understand complex gendered realities. (p.482)

Here, we must understand that challenging the dichotomy between the “good” community and “bad” perpetrators can birth a new approach that imagines a future we have not seen yet, one where accountability is not synonymous with punishment and exile (Kim, 2020; Kaba, 2021). Rather, as Kaba, Rice, and Sultan (2021) note, we can push back against definitive and permanent labels of “good” and “bad” to instead understand that we are all capable of experiencing and inflicting harm and that one’s actions are not an automatic or permanent reflection of identity or character.

Creating space for men to reflect in my doctoral project seeks to enact these imaginations; through this process, we can both engage with complicity and explore accountability in a dedicated space for men to acknowledge experiences of harming and/or being harmed within the carceral, cisheteropatriarchal state. I also turn to Carian’s (2024) significant text, which reviews men’s engagement in gender activism through the exploration of both the

men's rights movement and those who self-identify as feminist men. Her conclusions about feminist men's imaginings of "inclusive masculinity" and allyship, although seemingly bleak, offer an imperative reflection for me in further deconstructing ascribed "goodness":

In constructing a masculinity around superiority to other men and women generally, feminist men reify masculinity's place in the gender hierarchy and so perform a hybrid masculinity. Moreover, they leverage a social movement meant to advance gender equality for their own purposes in ways that, I argue, hinder the movement from the inside. (p.17)

I take this reflection with me as it offers a complex and necessary evaluation of how binary logic extends to men's allyship, whereby those who self-identify as "good" or "feminists" might perpetuate harmful dynamics, such as seeing their voices as more important, effective, or progressive than others' and relying on cisheteropatriarchal scripting to reify these beliefs (e.g. asserting biologically essentialist ideas that men are rational, strong leaders with the agency and power to make a difference). Additionally, the more palatable, less disruptive, liberal feminism is more likely to be applauded, accepted, and welcomed by the public and the state, thus facilitating practices where men allies are awarded accolades for performative, symbolic, and ultimately tokenistic activism or allyship that does little to contribute to ending GBSV. Without a continued (re)orientation to the goals of feminist movements against violence – which are predominantly concerned with addressing the staggering and continued harms of men against women, trans, and gender diverse people – men's allyship risks propagating self-identified "goodness" in ways that ultimately detract from the movement, such as becoming self-congratulatory or self-adulating, talking over people of marginalized genders, and failing to engage in continued reflection by seeing the label of "ally" as a lifelong absolution or indicator of expertise. Critical and

abolitionist feminism views allyship as a continued practice and pursuit as one never “accomplishes” or “achieves” this identity marker.

The Postsecondary Context/Actor

As these theoretical perspectives apply to the postsecondary institution (PSI), where my dissertation research occurred, carceral logic and praxis is instilled within the university’s functioning. While on-campus services, supports, and methods of redress (e.g. internal investigations into GBSV and sanctions applied to those found in violation of the policy which may occur independently of the criminal punishment system) might brand themselves as “alternative options,” they still deploy and work in tandem with the carceral gaze via enacting its central practices (e.g. surveillance, investigation, punishment, etc.). In internal disclosure and reporting processes, survivors’ stories are collected by the institution and then used to justify increased budgets and strengthen sociolegal interventions, regardless of how survivors envision effective intervention and social justice (Students for Consent Culture, 2017; Salvino, 2024). For example, when we continue to see data that indicates that GBSV is disproportionately occurring on postsecondary campuses, we see responses that focus on increased security measures (e.g. hiring more special constables, providing better lighting in outdoor public spaces, increasing the number of security cameras on campus, etc.). We also see a commitment to “consent education” and “bystander intervention,” which often assumes that the issue of GBSV is a lack of understanding and an absence of skills, thus reducing it to merely individual choice, moral compass, and capacity for knowledge and action (Brush & Miller, 2022; Brockbank, 2023).

Furthermore, the PSI is consistently framed as a context or *site* where violence happens and not as an *agent* of this violence, thus obfuscating its role in contributing to or perpetrating state violence. For example, we talk often about GBSV that happens on campus, but we rarely

move into talking about the violence that the PSI facilitates, perpetuates, or perpetrates, such as through invasive investigation practices, re-traumatization of survivors, the protection of people who cause harm in positions of power, the failure to invest in prevention work, and the prioritization of the university's reputation over transparency, accountability, and honesty. Anti-carceral feminist theory is especially useful here in this description as it aids us in centering a sociostructural analysis of GBSV that points to its functioning as an oppressive system within the broader violent state. As participants in this study were students, it felt important to theorize the PSI in this way to begin enacting the central values of anti-carceral feminism that identify the state and its operations as active agents in perpetrating and facilitating GBSV.

Theoretical Bridge to Methodology

The strands of feminism that I cite throughout this chapter also offer a tangible pathway to action-oriented research. As postmodern and critical feminisms centre women's resistance to GBSV as occurring through deconstruction of androcentric histories, identifying shared patterns and themes among interlocking systems of oppression, embracing and celebrating difference between and among people of different social identities, and relationality as liberatory praxis, imagining a dissertation project that mobilized this theorizing methodologically was a key consideration. Furthermore, anti-carceral feminism's similar commitments to pursuing social justice through identifying and dismantling carceral logics and systems supported me in imagining a project that was about both deconstruction and (re)construction. In this process, theory became action quite organically as I started to build plans for my project and draw on feminist theorizing to envision alternative approaches to working with men.

My dissertation's theoretical perspectives are deeply entwined with my methodological approaches: critical, feminist, participatory, and anti-carceral. To quote Swauger and Kalir (2023):

[A]bolition is imaginative, a force of world-building rejecting oppressive systems while actively creating better, more humane alternatives. [...] Abolitionist perspectives provide a fuller account of the human experience, acknowledging both the innumerable ways people experience pain and joy. [...] [I]t can be difficult to envision alternatives to carcerality as these forces are pervasive and normalized. Nonetheless, this is why abolitionist imagination is an essential skill for furthering care and justice. (p.103-104)

This excerpt captures the interrelationship of theoretical and methodological approaches that are expressly concerned with imagining a better world informed by the experiences of those rendered marginal. Critical and anti-carceral feminisms are historiographical in their theoretical orientations by centring critique of white, colonial, capitalist, imperialist cisheteropatriarchy; however, such critique is compounded by imagining, dreaming, and pursuing social justice that is cognizant and reflexive of sociohistorical harms.

As Love (2019) offers, “[t]hese dreams are not whimsical, unattainable daydreams, they are critical and imaginative dreams of collective resistance. Arguably, abolitionists’ greatest tools against injustice [a]re their imaginations” (p. 101). When envisioning this dissertation project, I was resolute in my commitment for the research to defy academic confines of living solely in the ivory tower to, instead, offer something tangible, accessible, and transferable to the social justice work that is happening in my community. I was also wary of inadvertently slipping into “academic abolition” (Carrier & Piché, 2015, quoting Hulsman), which refers to how abolitionist praxis can become muddled and unintelligible by esotericism, (mis)appropriative of and divorced

from its radical origins, and limited by its iteration in academic disciplines. Grounded in my own experiences working in GBSV prevention with men and across different social work sites, I sought to imagine a project that would engage with the existing successes and tensions of anti-violence work while also providing a space for conversation about how to do this work in an anti-carceral way, something that I have found has often evaded mainstream anti-violence work.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter provided a brief evolution of my feminist theorizing and my journey to the current topic. I drew on postmodern and critical feminisms to examine how challenging androcentric narratives, honouring difference, examining interlocking systems of oppression, and centering relationality in our praxis carves a key avenue for envisioning a participatory project to actualize this theorizing. Furthermore, I articulated the central commitments of anti-carceral feminism, which is an action- and social justice-oriented theorizing that deconstructs the power of the carceral state and imagines alternative community-based responses to social problems predicated on care. I described the application of this theorizing to my project and the natural bridge that it builds to my methodological approaches.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

Actualizing my anti-carceral and critical feminist positionings requires engaging with a methodological framework that both embodies and operationalizes their key values. I arrive here interested in what anti-carceral principles can offer the *how* of the research project. Abolitionist values are inherently actionable and necessitate mobilization into tangible movements for and toward social justice. In this vein, anti-carceral theory can offer a helpful bridge to research methodology. Part of this imagining is about envisioning an approach to doing the research in a way that is aligned with anti-carceral values.

In this chapter, I review the methodological considerations that informed my imagining, development, and iterative re-working of the project. I focus on envisioning an anti-carceral approach to the research as articulated by abolitionist and adjacent literature, particularly those that examine the oppressive roots of western approaches to research. I then transition into imagining what anti-carceral feminism can offer feminist participatory action research (FPAR), which served as my guiding and overarching methodological approach for this project. I discuss both the potential successes and challenges of drawing on FPAR, especially in the context of a project whose primary participant population is university-aged men. I conclude with outlining the methods that I used to carry out the project.

Imagining an Anti-Carceral Research Methodology

To apply anti-carceral commitments to a research methodology, I would view this research as seeking to deconstruct and reimagine these carceral logics and discourses via participatory practices. There is emerging academic commentary on what an anti-carceral research methodology could look like, such as works by Chennault and Sbicca (2024) and Davies, Jackson, and Streeter (2020); however, the topic remains fairly marginal. To supplement

my exploration of anti-carceral approaches to data generation and analyses, I examine adjacent and interconnected literature that understands western research practices as inherently oppressive due to their origins in the exploitation of marginalized communities.

Decolonial and anti-racist approaches are intertwined with abolitionist values; it is important to recognize and honour these origins and histories to create informed, critical, and expansive scholarship. What abolition contributes to this discussion is a continued attention to state violence and the carceral web of interrelated systems that justify surveillance, arrest, and punishment through logics of “good/bad” and “innocent/guilty.” Here, white supremacist cisheteropatriarchy is identifiable in the ideas and practices of the carceral state, such as through mass incarceration of Black, Indigenous, and racialized persons, disproportionate uses of surveillance tactics and police violence on marginalized communities, carceral logics that rely on racist and sanist discourses, and state-sanctioned murder, among many other examples (Maynard, 2017; Kaba, 2021; Davis, 2024).

To develop an anti-carceral method aligned with decolonial and anti-racist values, we can begin by designing research that seeks to collaboratively identify majoritarian discourses and narratives that uphold and reify the power of the carceral state in qualitative inquiry (e.g. interviews, focus groups, etc.). Specifically, this deconstruction must happen with (and be led by) those subjected to and most affected by them to offer an alternative avenue for beginning to interrogate their histories, origins, and harms (Kaba, 2021; Davis et al, 2022). Second, drawing on similarly critical methodologies – such as FPAR – could offer a reconstructive approach, where participants are invited to co-author, co-design, direct, and disseminate the work in ways that reflect their goals and values and that shift toward active assembly and mobilization. In this process, social justice can be reimaged outside of the current confines of the western criminal

legal system. For example, in the case of conceptualizing “accountability” for causing harm, we can collectively deconstruct popular carceral framings as exiling and punishing those deemed “criminals” or “offenders” to instead imagine it as a shared labour of community care that requires critical reflexivity, tangible action, and prevention. Such an approach both confronts colonial and racist histories and grapples with existing tensions, while also mobilizing and pursuing informed social justice action.

Abolitionist Research Methodologies

Most academic scholarship exploring an abolitionist methodology focuses on work that explicitly engages with those victimized by the carceral state, namely those within prisons (Ben-Moshe, 2018; Chennault & Sbicca, 2025). Within the context of this study, my application of anti-carcerality is less so focused on the tangible systems of police and prisons and more so concerned with the carceral state and its operations in everyday life, particularly in discursive and invisibilized constructions of social problems and our responses. I sought to explicitly challenge the binary between criminalized and non-criminalized persons by recruiting men who had not been subjected to the criminal legal system, while simultaneously not automatically assuming that they had not caused harm or making that a caveat in eligibility criteria. I wanted to mobilize abolitionist praxis beyond working only with those who have been incarcerated and/or harmed by violence to, instead, examine how non-criminalized people often unknowingly reify and perpetuate carceral logics in ways that further strengthen and extend the carceral gaze. In this process, I hope that I am operationalizing what Chennault and Sbicca (2024) aptly name “gaze-shifting,” as in moving the subjective focus of research “away from the ‘violated body’ and toward the ‘violating instruments’” (p.5), many of which are commonplace and normalized in

everyday experience (e.g. assumptions that the criminal legal system is the best and only response to GSBV).

Chennault and Sbicca (2024) offer an apt and poignant expressions of abolitionist methodology. As they note:

Abolition methodologies entail a responsibility to center action-oriented ideas, aims, and approaches. They present an opportunity to create “seed bombs” that are useful to anyone committed to abolition. And they refuse enclosure, rarefication, and restriction, instead aiming to embrace our collective capacities to connect. (Chennault & Sbicca, 2024, p.2)

I find this working definition particularly relevant and helpful in framing abolition work as something fundamentally concerned with dreaming, imagining, and centring social justice action, particularly in designing communities of care. I also appreciate the imagery of “seed bombs” and collective capacity as it felt quite relevant for my proposed project engaging men who are at different places regarding their engagement with anti-carceral thinking. The emphasis on social action became a key commitment in articulating my methodology to participants.

Chennault and Sbicca (2024) go on to further explain that an abolitionist methodology deploys central values of: (1) Re-orientation, which refers to refusing, resisting, and re-shifting the carceral gaze away from incarcerated people and to the white supremacist, capitalist, ableist, sanist, carceral, cisheteropatriarchal state. (2) Context, as in refuting data generation and analyses that frame knowledge as neutral to instead root them in their histories and draw on them to inform social action. (3) Livingness, which is challenging the construction of the carceral state’s operations as a humanizing process to instead realize and appreciate the full range of humanity that people already embody independent of the state’s interventions. And (4) Relation, as in refusing to perpetuate the binary between the incarcerated and the free to (a) examine how the

carceral state operates across contexts to render people unfree and (b) build solidarities toward abolition as collective liberation. I resonate with each of these commitments in their understanding of abolition as a movement toward deconstruction of the carceral state and dreaming of a world free from all systems of oppression and violence. In particular, the concepts of re-orientation and relation are salient in this project as I seek to engage non-criminalized men to disrupt binary understandings of “good” and “bad” men and shift the gaze toward how non-criminalized men are entangled and implicated in the carceral state. The core values also served as a guiding tool in data collection as I worked toward using a methodology that both built capacity via participatory education and framed social action that is possible within abolition as inherent within the research process, such as the dynamic and natural community care that participants incited during the focus group gatherings.

Chennault and Sbicca (2024) draw on decolonial scholarship to emphasize that an abolitionist methodology “refuse[s] dominant social science methods as a means to enact liberatory ideas and practices beyond the confines of the academy” (p.2). Similarly expanding on these ideas, Carrier and Piché (2018) describe the advantages of undisciplined abolition – that is, abolitionist praxis that does not have to confirm to academic requirements. They posit that this approach maintains immense (and, at times, messy) possibilities to “make visible various forms of injustice in order to problematize the prison, punishment, or the carceral” (Carrier and Piché, 2018, p.37). Namely, such work does not have to contend with being censored or sanitized to reflect or uphold the interests and reputations of an institution, such as a university. In the context of my doctoral education, there have been significant strides in the Greater Hamilton community toward undisciplined abolition, including ongoing advocacy to defund the police and reinvest funding into community-based and grassroots social programming, some of which I have

witnessed, participated in, and supported. Examples include mutual aid initiatives, advocacy to stop encampment evictions, providing grassroots harm reduction services, creating mental health programs that do not invoke police presence during crises, and mobilizing against state and colonial violence globally.

This context is important as it greatly inspired and informed my doctoral project. In seeing what was possible in my community and having the chance to support this dreaming, my vision for an abolitionist methodology became clearer and more informed by the immense possibilities of solidarity building and re-orientation. As Kaba (2021) expresses:

Let's begin our abolitionist journey not with the question "What do we have now, and how can we make it better?" Instead, let's ask, "What can we imagine for ourselves and the world?" If we do that, then boundless possibilities of a more just world await us. (p.3)

While undertaking this dissertation project was inherently "disciplined" due to it taking place within an academic program and institution, the co-design and implementation of the framework can expand outside of these boundaries to support, sustain, and (re)imagine the diversity of anti-violence work happening in the broader community. I was less so focused on asking participants to consider the physical abolition of police and prisons; rather, I was interested in creating space where we could collectively imagine something outside of what we currently have. Despite the confines of an academic setting, there is still immense potential to enact abolitionist ideals. As Chennault and Sbicca (2024) conclude, "where we sit in the academy, we need to enact liberatory and life-affirming imaginations in sets of concrete methodological practices" (p.17)

A Bridge to Feminist Participatory Action Research

As abolitionist methodologies remain an emerging area of study, and my own project's framing often falls outside of what is usually considered abolitionism, I felt compelled to support

my imagining of this approach alongside the wealth of work in feminist participatory action research (FPAR). Community engagement is a tangible way that abolitionism becomes imagined in research; therefore, drawing together these frameworks felt necessary as both express a fundamental concern with pedagogy, praxis, and participatory processes of deconstruction and dreaming (Davies, Jackson, & Streeter, 2020; Chennault & Sbicca, 2024). Rather than categorizing anti-carcerality strictly as a theoretical approach and FPAR as a methodological endeavour, I sought to trace shared values, practices, tensions, and successes. Both are rooted in liberatory anti-racist pedagogies and discourses of participation in social action; simultaneously, both must remain vigilant about misappropriation, deradicalization, and esotericism that inhibits meaningful action and/or reifies the operations of the oppressive state. Nonetheless, I believe that both approaches have much to offer each other in successfully initiating and sustaining the dreaming that is necessary for projects of social justice. In this, anti-carceral and critical feminist frameworks are deeply tied to my methodology and methods.

Feminist Participatory Action Research

In its simplest terms, feminist participatory action research (FPAR) invites participants to take an active role in informing the research process and engage readily in knowledge mobilization activities that are social change-oriented (Reid, Tom, & Frisby, 2006; Frisby, Maguire, & Reid, 2009). As I am seeking to intentionally disrupt hierarchical research practices that decentre lived experience, I am harkening back to the origins of decolonial and anti-racist scholarship that urge us to push outside of western epistemologies and centre livingness via abolitionist praxis. It is important for me to undertake a feminist project both theoretically and methodologically in order to continuously centre the feminist-driven values, histories, projects, and outcomes that inform my work.

In the same vein as my exploration of using anti-carcerality as a white woman in the academy, there are ongoing tensions in facilitating explicitly feminist participatory projects with men. This concern is due to both microlevel/technocratic issues (e.g. men's resistance to feminism) and systemic/discursive concerns (e.g. using feminist analyses in projects with men, whether the project is accountable to people of marginalized genders, etc.). However, by applying a feminist approach to my research, I am keenly aware that the purpose of the project is to prioritize the betterment of social conditions for people of marginalized genders through challenging cisheteropatriarchal, carceral logics about GBSV. FPAR creates the space for centering such an analysis through each stage of the project, and it maintains the potential to be used carefully in specific spaces throughout my project that align with creating space for anti-carceral (re)imaginings. While FPAR offers immense potential for methodologically guiding my project, I also keep in mind the critiques that I explored extensively in my comprehensive exam and that I review briefly in this section. In this, FPAR is used strategically; namely, I am drawing on abolitionist methodology and FPAR to facilitate conversations about anti-carceral imaginings that centre participants' insights and ideas about what this could look like in creating a tool for anti-carceral GBSV prevention.

Central Concepts

Stemming from its origins in critical pedagogies and participatory development, FPAR, broadly speaking, seeks to centre community collaboration, engagement, and inclusion through partnerships between academics, key shareholders, and community representatives (Reid & Frisby, 2008; Frisby, Maguire, & Reid, 2009; Lorenzetti & Walsh, 2014). FPAR aims to involve community members and representatives in imagining, designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating research at all stages in the process, with particular focus on drawing on

community members' insights to identify, explore, and respond to complex challenges that they experience. Of central focus is facilitating full, democratic, and empowering community engagement to imagine, produce, and pursue action-oriented responses, which differs significantly from traditional research approaches as FPAR aims to have communities maintain agency in guiding the research and determining its direction in working toward shared solutions (Reid, Tom, & Frisby, 2006; Reid & Frisby, 2008). A main commitment of FPAR is to facilitate transparency and equity in decision-making processes through attending to community members' complex experiences of marginalization and validating various – even, at times, conflicting – community knowledges (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000; Maguire, 2001; Reid & Frisby, 2008).

As Frisby et al (2005) note, FPAR departs from other forms of participatory action research (PAR) by centring a gendered focus and an intentional consideration of diversity among women's experiences, all while maintaining the same values of centering participants' capacities to contribute meaningfully to social change efforts. Lorenzetti and Walsh (2014) and Frisby and Reid (2008) expand on this assessment in their literature review comparing PAR, feminist research (FR), and FPAR. While each framework has the potential to learn from and engage with each other, they are rooted in shared commitments to social justice, flexibility, capacity building, reflexivity, and critical analyses of power. FPAR's commitment to exploring gendered experiences of oppression, and how they operate in relationship with other forms of marginalization, thus articulates PAR's shared values in a unique way. Here, concepts of agency, representation, power, voice, and action are conceptualized within feminist theorizing, where the liberatory project of FPAR centres critical consciousness raising about and the dismantlement of cisheteropatriarchal oppression in its various forms against women of various social positionings (Reid, Tom, & Frisby, 2006; Reid & Frisby, 2008; Lorenzetti & Walsh, 2014). By naming these

systems explicitly, FPAR researchers are intentionally pushing back against the practices that silence, erase, or obfuscate the social dynamics that perpetuate gendered oppression.

Challenges

Despite my inclinations toward a feminist participatory method, I would be remiss not to more deeply contemplate the tensions that I have contended with throughout my doctoral education. It is important to note that existing critiques of FPAR tend to rely almost exclusively on its technical and practical limitations and challenges, thus risking romanticization of its epistemological commitments in potentially dangerous ways (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Kapoor, 2005; Janes, 2016). While some of these identified challenges allude to greater concerns within conceptualizing and theorizing participation, they appear to be more concerned with the *how* (e.g. practicalities, logistics, etc.) of research and not the *what* or *why* of participation. Here, FPAR risks being framed solely as a method for doing research rather than something with clear epistemological commitments, values, and ideals. When these tensions are depicted as solvable via certain kinds of researcher-led action – or impossible to prevent due to limited resources – there is the potential for it to be excused in a way that ignores its potential to be harmful.

When many FPAR researchers grapple with what kinds of participatory research are or are not “good,” “real,” and “authentic,” many commentaries conclude that it is a matter of how the researcher employs these practices (see Bryant & Pimbert, 2007; Brydon-Miller, 2008; Cornwall, 2008; Maiter et al, 2008; Reid & Frisby, 2008). In this process, there is a damning absence and distortion of interrogating what informs these practices and whether they are redeemable. I agree that it is not just about *how* the researcher does it, but *what* foundations the research practice is built upon. My methodological foundation is grounded in several key concepts that are guided by critical questions regarding implementation. These include:

participation, reciprocity, complicity, power, positionality, and social change. Namely, I have thought critically throughout this project about how men's participation in the project is framed (and what performance it might demand), what kind of reciprocity and social change is realistic and feasible, and why men's relationships with power and positioning must be an ongoing consideration to ensure that the project's conclusions do not reify cisheteropatriarchal sensibilities about men's (dis)engagement from anti-violence work.

Possibilities and Application to the Project

In the context of my proposed project, men students on postsecondary campuses occupy a unique space entrenched in power and powerlessness. While the academic system is foundationally sustained to benefit, support, and bolster white, affluent, cisheterosexual, able-bodied men's successes through elevating and giving space for their knowledges, students are generally at mercy to the greater structural forces of the institution and do not have direct say in its operations. PAR projects, in particular, have modelled the efficacy and challenges of partnering with academic institutions; however, they frequently frame intervention in the community as laying outside of the institution's physical boundaries rather than seeing students, faculty, and staff as tangled up in various representations of campus and community identities (Boser, 2006; Pollack & Eldridge, 2015; Janes, 2016; Lorenzetti & Walsh, 2022). In this, men students continue to occupy a liminal space that poses challenges for engaging them in this work in a way that is both invitational and aware of their powerlessness, while also recognizing the potential for practices of accountability for preventing GBSV in confronting their proximity to white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy.

As my previous research and the literature that I have engaged with has articulated, involving men in gender-specific anti-violence efforts has proven to result in a decrease in

misogynistic attitudes, rape myth acceptance, victim-blaming, and beliefs that facilitate rape culture (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Eckstein & Pinto, 2013). Specifically in the context of this project, there is demonstrated efficacy in engaging men who are in college or university as GBSV happens disproportionately on postsecondary campuses and men students are uniquely primed and positioned for conversations about GBSV based on institutional mandates and commitments to sustain GBSV policies, procedures, and prevention efforts (Rich et al, 2010; Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012). However, despite the proven successes and benefits of these programs, few seek and integrate the insights, questions, opinions, and concerns narrated and posed by the young men partaking in these groups. Instead, curriculum is authored by public educators and tend to reflect their perspectives of what is missing from conversations around sex, consent, and sexual violence. Conversely, mandated violence intervention programs for those who have been criminalized for GBSV tend to impose standards and topics as articulated by the Government of Ontario (e.g. PAR programs must include sessions on a select list of topics provided by the Ministry of the Attorney General). In this, men's voices continue to be excluded from the actual construction of primary and tertiary violence prevention programming. Further, allegedly preventative and transformative programming is being designed and authored by those traditionally deemed "the oppressor" (e.g. government, the carceral state, and social services), thus reifying discourses about GBSV that are individualistic and evade structural attentions.

As this tension lies at the heart of my research, FPAR as a methodological approach with men postsecondary students became particularly compelling as I was interested in co-designing a sustainable practice framework for engaging men in primary GBSV prevention. Through this work, I wanted to create space for critical consciousness raising about men's experiences of cisheteropatriarchy to collaboratively reimagine approaches to GBSV prevention with and for

men, including discussions about how we can elicit and sustain their engagement. Via a dialogical, participatory process, I aimed to build foundations for men to embrace responsibility for leading responses to GBSV; rather than perpetuating victim-blaming narratives and exhausting survivors as a historically over-researched community, engaging men in this work might allow us to push outside of the existing boundaries and barriers in current prevention efforts that rely on these individualizing narratives. Specifically, an FPAR project seeks to foster a space where men can feel accountable to and responsible for this work in action, including how they can challenge carceral and cisheteropatriarchal discourses that facilitate GBSV in their lives.

Subsequently, my research is in line with a participatory, anti-carceral, and feminist approach that aims to shift away from individualized perspectives of GBSV and toward community-based solutions and accountabilities that see men as needing to be a part of these conversations *before* they perpetrate violence and/or become criminalized for GBSV. Put simply, the purpose of this research is to invite men meaningfully into this conversation in a way that recognizes their unique roles in this issue, the need for their active involvement in moving toward solutions, and the significance of anti-violence programming reflecting men's voices, lived experiences, questions, and concerns. FPAR offers the emerging, alternative, and community-based way forward that I felt compelled to pursue based on my epistemological alignment with feminist mobilizing. In this, I believe that FPAR provides a tangible framework for eliciting the kind of engagement that I was seeking to facilitate, whereby men are called to be more actively involved in designing, participating in, and sharing the research.

The Community Advisory Board

Aligned with community-engaged research principles, my supervisor and I had numerous discussions about facilitating a participatory project alongside a Community Advisory Board

(CAB). CABs often serve as a leadership body for community-based and participatory projects (Newman et al, 2011; Cramer et al, 2018; Ortega et al, 2018). Comprised of those who reflect the communities in which they are serving, CABs seek to provide structure, accountability, guidance, and connection to ensure that the project is meaningfully attending to its central values of participation, inclusion, reciprocity, and social change. Members of CABs usually share similar interests, identities, experiences, histories, languages, and/or cultures which situate them firmly within their communities and grant them “insider knowledge” to the community’s dynamics, goals, and needs (Ortega et al, 2018). CABs can act as necessary bridges within the academic-community partnership by voicing concerns and priorities that are outside of the researcher’s knowledge or awareness and might provide viable insights about research processes that are respectful, intentional, and reflective of best practices in relation to the community.

While the CAB’s role can be variously defined – and will change depending on the project, its members, and the community context in which it is happening –responsibilities could involve liaising with community members, supporting data collection via articulating risks and benefits of the research, providing necessary resources to community members, and supporting project dissemination plans (Newman et al, 2011; Cramer et al, 2018). According to Ortega et al’s (2018) research on members’ motivations for becoming involved in a CAB, members articulate a desire to lend their expertise and insider knowledge for the betterment of their communities. CABs have also demonstrated the potential for mutual benefit, whereby members report that their participation is materially compensated and can result in professional advancements (e.g. adding it to a resume, furthering community development, etc.).

Despite the noted benefits of CABs, there are challenges that can impact the accessibility, inclusivity, representation, and efficacy of the group. Cramer et al (2018) note that CAB

participation can be marred by: logistical barriers, such as time, distance, and funding; ethical concerns, such as questions of confidentiality, vulnerability, inclusion, representation, and equitable participation; and infrastructural tensions, including whether the roles and responsibilities are clear, tangible, feasible, and reflective of how members envision their contributions. Technocratic limitations of participatory research can often obfuscate the more theoretical concerns of the work, where we must carefully examine our research practices and critically reflect on whether they meaningfully apply the values that we commit ourselves to.

Drawing on what I learned from my earlier pilot study, I decided to create a CAB comprised of anti-violence service providers who were (a) working with men and (b) interested in and knowledgeable of anti-carceral praxis. While I considered having a CAB of survivors, I decided that this project required the inclusion of shareholders with material investment in facilitating GBSV prevention work, knowledge of how this programming operates, and with the resources and skills to facilitate knowledge translation of project outcomes. As this project undertakes an explicitly anti-carceral feminist approach and is interested in working with people who have not been criminalized for perpetrating violence, I believe that assembling a CAB of people with knowledge and interest of working within these groups/frameworks is essential in operationalizing its outcomes. I acknowledge that inclusion of people doing GBSV work might also include people who have survived violence; however, I did not want that identity-marker to be an inclusion criterion for the purposes of reframing roles for imagining this work as a community responsibility, not just one for those who have been most impacted. By involving shareholders in various stages of the project, I was aiming to be accountable to those with the most knowledge of and investment in this issue within the broader Hamilton community.

Central principles that I sought to establish the CAB upon included shared knowledge of GBSV work, a plurality of perspectives around approaches to the work, respectful communication, and common values in community betterment via the eradication of GBSV. The CAB's connection to their community – where they all have experience leading anti-violence initiatives in a variety of settings – ensured that the community's values were centred, including an understanding of how GBSV is a structural issue that intersects with racism, classism, cisheterosexism, and ableism, among other systems of oppression. Further, I sought a diversity of perspectives from those who have worked with different populations in the Greater Hamilton community, including men who have been criminalized for GBSV, men who represent organizations that are committed to GBSV prevention, and voluntary men's allyship circles.

Methods

This project drew on FPAR and abolitionist methodologies to inform its approaches in all stages, ranging from recruitment to data analysis. Inevitably, due to the confines of the project being a doctoral dissertation, there were challenges in facilitating a fully participatory project as articulated by FPAR research. However, I remained intentional throughout the project to imagine what participation was possible, how reciprocity could be framed and pursued, and what social change efforts could stem from the co-design.

Ethics: Tensions and Considerations

I received ethics clearance from the McMaster Research Ethics Board in February 2024 to begin my project. Throughout the design of the project, I revisited some emerging ethical tensions to ensure that I was remaining vigilant about potential challenges.

A central and immediate tension that I considered before data collection was how to articulate that this project was undertaking an explicitly anti-carceral feminist approach. I

wondered about how to engage in anti-carceral feminist and participatory principles with men, many of whom may have complex and intimate relationships with the carceral state. How do you articulate such a commitment without alienating specific participants who may be deeply committed to carceral logics? How do you imagine concepts and frameworks outside of our current forms of knowledge? Many people struggle with abolitionism because they simply cannot see a world free from prisons, police, or the systems that they believe “protect” them from violence. If I were to introduce these concepts via critical consciousness raising (Freire, 1974; hooks, 1994), I worried that it would detract from the participatory goals of my study.

Further, my supervisor and I debated the “who” of the CAB composition as well; I considered the ethical tensions and possibilities of assembling a CAB of survivors to ensure that the work remained accountable to its feminist origins and to survivors of GBSV. However, I was consistently concerned about demanding labour of survivors and inadvertently subjecting them to harm. As men participants would be entering the space at various levels of experience and engagement, there was a likelihood that topics would arise that perpetuated or relied upon harmful assumptions as they are normalized in mainstream dialogue about GBSV (e.g. victim-blaming). Additionally, I was worried that men’s participation in the study would be affected by the knowledge that a survivor-led CAB was overseeing the project. In my experience working with men, many express an excitement to engage in GBSV prevention, but are often hesitant because they fear saying or doing something that would offend, hurt, or scare survivors.

As I decided to pursue a CAB of anti-violence service providers, I wondered about how anti-carceral feminist research would (or could) work in partnership with the kinds of services that CAB members would work within. As I was drawing on anti-carceral feminist values – which relate to divesting from mandated violence intervention programs and investing in

programs/services that are deliberately distanced from the carceral system – I was afraid of alienating advisory committee members working in these settings. Service providers might be bound by their organizations regarding their participation in external activities; identifying as a representative or member of that institution publicly might not be permitted by their organization and/or constrain their participation to only reflect the goals and views of their organization. I also pondered that, if co-producing an anti-carceral feminist framework for men's violence prevention was successful, there would be challenges in translating and disseminating the project for intended use in existing anti-violence programs that rely on carcerality.

My supervisor and I engaged in continued discussion about framing and the ethical considerations of confidentiality, risk, and how they would affect participation. She encouraged me to be explicit in my epistemological approach and be transparent about what I was looking for. I initially did not want to bar interested persons from participating; however, through our conversations, I concluded that I wanted to create a space where everyone was open to and/or curious about anti-carceral approaches so that our dialogue did not become inhibited by debate about the merits of such perspectives. Rather, as this was a project interested in abolitionist dreaming, the focus needed to be on creating a space where that was possible, which is entirely reliant on who is participating and whether they are willing to imagine. I also needed to be intentional about how the anti-carceral lens was communicated as this language might be lesser known. As such, we brainstormed how to phrase the framing so that those who did not have knowledge of the subject but had an interest in it were encouraged to connect. Our conversations supported me in appreciating the tensions that I listed above, while also not allowing it to prevent me from pursuing the project as I envisioned it.

Recruitment

The Community Advisory Board

The role of the CAB was threefold: to facilitate necessary connections to recruit men students that I would like to have a series of conversations with about GBSV prevention; to oversee the project and provide ongoing feedback about the project's progression, including participation in data analyses; and to aid in expanding the reach of dissemination efforts to support improving and imagining anti-violence work in the community.

As I am actively engaged in anti-violence work happening in my community, CAB members were recruited through my existing professional networks via targeted email invitations to select individuals. I focused on inviting people with experience in and expertise of GBSV prevention work with men and boys, while also keeping in mind those who had expressed interest in, knowledge of, and curiosity about anti-carceral feminist approaches. While I originally envisioned having men students serve on this CAB, I decided that the lived experience, knowledge, and commitment to GBSV work that community members who have led anti-violence programming would better serve the project. Namely, CAB members needed to have intimate knowledge of both best practices for engaging men in this work and awareness of how conversations about violence happen in different anti-violence contexts (e.g. with mandated populations versus voluntary populations).

To assemble the CAB, I sent emails to approximately ten contacts in my professional network. The recruitment email (see Appendix A) explained the purpose of the study, the role of the CAB, the proposed time commitment, and details regarding compensation for their time, all of which was reiterated via a Letter of Information attached (see Appendix B). Of the ten recruited, seven indicated their interest and capacity to undertake the role. I completed individual informational calls with each of the seven participants to discuss the project, answer any of their

questions, and orally obtain their consent to participate in the study. I asked participants about their comfort regarding confidentiality; as this project was interested in co-producing something that participants could exercise ownership over, I wanted to provide them with the option of remaining anonymous in publication of the framework (that is, not identifying their names and/or organizations) or being public about their involvement. All seven participants indicated that they were comfortable with being publicly identified by name as CAB members for this study in the publication of the framework. However, in this dissertation, they will not be identified by name or organization so that any direct quotes are not associated with them.

Recruitment of the CAB concluded in March 2024, and we hosted our first CAB meeting in April 2024 via Zoom. Zoom was our primary location for CAB meetings for ease of access as participants are located across the Greater Hamilton Area.

Men Students

The role of men student participants was to attend three focus groups to co-design a framework for engaging other men in GBSV prevention. Participants were also invited to engage in data analysis and dissemination efforts if they were interested, which included a data analysis workshop and the potential to co-author and/or co-present any knowledge mobilizations and translation efforts outside of the dissertation itself. Men students were framed as co-designers of the project and, therefore, co-owners of what we produced, thus both potentially building their own capacities for research and affecting social change in their communities.

Recruitment criteria for men student participants included anyone who used “he/him” pronouns and/or identified as a man. Participants were required to be 18 years of age or older and enrolled as a student in an Ontarian postsecondary institution (college or university) at the time of the data collection (April to June 2024). Eligibility criteria outlined on the recruitment poster

(see Appendix C) also explicitly invited participants who were “open to, interested in, knowledgeable of, or curious about approaches to solving social problems outside of the criminal justice system (e.g. police, prisons, etc.) and “committed to gender-based and sexual violence prevention.” In another section of the recruitment poster, I further explained the orientation of the project in “deliberately divest[ing] from the carceral state and its operations (e.g. police, prisons, arrest, surveillance, punishment, etc.) and invest[ing] in community-based and community-informed solutions/approaches” to ensure that participants better understood the epistemological underpinnings of the project. The poster also detailed compensation, time commitment, and procedures for expressing an intent to participate. Those who were interested in learning more about and/or participating in the study were invited to contact me via email to set up a screening call.

The recruitment poster and MREB-approved script were shared on my personal social media pages, specifically LinkedIn, Instagram, and X (formerly known as Twitter). CAB members supported the recruitment of men student participants by sharing the recruitment information poster via their professional networks and via social media. These posts were re-shared by many local anti-violence organizations, including White Ribbon Canada, YWCA Hamilton, and Students for Consent Culture Canada, and many colleagues to extend its reach. As an interesting aside, most participants who contacted me to express interest in participating in the study indicated that they saw the poster on LinkedIn. Recruitment took place from February to late March 2024.

About fifteen men (and one woman) contacted me to express interest in participating in the study. I only knew of one participant through general GBSV activism on campus; the remainder of participants were unknown to me. Of the fifteen, twelve participated in an initial

screening call via Microsoft Teams prior to the focus groups being scheduled. They were sent an invitation to book a screening call and the Letter of Information to review (see Appendix E). The purpose of the screening call was to confirm their eligibility and gauge their openness, curiosity, and/or experience in engaging with anti-carceral thinking. The screening calls allowed me to explain more about the project, understand their perspectives, and reassure them that expertise was not a requirement for participation. During screening calls (see Appendix D for the screening form), participants were asked to briefly describe their knowledge of or familiarity with anti-carceral kinds of thinking. I was interested in inviting men into the study who either had engaged with anti-carcerality in their education, professional, or personal lives and/or who exhibited an openness to or curiosity about abolitionist approaches to addressing social problems. My goal was to ensure that the conversation would not be disrupted by participants who were not open to critiquing, unpacking, and challenging the carceral construction of and approach to GBSV. During the screening call, if participants indicated that they had knowledge of this subject, they were asked to speak briefly about their understanding and experience. If participants stated that they did not have knowledge of anti-carceral principles, they were asked about their thoughts on movements that seek to divest from policing and prisons, particularly in exploring violence prevention outside of the confines of the carceral state and its operations (e.g. surveillance, arrest, incarceration, punishment, etc.).

All twelve participants who completed the screening call were invited to participate in the study. They each completed either an oral consent process on Microsoft Teams (if they planned to attend the focus groups via Zoom) or signed an informed consent form in-person at the first focus group. Similar to the CAB, participants were offered the option to remain anonymous in the publication of the framework or be identified publicly depending on their preference and

comfort. Some participants chose to remain anonymous (n=4), while others expressed that they were interested in being publicly identified and credited as a co-designer of the framework (n=8). All participants indicated on the informed consent form that they would respect the confidentiality of their peers regardless of their decision. In this findings section, participants are referred to with pseudonyms; however, the planned publication of the framework outside of this dissertation might list some participants by name, although any direct quotes will not be attributed to them.

Data Collection

My project involved two key sites of data collection: (1) the CAB, which used participant observation and fieldnotes to document our conversations and emerging reflections; and (2) the series of group conversations with men university students about co-designing a framework for engaging other men in anti-carceral feminist violence prevention.

Community Advisory Board – Participant Observation (PO)

The CAB participated in four meetings, held roughly bi-monthly, on Zoom from April 2024 to February 2025. Prior to these meetings, I would design and send out an agenda that could be amended based on their feedback and ideas. Meetings were scheduled for 90-minutes and were designed to focus on men student participant recruitment, the progress of the focus groups with men students, data analysis, design of the framework, and the possibilities of knowledge translation and mobilization.

Throughout my interactions with the CAB, I used participant observation (PO) and taking fieldnotes as a form of data collection. Participant observation, broadly, refers to the practice of the researcher actively taking part in conversations, groups, spaces, cultures, and other daily practices of a specific community for the purpose of understanding their customs, traditions,

interactions, values, and ways of life (Musante, 2015). In observation, the researcher engages in conversation with community members to further their knowledge and understanding of important interactions and practices. Data is collected and analyzed via fieldnotes, which document the key themes of interactions and practices observed by the researcher and the researcher's own thoughts, reflections, and takeaways (Papen, 2019).

In the CAB, I used PO and fieldnotes during our bi-monthly meetings to document the conversation between members and gain further insights about recruitment and early data analysis of emerging narratives from the conversations with men students. Rather than recording and transcribing CAB meetings as I did the focus groups with men students, PO and fieldnotes allowed for organic dialogue between CAB members to still be understood as a source of data, while also only focusing on major themes rather than specific details. PO was the chosen method of collecting data with the CAB as opposed to formalized focus groups and audio recordings of our conversations as I was more interested in major themes emerging from our unstructured conversations. As CAB members were granted permission to participate in the project often by their organizations, I wanted to reduce the risk of a breach of confidentiality by using PO rather than audio recordings. I presented this to CAB members, who expressed appreciation for the decision even though none were particularly concerned about their organization learning about what they shared in the project. As Olive and Thorpe (2011) note, PO and fieldnotes can be enormously beneficial for feminist projects as it pertains to facilitating and documenting researcher reflexivity; namely, it aided in integrating my own thoughts and reflections about my position and influence on the research. However, I also want to note that PO reflects a kind of surveillance that could be deeply aligned with the carceral state and act as a kind of carceral gaze. As I was observing conversations and making fieldnotes, I maintained the power to

introduce my interpretations in a way that could be an imposition of my worldview, an exclusion of perspectives outside of my own, and an extension of the carceral state's governing mechanisms. I introduce this tension and consideration to recognize that, while it might not have been my intention, the use of PO retains its roots in colonial carcerality and must be readily interrogated as a method of data collection and analysis.

Men Students – Participatory Focus Groups

The second part of my data collection sought to facilitate three distinct group conversations with men postsecondary students. While I am using the term “focus groups” here, they were participatory, iterative, and adapted depending on the conversations with the CAB and the input of the men participants as we proceeded. In this way, they were less structured and formal than focus groups tend to be in qualitative data collection. These conversations drew on principles of FPAR to invite men into a shared space to discuss their ideas, imaginings, and perspectives to mobilize into the co-design of a tangible framework for engaging other men in anti-carceral feminist violence prevention work. For each focus group, participants had the option to attend in-person at McMaster University or online via Zoom, which was projected to a television in our meeting room and captured via an OWL (a conferencing technology that has a 360 degree camera and a microphone to capture in-person conversation for a hybrid meeting) and a Zoom recording.

Framing Anti-Carceral Praxis

In consultation with the CAB and my supervisor, and based on participants' requests during the screening call, I prepared a brief peer educational presentation to deliver at the beginning of the first focus group (after introductions and an icebreaker) to orient participants to the topic. This presentation spanned roughly fifteen minutes. In my previous experience

facilitating research with men on GBSV, I found that creating space for them to become better acquainted with the topic allowed conversation to flow more organically as they were primed for discussion and had information to draw upon to inform their contributions. All participants indicated that this presentation was helpful and provided them with a starting point to engage with. The presentation began with some background on GBSV, including a working definition, some national and provincial statistics to demonstrate the prevalence of the issue and its under-reporting, and some local case examples of ineffective responses to GBSV (e.g. Hamilton Police Services' mislabelling of 70% of sexual assault cases as "unfounded"). Participants were encouraged to ask questions and express their thoughts as we proceeded through the presentation.

Based on participants' ideas and requests after the first focus group, I also prepared a short presentation again for the second focus group that focused explicitly on anti-carceral approaches to violence intervention and prevention. Halfway through the second focus group, I delivered a short (roughly ten-minute) presentation that offered this information with sources, alongside an additional handout with references for them to peruse based on their own interest in the subject matter. This presentation was then followed by a discussion about beginning to shape the co-design of our framework. All participants indicated that this presentation was a helpful primer that allowed them to imagine anti-carcerality as we began designing the framework.

Focus Groups

For the first focus group, I designed a tentative focus group guide based on my own knowledge and experience of designing and facilitating qualitative research to orient the project to my research questions about the factors/conditions that sustain men's engagement in GBSV work and to identify themes/topics that would be used to engage men who want to participate in

GBSV work (see Appendix F) The first session, which took place in mid-April 2024, began with a brief capacity-building workshop presented via PowerPoint presentation, as mentioned above. Following this presentation, I then posed a series of questions to participants about their perspectives on what motivates and/or challenges men's participation in anti-violence work and the possibilities of applying an anti-carceral lens to this conversation. At the end of the first focus group, I asked for and then noted participants' suggestions for key topics to cover in the second focus group. The design of the second focus group guide was supplemented by suggestions from the CAB during our first meeting.

I sent the new focus group guide to men student participants over email prior to our second meeting, which was held in early May 2024 (see Appendix G). Based on the CAB's ideas, we began the second workshop with an arts-based activity, where participants were invited to create a collage, mind-map, or other piece (e.g. jotted notes, poetry, etc.) to explore how violence is framed in popular media and where men are positioned in conversations about violence. This activity was borne from conversations with my CAB about different ways to prime men students for the discussion and invite them to reflect in creative ways. Participants were given thirty minutes to create a collage or a mind-map, jot down some thoughts, and/or sit and reflect on the question. The four participants in the in-person space were given magazines to collage, while the eight online participants were able to brainstorm via different online mediums, such as Canva. Many shared that they were not often given the opportunity to engage in arts-based reflections, particularly in gender-specific spaces for men, and seemed excited to participate in the activity. Upon completing the activity, participants were encouraged to share their creation and discuss what it evoked for them.

The arts-based activity was followed by a brief overview of successful examples of anti-carceral work in the community, which was explicitly requested by participants and delivered via another short PowerPoint presentation as described above. We concluded the second focus group with a conversation about how we wanted to imagine co-designing the framework, including key themes, concepts, format, and presentation. Participants decided that, in lieu of gathering for a third focus group to parse this out further, they wanted to add their ideas to a shared Google Doc and come together with CAB members for the data analysis workshop as the final formal meeting. As a brief note, in this conversation, we also spoke about where the framework could be used and how it could be integrated into specific spaces, such as within sexual violence prevention programs on campus or as a course credit or microcredential in a higher education institution. This conversation was largely informal as men students spoke of how to give the framework a structured place to live.

The group conversations were audio recorded via Zoom for the purposes of transcription, which were initially completed by Zoom's automated AI transcription and cleaned up manually by me. I also took fieldnotes during the focus groups to document any key reflections and takeaways that might be difficult to capture in an audio recording, particularly in ensuring that participants' suggestions were clearly articulated and approved by them. At the end of the first focus group, I shared my notes via email to participants, which all indicated was a helpful reminder and an accurate description of our conversation. At the end of the second focus group, I shared my notes again via pasting them into the shared Google Doc; participants commented that they were grateful for these shared notes as they aptly reflected the group dialogue. For the one participant who could not attend any of the focus groups synchronously or in-person, they were invited to review the notes and transcripts from the session and participate in a way that worked

best for them, whether that be sharing thoughts via email, a call with me, or by coming to the next session and expressing their ideas.

Data Analysis Workshop

In June 2024, we hosted our data analysis workshop with both CAB members and men student participants. The purpose of this session was both to create space for participants to analyze their own data and serve as another form of data collection as participants began to fully articulate the central principles of the framework. This was an optional session for men students; however, most participants chose to attend. The data analysis workshop had eight in-person participants and ten online participants.

The session was hosted via a hybrid format, with the option of in-person participation at McMaster University or via Zoom. The session was recorded via Zoom and transcribed through both AI automated transcription and my own manual cleanup. We were joined by Sam Bradd, a graphic notetaker from Drawing Change; participants expressed an eagerness to have a graphic notetaker capture our discussion and provide the basis for the framework that we were co-designing. Sam has a history of being involved in social change projects, and I learned about his work through another anti-violence organization, Possibility Seeds. Sam maintained a strong knowledge of the subjects that we were discussing, and he was excited to support this project. During our call prior to the data analysis workshop, Sam mapped out his approach and supplemented his design with the notes that I provided him from our focus groups. Sam joined the data analysis workshop via Zoom as he resides in British Columbia.

I designed a data analysis workshop guide (see Appendix H), which was sent to and approved by participants prior to our meeting. Sam suggested some engaging icebreaker activities that I deployed at the beginning and halfway points of the workshop, which encouraged

participants to spend a few minutes free writing about and then verbally sharing what motivates them to be involved in this work and one thing that they would change to address GBSV if they could do so overnight. These questions primed participants to engage and aided in building rapport between the CAB and men student participants. These activities were followed by questions about any salient themes, concepts, or tensions that participants saw as most important to include in the framework. We then reviewed the notes that I had written to summarize previous group discussions and the Google Doc that participants had been working on to outline their ideas for co-designing the framework, which were projected onto the television and visible for both online and in-person participants. As we talked, I continued to add live notes to the Doc for all participants to review in real-time. In retrospect, I would have benefitted immensely from having a technological support person to help with navigating the hybrid format and an additional notetaker as I struggled with attending to all the moving pieces.

At the halfway point and again at the end of the session, Sam shared his screen to show his progress then his finished product of the graphic notetaking. This was a particular highlight of the study; participants were amazed by Sam's work as it beautifully captured the complexity and dynamics of our conversations. Participants expressed that they wanted this image to be featured prominently in whatever we produced, as either a title page or the first thing that people see when they open the framework physically or digitally. Sam asked for any feedback, which participants provided briefly and that I provided again via email. We received the final version in June 2024 (see Appendix I).

Following our final formal meeting, both CAB members and men student participants were invited to review the completed framework, provide their feedback, and indicate their

interest in participating in follow-up dissemination efforts, which remain ongoing. However, formal data collection concluded in June 2024.

Data Analysis

As mentioned, the data analysis workshop was our first step into analysis, while also serving as our final stage of formal data collection. During my ongoing interactions with the CAB, our latter meetings were an opportunity to continue analyzing the data via thematic analysis, which I outline below. CAB members had the option to review my fieldnotes throughout the duration of the project. Due to potential ethical concerns, the CAB did not review transcripts of the focus groups with men student participants; however, they were invited to discuss broader narratives and themes that I documented in my notes. Similarly, men students were invited after formal data collection ended to review my notes and analyses, including the final iteration of the framework. This approach aligns with my theoretical and methodological commitments by ensuring that participants are involved in various stages of the research, including analysis of the data, so that they feel that their contributions are being fairly, ethically, and accurately represented.

For both the fieldnotes and transcripts of the focus groups, I used thematic analysis to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is described as a method of identifying, examining, and documenting patterns or themes within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thematic analysis (TA) is a standalone descriptive method that can flexibly organize data, which is often used in conjunction with other data analysis methods; in other words, TA is not a methodology, but a method of analyzing data in the context of another methodology (e.g. FPAR). I chose TA for my data analysis as its wide applicability and accessibility fit neatly within the project, where I wanted to use participatory data analysis and encourage those with minimal experience to still be

able to feel like they could contribute. TA has been readily used in FPAR as it remains an accessible and effective approach to data analysis that participants can readily engage with (Liebenberg, Jamal, & Ikeda, 2020; Godden, 2025). Although it is a malleable approach, TA requires special attention and should be conducted in a way that maintains the integrity of the data, adequately responds to given research question(s), and (re)articulates the purpose of the study (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2019; Labra et al, 2020).

Because TA can work well within various epistemological approaches, it creates space for both inductive and deductive analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2019). While my methodological approach to the study was iterative and participatory, I found that I could not completely remove myself from deductive analyses due to my subjective knowledge and experience of the topic. Participants also came into the study with immense knowledge and experience, which facilitated natural deductive analyses. Here, these approaches worked in conjunction to assist me in organizing and making sense of the data in a way that would not happen if I were to attempt to stick to either approach. Similarly, my TA approach allowed for various kinds of readings of the data, including literal, interpretive, and reflexive, to happen simultaneously (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2019; Labra et al, 2020). Literal reading refers to summarizing and analyzing what is directly said by participants, while interpretive and reflexive reading also recognizes contextual meanings of what participants share and how the researcher's subjectivity also shapes participation and analysis.

According to Labra et al (2020), TA can “promote social justice and combat inequalities” and “transmit people’s ideas, perceptions, and opinions by analyzing and disseminating participant discourses” (p.183). In this way, this method is aligned with my epistemological commitments to anti-carceral feminisms. Here, identifying shared themes and patterns can assist

To code transcripts, I began by reading them several times over and making notes via the “insert comment” function on Microsoft Office. While I considered using a coding software, such as NVivo, I felt more comfortable with manual coding on a Word document as there were only three transcripts to analyze and I had done manual coding via Word previously. Then, I used the coloured highlighting function on the Word documents to pick out important concepts, ideas, reflections, and questions to begin devising potential themes. A theme, according to Braun and Clarke “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (as quoted by Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, p.809). I identified several different themes that were slowly refined, reviewed, collapsed, and reconfigured throughout the process of data analysis. This process was completed through organizing the codes on a different Word document, moving similar codes together, and deciding on a salient theme that summarized the common threads of each code. While this was a more arduous and technical process, I found that it made me intimately familiar with the data and gave me some freedom in collating and organizing my ideas.

In the next chapter, I focus on three major themes that capture *the state of things*; that is, participants’ reflections and insights on where we currently are regarding men’s (dis)engagement and positioning in GBSV prevention work. The second findings chapter moves into *where we are going*, which focuses on the anti-carceral imagining and co-designing that happened throughout the project. That chapter concludes with *what we created*: the final iteration of the framework that participants co-designed.

Chapter 5: “The State of Things”

In this chapter, I explore three major themes emerging from the first two focus groups with men student participants and ongoing conversations in the quarterly CAB meetings: men’s (dis)engagement from GBSV work, how and where men are positioned in this project and in the broader feminist anti-GBSV project, and how GBSV is framed. The first focus group created space for participants to consider the motivations, deterrents, successes, and challenges of existing approaches to GBSV prevention work with men. This conversation was a practical one, where participants identified specific examples of what invites them in or turns them away from becoming more actively involved in anti-violence work on campus or in their own communities. The second focus group built upon these reflections but also took us a step back into the more theoretical; participants were asked to reflect on how violence is framed and where men are (dis)located in conversations about GBSV. These two focus groups enabled men student participants to join with CAB members to imagine co-designing a framework that drew upon and actualized these conversations in ways that were innovative, disruptive, and explicitly concerned with challenging dominant narratives that alienate men from participating in GBSV prevention work.

About the Participants

In recruitment of both the CAB and men student participants, I aimed to bring together a diversity of perspectives from various social positionings, as my previous research had almost exclusively focused on white, cisgender, heterosexual men. During this project, I wanted to elicit the perspectives of men from non-dominant social positionings to better situate our analyses and knowledge mobilization among a diverse population.

The CAB (seven people) was composed of three cisgender white women, one of whom was formerly incarcerated; one cisgender Black woman; one cisgender Black man; and two cisgender racialized men, one of whom is openly gay. The men student participants (twelve people) included six cisgender Black and racialized men, two of whom were international students; five cisgender white men; and one white masculine non-binary person. Seven men were current undergraduate students, three had just graduated from their undergraduate degrees and were transitioning into graduate studies for the 2024/25 academic year, and two were current graduate students. I did not ask men student participants to identify their sexual orientations; however, it should be noted that all participants spoke of heterosexual relationship dynamics with women throughout the study.

Tensions and Possibilities of Men's (Dis)Engagement

The first focus group explored what compels and deters men from becoming actively engaged in GBSV prevention efforts, whether it be via their own personal learning, peer and social engagement, and/or organized and community-based participation. This question became an underlying thread through the second focus group, the data analysis workshop, and any subsequent activities related to co-designing and developing the framework. Both CAB members and men student participants continuously returned to considerations of (dis)engagement to practically apply our conversation to imagining the central values and commitments of the framework. While I provide examples from each, the summary of our dialogues on men's engagement in GBSV is consolidated in the table depicted below, which was co-developed and approved by the men student participants and the CAB.

<i>Barriers/Challenges</i>	<i>Motivations</i>
Personal discomfort (e.g. feeling awkward, uncomfortable, uncertain, unsure, unaware, fearful, unwelcome, etc.)	Personal connection (e.g. knowing someone affected by the issue)

○ Feeling like you don't know enough about it and, therefore, can't contribute anything meaningful ● Positionality and where you are in proximity to the conversation (e.g. how it differs depending on your race, sexual orientation, class, etc.) ● Historic exclusion of men from the conversation, ranging from subtle/normalized assumptions about men's roles to openly hostile resistance to men being part of the dialogue ● The breadth of GBV as an issue and being uncertain about where/how you've engaged in harm (e.g. shame re: past behaviours, fear of or unwillingness to exercise accountability) ● Popular methods of GBV prevention – e.g. approaches that are fear-mongering, one-size-fits-all, generic, asynchronous, impersonal, etc.	○ Hearing stories, stats, etc. about prevalence ○ Seeing how GBSV has been normalized interpersonally/socially/culturally and wanting to break out of these dynamics/cycles ● Seeing that it is not changing or getting better over time; wanting to be a part of the solution ● Seeing/experiencing failures in institutional or state responses to the issue (e.g. lack of transparency, re-traumatization, etc.) ● How it affects the entire community and how it is connected to forms of oppression (e.g. racism, ableism, misogyny, classism, colonialism, etc.) ● Interested in imagining better methods/approaches that take into account survivors, perpetrators, and the entire community ● Wanting the message to reach people who need to hear it
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Table 1: Co-created with the participants from our discussions in Focus Groups 1 and 2.

According to participants, there are several interrelated factors that facilitate men's disengagement from GBSV prevention efforts, ranging from individual to structural. In our focus groups, the men student participants began with discussing individual and interpersonal challenges of participating in this work, citing feelings of awkwardness, discomfort, fear, and uncertainty about what kind of engagement would be welcome or appropriate. As Anish describes, "I find it awkward to just get started in these conversations, so there's no good place to get involved." Other participants expressed that they felt as if they were intruding in feminist or survivor-centred spaces, and they often feared hostility or rejection if they attempted to get involved.

In response to these comments, John, a graduate student in the group, offered a compelling reflection that prompted further conversation among the group:

I'm kind of thinking...what I've heard everyone else's sort of experiences based on this question and I definitely have had similar sentiments in terms of not wanting to feel like I'm intruding on different safe spaces, but at the same time, I feel like something that I've really gotten to learn in my graduate research working with an Indigenous community as a settler is, if you're able to own your positionality and recognize how your identity is going to impact the way you engage in conversations, people tend to be very open-minded about having you participate in those conversations. And I don't think that's the case always, obviously, but yeah, just something I wanted to mention.

John's comment became a sentiment that the group returned to in later stages of the study. In particular, there was a keen interest in identifying and exploring how men must reflect on their own positionality and social identities to better understand how it affects their disengagement. As Sam and Felix reflected:

Sam: I think a big barrier for what's preventing men from getting involved in these conversations has a lot to do with avoiding taking accountability for things. A lot of times there are things that are kind of in a questionable area that a lot of men would rather not admit to themselves might actually be in the vein of sexual violence. It's difficult to try and confront this issue when you realise that hey, maybe I was part of this issue. And there's always this urge, like [to say] "not all men. I'm okay. I wouldn't do that." But I think there's something to be said about the fact that that's not just because you wouldn't be that way, just because a guy wouldn't participate in that action, doesn't mean that there isn't a responsibility as a man in the sense that we are a part of a larger group that has

carried out and continues to carry out violence. And it isn't just because we're special, or we're the good men. So I think we have to enter into the conversation, not trying to excuse ourselves from the violence that other men have perpetrated, but rather situate ourselves in this larger group of men and try and figure out what it is that makes it so common for men to carry out violence.

Felix: I agree. I don't want to say obviously we should make it clear that they're the perpetrator of this to an extent, of course, but not make it so we're the laws or dictators and we're belittling them to a huge extent and kind of blaming them for everything. I think for a lot of guys it creates...there's almost this anger surrounding their situations and surrounding sort of these things that happen where they feel as though, what you were just saying with, "oh, not all men, I wouldn't ever do that." And they have this anger and that kind of builds into this reluctance to actually speak about these certain issues. So I think when you really express to them that even though a large number of men actually are the perpetrators of this, it's not necessarily your fault in a sense, if you know what I mean. You've been socialized or you've been conditioned to make certain acts this way, and I think that can make men feel a little bit more comfortable actually talking about how you can combat violence...and gender-based violence specifically.

This interaction emphasizes that, while defensiveness can be normal or expected, men can be invited to reflect on their resistance and reframe conversations about gender-based violence not as a personal attack or indictment. Sam's comments allude to how self-identification as a "good" man might inadvertently justify men's disengagement from the issue as they do not see themselves as causing harm and, therefore, are not responsible for challenging gender-based violence. He also points to the difficulty of identifying past experiences where men might have

engaged in misogynistic or sexually violent behaviours and are subsequently navigating feelings of guilt, shame, or discomfort that distance them from practicing accountability, an especially tricky dynamic that participants continued to reflect on. Felix's response builds on how the popular refrain of "not all men," often articulated by self-identified "good" men, might be signalling a frustration with perceived generalization of men's perpetration of violence. This dynamic became a point of continued discussion amongst the group who identified violent behaviours on a spectrum, ranging from "rape jokes" and consumption of violent pornography, to the perpetration of sexual assault. This framing is discussed in a later section of the findings.

Alongside participants' commentary on the contributing factors to men's alienation and disengagement from anti-violence work, we reflected on our motivations for being involved in these conversations at various stages throughout the study. Participants found common themes and shared experiences throughout these conversations, which built rapport and enriched discussion. Many of the participants returned to these motivators spontaneously as we co-designed the framework. Participants expressed that men's engagement is underscored by a variety of personal, social, and systemic factors, ranging from having personal relationships with people who have been affected by gender-based violence (particularly women) to seeing statistics about the consistent prevalence of gender-based violence internationally.

Men's Framing of their Involvement in the Project

Interestingly, participants articulated an understanding of the impacts of GBSV that extends beyond the survivor to both perpetrators and community members. As Jack shared, "Not only would this [project] benefit the people who are affected by it but also create some sort of understanding or framework for preventing it within the population who are perpetrators." The role that prevention work maintains in supporting and addressing perpetrators of GBSV,

particularly in contending with recidivism among non-criminalized populations, was an unexpected and unprompted consideration among the group.

This commentary was supplemented by reflections from participants on how the normalization of unhealthy relationship behaviours was a motivation to engage in reimagining and challenging these dynamics. As one interaction demonstrates:

Sam: There is a very much a culture, not just in university but in young adults, that's not outright sexual violence, but a misconception of what sexual interactions are meant to be. And a very pervasive problem is that people are not understanding or they're not fully understanding what it means to engage in healthy sexual relationships. I do see people that will be hurt by somebody and think it's a normal part of a relationship. And I think that's kind of what motivates me to want to be involved in conversations like this is that to kind of break that conception that this is what the norm is. Like, you deserve better than that!

Darren: Yeah, totally, and you see that happen in media a lot, too. Like an example in a movie or a TV show that is given that you can viscerally see and hear and you've learned about the issue through this character, you feel like you've come to know them, and it kind of demonstrates your options for how you can respond to situations. And that can be a good thing or bad thing, right? Like, I think media is a really big part of how people can learn about the issue of unhealthy relationships or violence and the options available to them.

Ijay: Yeah, I agree. And I think a lot of these issues and the behaviours and opinions people have about gender-based violence, they start and early, whether it be through media like you said, or sports, like hockey, baseball, football, whatever. And that opens

up a whole other conversation about, like, how gender-based violence and sports is also connected to how guys are expected to act or joke around or be on a boys' team, which we know is often where a lot of, like, harmful comments are made and normalized.

The binary between what violence does or does not “count” as harmful was a significant talking point in our group discussions. What emerged was the normalization of unhealthy relationships, which then expanded into discussions among the group about how this is communicated and reified in everyday practices, such as media, peer relationships, gender socialization, and familial history. Participants voiced that they were motivated to contribute to this project to benefit the broader community and break social patterns that facilitate GBSV, such as by identifying the harms in normalized unhealthy relationships and making it easier for people to speak openly about their concerns without threat of scrutiny, exclusion, or violence.

Connected to the normalization of GBSV, participants voiced a frustration with the perceived ways that this issue persists and how such feelings motivate them to be involved in GBSV prevention. In the first focus group, I began with a brief overview of GBSV to prime participants for the conversation, which reviewed key statistics, media case examples, and different conceptualizations of how the problem has been traditionally addressed (e.g. via the criminal legal system). When asked to then reflect on what motivates them to be engaged in ending GBSV, two participants shared:

Ijay: For me, I think it's just that I feel like this is an issue that we should have moved past by now as a society, and I think that the fact that it's still here and from the statistics you shared, it's not changing. It is something that is concerning. It needs to be addressed in terms of, if we're progressing in so many different areas of who we are and the way we behave in society, why is this something that hasn't changed?

Anish: So my view from what everyone else has been mentioning, and when we're talking about, like, society, has been more on the western side. I have heard of stories from back home of all these events and that's what motivates me to try talk because...I guess, over here, we're in a western country and maybe we can talk about this more and tailor the conversation to where we're at, but there's also other parts of the world which don't, I guess, get talked about too much. That's my motivation...to be able to talk about this back home and have those stories heard, too.

John: I appreciate that comment. I'm also very, very interested in how things like gender-based violence and other issues in society are, from my perspective, symptoms of dysfunctional societal symptoms or societal frameworks. Something like gender-based violence is such a core component of a force like colonialism, for example, or capitalism. I think a lot of these issues are really not so much that the system is failing as much as these systems are working in ways that they were designed to and they're benefiting the people that they're designed to benefit, and we're just really upset that people are getting hurt and we're more aware of that now.

As Ijay's comments emphasize, the group saw GBSV as an issue that we should have evolved past as a society, therefore posing as a motivation to challenge the longevity and sustainability of GBSV. This observation was compounded by participants' reflections on how the system is clearly "failing" because GBSV persists. Anish's comments urge us to consider the implications of this thinking on non-western contexts and how western approaches to GBSV cannot be framed as a universal liberatory praxis. Anish also implicitly points to naming colonialism and other imperialist forces in non-western contexts as endemic to the proliferation of GBSV in non-western places. John's reflections on how the system designed to address GBSV (i.e. the criminal

legal system) is built on foundations of colonialism that are working as intended: to harm marginalized persons and reify the carceral-capital machine. This is a key tension as a western approach is still privileged in our analyses despite participants' hopes to also discuss non-western contexts and experiences, which is also situated alongside the reality that we are limited by having these dialogues in a western academic space. Such commentary became a salient point to return to as we waded into exploring anti-carceral approaches to GBSV prevention that ask us to look outside of current models, especially considering the experiences of doing this work in a western context.

The Imposition of Traditional Masculinity and Men's Dislocation

In the arts-based portion of the second focus group, men produced mind maps and collages to explore how men are more generally positioned in conversations about GBSV. I clarified that these "conversations" could refer to formal services (e.g. in consent campaigns and allyship groups, in education, in workplace training about GBSV, etc.), informal social settings, such as with intimate partners, family, and friends, and/or in media (e.g. TV shows, movies, etc.). The first example depicts a mind map and notes completed by Yadhu. His piece brainstorms the connection between how violence is portrayed and communicated in the media and its subsequent impacts on men's identity formation, self-perception, and expressions of masculinity.

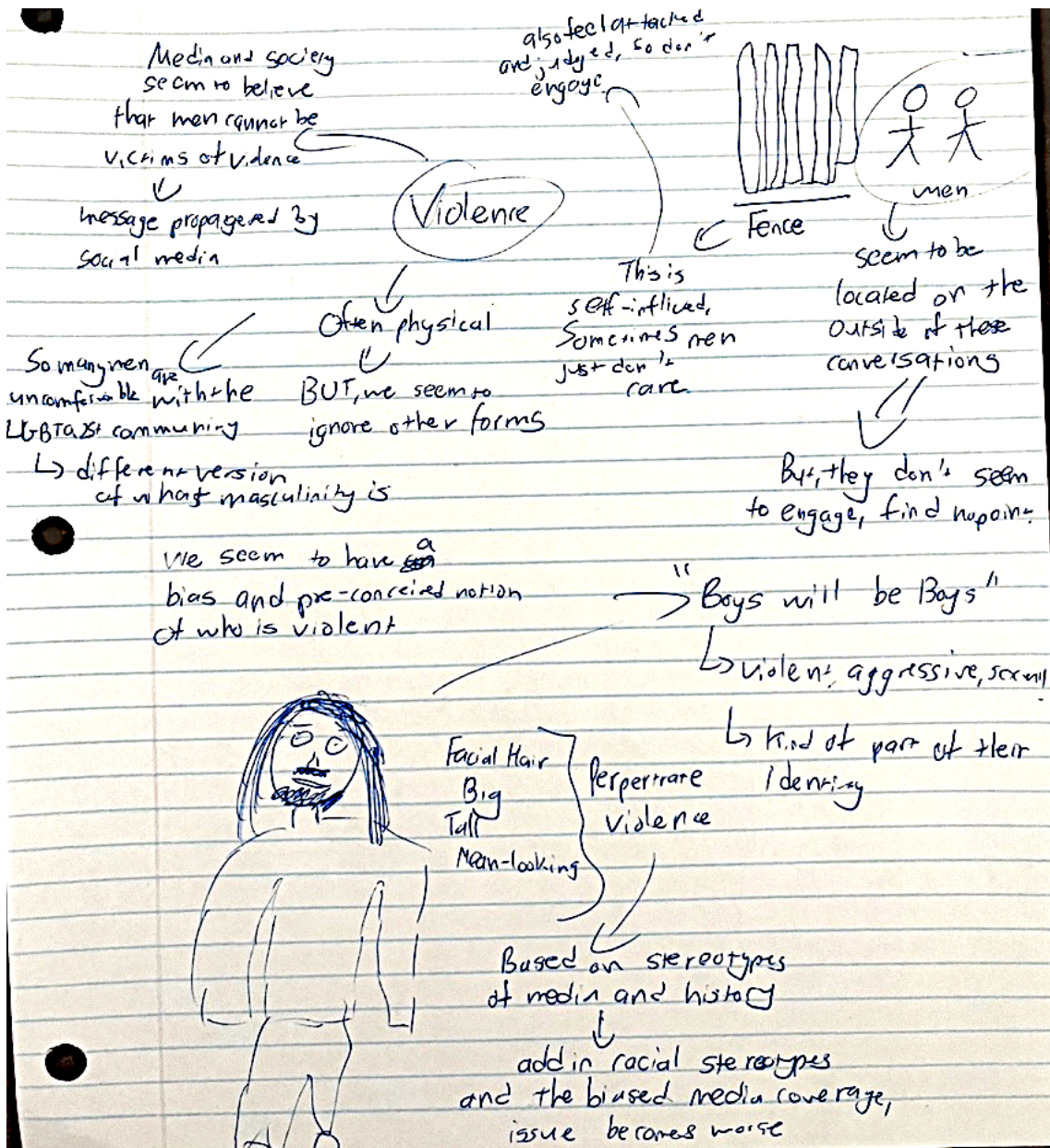


Figure 4: Yadhu's collage.

As he writes "We seem to have a bias and pre-conceived notion of who is violent," which is then accompanied by a drawing of how men are expected to visually present (e.g. facial hair, tall, physically strong, "mean-looking"). Yadhu suggests that these ideas are reified through media, history, stereotypes, and popular motifs like "boys will be boys." Despite this interrelationship between cisheteropatriarchal masculinity and violence, which he indicates is "worsened" by racial stereotypes and biased media coverage, Yadhu depicts a fence to indicate how men are

often positioned “outside of these conversations...but they don’t seem to engage” or they “find no point” in being involved.

Yadhu’s drawing incited additional reflections from other participants about how socialization of traditional masculinity must be considered on the spectrum of GBSV, which emerged as a salient theme among participants’ conversations. An interaction between two participants expanded on these ideas:

Jack: It’s not necessarily that men are explicitly portrayed in media as violent people, but young boys are implicitly socialized in order to see these things that will eventually lead to mindsets which would encourage gender-based violence. So kind of like this, “men are better than women,” these small things, or even “men need to be breadwinners.” They need to be muscular, they need to be into sports, they need to be bad boys that can go to prison ready for anything. These things where these single words that we see in a lot of the collages...like, the confidence and sex appeal. So it’s like these things where you’re just exposed to them and kind of like “this is the perfect man” that will eventually lead to these mindsets, which are like, “I’m better than you. I deserve you.” And that kind of leads to that sexual violence kind of thing, too.

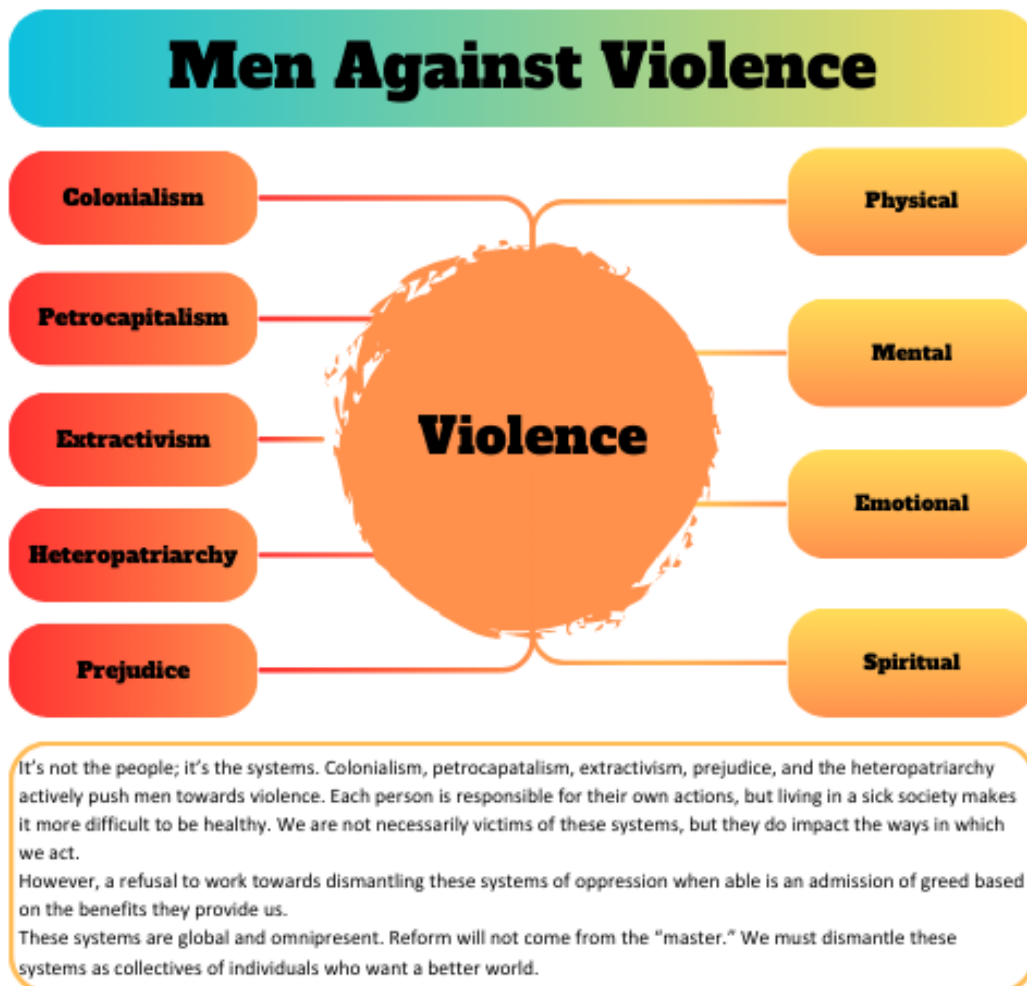
Josh: Yeah, absolutely. My takeaway on this topic is that the way we express our emotions or the ways we can even conceive of how to react to certain things can sometimes be dictated by the media we’ve consumed. And I’m not saying it’s like, “oh, because we’ve watched this one video of this man punching somebody, like, okay, I’m going to now go punch other people.” But if you didn’t know previously that it was acceptable or this was a mode of expressing anger or something, you wouldn’t have thought to express it that way. So I think media, for better or for worse, TV shows, web

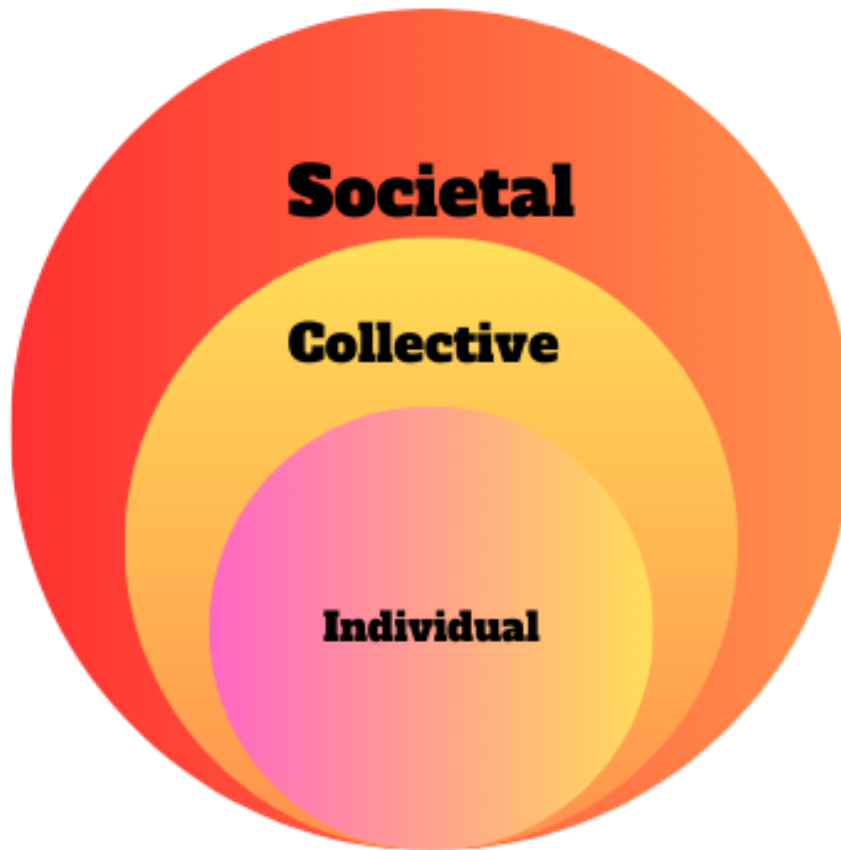
tunes, comics, anime, stuff like that, can change the way people think of expressing their emotions. And I think “The Boys” and “Invincible” are good examples of where masculinity is linked to expressing your emotions through violence. You’re allowed to have these episodes where you’re just like, “oh, I’m so mad right now. I’m going to start hurting the people around me physically or emotionally. And after I calmed down, it’s like, okay, we’re fine now. Sorry, I just had that little moment that I’m allowed to have because I’m a man.” And it’s like this is a way of outfitting or expressing this emotion of anger.

Participants drew connections between media portrayals of masculinity and their associations with seemingly “acceptable” expressions of men’s violence, particularly if they are a result of anger or a demonstration of physical, intellectual, or sexual superiority. Representations in the media of cisheteropatriarchal masculinity might be internalized by boys consuming the content as reflective of the “ideal” or as an expectation to meet and exceed. While participants were clear that singular media representations do not automatically facilitate violent perpetration among viewers, normalization and conflation of these images with the idea of “the perfect man” can lead to the proliferation of misogyny, sexual entitlement, and the justification of violence. Such comments reflect Sam’s earlier reflections on the normalization of unhealthy relationships behaviours and their interplay with men’s gendered socialization in romantic and sexual spaces. In this process, men are positioned in conversations about violence in potentially essentialist, naturalist, and binary ways, whereby violence is inherent within or synonymous with ideal demonstrations of traditional masculinity.

Contributing to this rich discussion, John’s mind map located these reflections in the dynamic interrelationship between individual, collective, and societal iterations of violence.

Throughout the focus groups, John drew upon his graduate research experience working with Indigenous communities to continue to ground the conversation in understanding how interpersonal violence is symptomatic of systems of oppression, like colonialism, capitalism, and cisheteropatriarchy.





Violence manifests at multiple levels. We have the immediate ability to eliminate violence on our individual level. But as violence moves into larger group collectives and towards societal consciousness, it becomes more difficult to address and stop.

We can take ownership for our own behaviour, and we can contribute to the mobilization of likeminded individuals.



Figure 5: Parts of John's mind map.

In John's mind map, he identified systems of oppression as feeding into violence and occurring simultaneously and interdependently on the individual, collective, and societal levels. The bottom section of his mind map was connected to his mapping of different kind of violence; here, John depicted the systemic and structural forms of violence as facilitating the individual and interpersonal forms, such as sexual abuse, coercion, and discrimination. As he aptly writes in his summary, "It's not the people, it's the systems [...]. We are not necessarily victims of these systems, but they do impact the ways in which we act." John's reflections emphasize the perilous

yet necessary navigation of personal accountability and recognition of state violence's role in creating the conditions for violence to sustain and flourish.

The continued return to these ideas was evidently appreciated by other participants who talked about how engagement in GBSV prevention can be bolstered by intentionally naming how men are also subjected to and victims of these violent systems. In response to John's mind map, Jack shared a poignant reflection to further interrogate how men are (dis)located in conversations about GBSV:

I think we talk about violence often as something that you can do to somebody else, but it's also something you can do to yourself. Like, a normalized thing is men drinking or keeping for themselves or not crying and all of these things where it's just like, "you aren't allowed to do that." They are violent actions against yourself as well. I think it's something that's been absent from a lot of our conversations. We don't really talk about that as a thing of violence, but all of those things that John had in his mind map, it's the same thing where they all those also lead to violence against yourself.

In response to Jack's comments, participants agreed that men are frequently positioned as enactors of violence, thus erasing experiences of violence that they have been subjected to at the interpersonal, systemic, and collective levels. However, they also began to think about how those who cause harm might also have experienced harm in these various ways. Participants agreed that space is rarely created for this tension; rather, we rely on a binary understanding of survivor/perpetrator to absolve ourselves from exercising accountability for contributing to the conditions that cause harm against people who use violence, many of whom are men. CAB members were struck by these reflections as they, too, identified these binaries in existing anti-

violence programs, where men are either “perpetrators” or “allies” with little space for the nuance of men’s locations in the discussion.

In this process, men are often marginalized in conversations about violence rather than understood as subjected to the interplay between being victimized by and benefactors of cisheteropatriarchal violence. John’s concluding point in his mind map aptly summarizes this balance: “We can take ownership for our own behaviour, and we can contribute to the mobilization of likeminded individuals” that will ultimately contribute to challenging the societal forces shaping violence. Here, participants clearly articulated how media representations, education, socialization/upbringing, and gender scripting, among other factors, frame violence in a specific way that often denotes hegemonic masculinity, aggression, inevitability, and stereotypes that intersect with racism, classism, and sanism.

Popular Framings of GBSV as Binary, Tangible, and Singular

Alongside the question of where men are positioned in conversations about GBSV, the arts-based activity invited participants to consider how violence is framed in popular media. This question aided us in then discussing how these frames can be troubled and reimagined when translating our reflections into the development of the framework. Two collages in particular captured the central themes emerging from this conversation. The first was completed by Jack, Anish, and Fahri in the in-person space.



Figure 6: Jack, Fahri, and Anish's collage.

The group's collage bridged the dialogue about how GBSV and men's roles are framed. Namely, the centre of their collage used a headline from a mainstream magazine which reads "Married to a Monster." The other words and images surround this central motif, including lines like "Bad Boy," "Earn," "Invest," "Muscle," "Perform," and pictures of muscular bodies, mustaches, wrestling, alcohol, and symbols of monetary wealth. They also included an image of OJ Simpson, a former NFL player and actor who was criminally acquitted but held civilly liable for murdering his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman, a case that continues to sustain public interest and dominate media coverage decades later.

Jack spoke on behalf of the group to explain their approach to making the collage and selecting the words and images from the magazines provided:

I think what we were really trying to get at is... exactly like everyone has been saying about men needing to be muscular and strong and wealthy and bad boys who don't give a fuck. But then we have here, like, the "married to a monster" thing is, like, when the bad boy stuff goes wrong or goes too far. But how do you know when it crosses that line to, like, being a "monster"? When you're just exposed constantly to these things and taught that, like, this is who you're supposed to be, then I think it leads to the entitlement and seeing women as beneath you or less than you...then that also leads to the unwillingness to see what you're doing or saying as harmful. But then, yeah, when does it then cross the line into "oh, you're a monster"? I don't know.

Jack's reflections posed an interesting conundrum between navigating the ideal masculinity according to societal expectations and escalating into a kind of violence that is unacceptable or undesirable. They pointed to OJ Simpson as an example of someone that had been framed both as an ideal man (e.g. athletic, wealthy, successful, masculine, a "playboy" with sex appeal and confidence, etc.) and a "monster" (e.g. a murderer) at different points and how his social identities (as a Black man) were contextually deployed depending on his criminal status and the public perception of his case.

The main headline became a topic of continued discussion as participants contemplated what kinds of violence are seen as acceptable demonstrations of masculinity (e.g. in sport, to express anger, to exert dominance, etc.) as opposed to when violence is seen as intolerable, such as when it is perpetrated against an "innocent" woman. Participants found popular discourses around violent perpetration, such as labels of "monster," as contextually applied depending on the person's social identities, such as race, class, and mental health status, much like how who we see as a true "victim" is determined by the same social and contextual factors. In this frame,

violence is subjected to binary logics about what it is and is not, which is also shaped by who experiences or perpetrates it. The hazy image of a “perpetrator” is one of the Other, an inherently violent monster who is sick, dangerous, and visibly fearsome, while the image of the “victim” is a vulnerable person, usually a woman, who is innocent, helpless, and seen as a part or reflection of our community, not a stranger. Violence in this context is the one that we see often in media, thus glossing over complex and nuanced dynamics of the range of violent behaviours, attitudes, and languages that participants identified in their everyday lives.

In this process, participants suggested that the media’s frame of GBSV as only the most severe or egregious forms (e.g. femicide, sexual assault, physical assault) sustains the conditions that make it difficult to report, challenge, and discuss. An exchange between Ijay and Felix highlights this dynamic:

Ijay: There’s not a clear definition for what we define as gender-based violence and, from my perspective, a lot of it goes under reported because of that. There are so many nuances and, like, tiers of what gender-based violence is, yet we apply one outcome to all of these tiers. So, from this grey area, we haven’t defined it all and come up with tailored responses. It’s kind of hard to map my lived experiences and hard to see that maybe I have gotten close to this line before unintentionally and just knowing where the tiers and lines exist and where we can start to see how our roles fit into this might make it easier to start breaking down that barrier and have a conversation.

Felix: Yeah, I really agree with that, and it made me think of, like, joking around. Like how the jokes that we make can make environments unsafe for people and might not be directly violent but rooted in misogyny or something like that. And so we may unwillingly be enacting certain violence and making people unsafe without realising what

we're doing. And so trying to be more mindful of, well, why do we think certain things are funny? Why is this a joke that's common in media or comedians keep saying it? How could we actually be hurting people or alienating people in these spaces? So yeah, just trying to be more critical about these sorts of things and how violence isn't always the very physical thing we think of and how it can be a little more insidious.

As we progressed through the study, participants' reflections on what violence counts and how it is framed became a central tenet, particularly when we shifted to discussing what approach should underpin the framework. While unpacking the collages and mind maps, participants found that violence is often framed in a universalist and/or essentialist way, where everyone experiences, perpetrates, witnesses, and gains support around it in the same ways, regardless of social identities and contexts. Simultaneously, participants identified how types or "tiers" of violence often overlap; as Jack shared at one point, while this violence can "look different depending on the situation, it's often motivated by the same ideas," such as dominance, power, control, misogyny, and different kinds of oppression on the basis of social identities (e.g. racism, classism, and their interaction).

John added that these "tiers" happen in tandem and at various levels, harkening back to his mind map about the interrelationship between the personal, interpersonal, collective, systemic, and structural. However, when violence is divided into a binary of "acceptable" (e.g. jokes, comments, online hate, etc.) and "unacceptable" (e.g. physical violence), participants suggested that such a framing facilitates "one-size-fits-all" responses that are more alienating and generalist than they are specific and engaging. Such framing was also considered alongside men's own reflections about how they perceive and understand harm that they have caused; the

identify broader forms of violence that are societally justified, tolerated, or seen as necessary, such as war, police violence against marginalized populations, capitalist greed, or the war on drugs. Sam also adds images of support, mental health concerns, and substance use to depict the impacts of this violence on men and their communities

Sam's explanation of his collage highlights the interconnectedness of violence despite its typical framing as siloed:

What I was trying to map out was kind of the divisions of violence where they kind of break down into all their different components or the different types of violence there are, but at the end I was finding a lot of them tend to overlap. There's a lot of overlap in between the people that are the victims of violence and the perpetrators of violence and the types of violence that exist. We know that men tend to be the perpetrators of a lot of this, which isn't a secret, but the framing doesn't really trace the patterns across different types. There's intimate partner violence, child abuse or elder abuse, war, y'know...and these are all distinct, but they all have some sort of overlapping components where the violence takes place in different manners, but it's underscored by the same intention and, y'know, that's "just what what guys do." And then we don't, like, see where it begins and where the state or the system is involved.

Sam's comments summarize common themes that became salient in our group discussions, which is how different forms of violence are often motivated by root issues of misogyny, racism, ableism, and the need for social control. Linking back to Jack, Fahri, and Anish's central "Married to a Monster" motif, participants discussed how social fascination with "why" violence happens – often reified in true crime media – depicts it is an individual, pathological, or moral concern and not as a symptom or as a result of the state's violence and oppression. These

reflections again connected men's position in the conversation and the framing of GBSV: when men are socially conditioned to embody the characteristics of traditional masculinity and violence is framed through binary logics of what does and does not "count," the conditions that facilitate violence are sustained and the systems of oppression remain unchallenged.

As participants moved through the study, they continuously emphasized the need to integrate a state and structural analysis in GBSV prevention programming. As one interaction highlighted:

Felix: What these collages are reminding me of is a topic from one of my classes, where we talked about migrant workers and how they're not protected under a certain labour legislation and are low paid, which means they're often not able to give a significant amount of compensation to their people back in their own country or their family here. And as a result of that, it just creates this huge bubble of anger and violence might happen because of that anger with capitalism. Then they're punished for it. And then they're subjected to violence from, like, non-immigrant people and their employer and the state and it's seen as okay or as needed. It's just a cycle. And I just wanted to say I found that really, really interesting in terms of colonialism. Just the ways that can kind of trickle down through generations is something that's so devastating.

John: To add to that, colonialism and structural violence are not named and not seen as perpetrators of violence. So when you talk have, for example, an individual who is ancestor grandparent, great grandparents suffered an extremely traumatic event or whatever it was, they're now in a situation where their actual physiology is different because of that. And then when you reflect on the fact that so many of these colonial systems are still enforced and still in place, it's like you're taking someone who's already

at quite a disadvantage at a biological level and then you're holding them back and pushing them down even further. So yeah, it just is so nuanced and it is so complex and frustrating.

Here, participants identified the impacts of intergenerational trauma and the interconnected nature of personal, interpersonal, systemic, and state violence. As Felix and John suggest, while we might have some awareness of intergenerational harm, we often do not acknowledge the state, systems, and structures that create, uphold, and perpetuate the conditions that facilitate intergenerational trauma, such as colonialism. Furthermore, individual responses to oppressive conditions – some of which might be violent resistance – are punished by the state as a form of necessary, acceptable, or deserving violence. Felix notes that this creates a cycle of harm rather than meaningfully addressing and preventing further harm from happening. As these experiences are passed down through generations physiologically, socially, and culturally, violence is sustained and remains individualized through analyses of pathology, moral failure, or personal deficit rather than pointing to oppressive conditions facilitating intergenerational harms.

Participants again returned to a non-western perspective that identifies how racialized, immigrant, and those determined “non-Canadian” are subjected to specific framings of violence that rely upon racist, classist, xenophobic imaginaries. Here, we begin to see the turn to carceral critique, whereby dissent and resistance to state violence is framed as violent, thus justifying state intervention and punishment.

Community Advisory Board Reflections

CAB members played a significant role in both analyzing these dialogues and aiding me in creating pathways for new conversations, including suggesting the mind map/collage activity. CAB members enthusiastically agreed that participatory approaches are reflective of best

practices in GBSV prevention with men. Creating space for men to wade into reflexive praxis became a priority when men student participants and CAB members joined for the data analysis workshop and framework co-design. The group also felt connected with men students' efforts to position themselves and their motivations in the study, citing how their own programs and initiatives have aimed to facilitate participation through personalizing content, undertaking strengths-based and allyship approaches, and creating space for men to talk about their experiences, concerns, and ideas.

As it pertains to the various themes discussed in this chapter, CAB members echoed men students' sentiments that men's perceived and experienced disengagement from GBSV prevention can be met in programming with empathy, open-mindedness, a sociostructural analysis of men's violence that does not hyperindividualize the issue nor suggest that men are inherently or inevitably violent, and an invitation for men to think critically about their personal identification and social positioning in this conversation. Particularly, CAB members resonated with supporting men in grappling with how they might have been socialized to normalize and participate in violent behaviour that extends beyond the physical act of sexual assault (e.g. "rape jokes"). In our CAB meeting, however, we also reflected on the challenges of facilitating engagement within the contexts we are bound by; many spoke of how GBSV prevention work is perpetually underfunded and under-resourced, often happening colloquially "off the sides of desks" and being sidelined for necessary reactive work to address violence in our communities. CAB members also empathized with the factors shaping disengagement and how voluntary prevention work with men is rarely well-attended without incentive that goes beyond personal motivation, which is a reflection that underscores the inception of this study.

In our meetings, CAB members appreciated men students' reflections on the binary logics that determine what violence "counts" and what responses are deemed appropriate. They pointed to the carceral values imbued within such approaches, whereby ideas of "good/bad" and "right/wrong" are deployed intentionally to justify specific forms of violence, such as those that are state-sanctioned (e.g. war) or state-enforced (e.g. police violence, criminal punishment, etc.). CAB members indicated that naming such systems of violence can be deeply challenging; much like unhealthy relationship behaviours are normalized, the state's violence is also seen as necessary and effective, thus making it difficult to identify and dismantle. To challenge this dynamic is disruptive, risky, and requires community-building, which are processes that require time, capacity, resources, and continued commitment. CAB members were excited to join with men student participants to imagine how these reflections could be integrated into the framework, with particular emphasis on disrupting mainstream framings of GBSV that uphold the conditions facilitating and sustaining violence.

Furthermore, CAB members continued to point to how the socialization and construction of masculinity is contextual, social, cultural, and temporal; as such, men's positionings in these conversations are highly dependent on the social identities. For example, Jermal pointed to Black men's experiences, specifically, citing terms that serve to alienate Black men from feminist anti-violence work, such as being labelled "bullet bags"¹ by Black women self-identifying as "divestors" from dating Black men. In my own reflections, I recognize that, while there can be shared tenets among men regarding their experiences of being conditioned to embody and uphold traditional or ideal masculinity, we must exercise an understanding and awareness of

¹ "Bullet bags" is a colloquial term to refer to Black men who are victimized by gun violence and/or police violence. Its origins are in white supremacist and racist discourse; however, it has since been cited anecdotally in online spaces by Black men who indicate that Black women use the term to justify their decision to "divest" from or refuse to date Black men (Brown, 2021).

where these expectations and experiences differ, such as how it is modelled by those in their families and social spaces with shared identities (e.g. race, culture, language, etc.). Other CAB members added that the “manosphere,” or the online space where men predominantly articulate and internalize anti-feminist perspectives, varies depending on men’s social identities, thus locating them in shared and contrasting positions when it comes to approaching conversations about GBSV. This was an ongoing tension that stretched into how we approached the co-design of the framework.

In response to participants’ various reflections in these conversations, CAB members were impressed by the group’s continued analysis of the interconnected systems of oppression that shape men’s experiences of violence on personal, collective, and societal levels. However, they also appreciated how participants eschewed deterministic perspectives of how men are socialized to see violence as necessary, tolerable, or acceptable depending on the context; they echoed men students’ concerns about normalization, while also emphasizing that structural analyses should not dodge exercising interpersonal accountability for enacting harm. Notably, CAB members appreciated men students’ attention to non-western dynamics and realities, something that they indicated is rarely integrated into GBSV prevention work in the Ontarian and Canadian contexts. While there are limitations of integrating a culturally comprehensive perspective into any and all anti-violence work, both CAB members and men students expressed a desire to avoid western essentialism in developing and circulating the framework. Such intentions are well-aligned with anti-carceral considerations that imagine transnational abolition projects.

Concluding Remarks

Creating space for men student participants to have these discussions was pivotal to imagining and co-designing the framework. Additionally, the CAB's supplemental insight and reflection continuously re-oriented the conversation to applicability, transferability, and usefulness of the project to existing anti-violence projects in the community. Together, we articulated a snapshot of *the state of things*: men are both excited by and alienated from existing GBSV work. While existing literature focuses often on the technical aspects of their (dis)engagement, as in the tangible things that motivate or challenge men's participation, participants' reflections speak to discursive and epistemological issues in the framing of key concepts, like violence and where men are located in discussions about it. Attending to these concerns requires us to step out of the individualism that naturally permeates our interventions, while also ensuring that any structural analyses are not presented as fatalistic or unpreventable facilitators of men's interpersonal violence. This is a lifelong tension in my own work and a primary motivation for undertaking this project.

This chapter focuses on the dialogues within the focus groups and the CAB's supplementary reflections based on my notes, recollections, and discussion questions derived from the focus groups. The overarching theme of this chapter is *the state of things*, which refers to our focus on the status quo in GBSV prevention, how violence is framed, where men are located in this conversation, and what motivates and inhibits their engagement with this work. While I came to each space equipped to facilitate discussion, men student participants and CAB members were actively involved in leading and shaping the conversation, often taking it in directions that were unexpected, compelling, and nuanced. They also played an integral role in shaping subsequent meetings; I asked them what they wanted to talk about the next time we met, and they expressed their inclinations, hopes, and goals with clarity, passion, and thoughtfulness.

Chapter 6: “Best Intentions and Tensions”

When I was imagining a participatory project for my dissertation, I felt that it was important to create space for men and anti-violence service providers to play an active role in co-designing a framework. Given my experience in co-design, I believed that, in successfully creating this space, the knowledge generated could be mobilized by participants and transferable in various relevant contexts. In practice, the participants were engaged in the project and eager to contribute, which was demonstrated by rich conversations, sustained participation in the series of focus groups, and demonstrated interest in contributing to knowledge dissemination efforts. Simultaneously, aligned with my experiences of facilitating men’s anti-violence programs, there were moments where – despite best intentions – participants had reified and perpetuated some of the central issues that we were collectively seeking to challenge. As I approached the knowledge mobilization phases of the project, I was concerned about the impact of integrating participants’ analyses that explicitly contained dynamics that reflected misogyny, anti-feminism, and/or harm, especially when they were not seen as intentional by participants. Given the participatory nature of the project, whereby men willingly agreed to engage in challenging these dynamics, I, too, did not frequently interpret their comments as consciously or intentionally anti-feminist; nonetheless, I noted these dynamics and wrestled with my own response. I feared that, by sharing my observations of the moments where I noticed this language or ways of thinking during the data collection phase and by writing about these tensions in my dissertation, I would ultimately alienate the very men who I wanted to engage.

Through engaging in a process of deep reflexivity, it became evident that I could not shy away from these reflections as they were essential to practicing transparency regarding the participation of men in GBSV work and in my discussion regarding how to name and work with

these tensions. Aligned with anti-carceral feminist perspectives, reframing accountability as a practice of hope, care, and growth deliberately rebukes the carceral impulse for shame, blame, and resistance to recognizing and owning harms out of fear of punishment. As such, naming dynamics within the study that relied upon anti-feminist rhetoric, regardless of intent, is important within the broader project of GBSV prevention. It is similar to how we talk about white supremacy and racism; if we cannot or will not identify the harms that we have caused and our relationship with white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy, we cannot expect to see changes in how we respond to harm, especially when GBSV is a symptom of this system. Furthermore, identifying and exploring moments in the project where anti-feminist or misogynistic ideas were propagated does not equate to definitively labelling participants as harmful. Rather, in conjunction with anti-carceral feminism, we can resist the “good” and “bad” identity binary altogether in favour of appreciating the complexity of men’s engagement in GBSV. In this chapter, I create space for recognition, appreciation, and celebration of the successes of engaging men in this work *and* for naming the tensions inherent in working with men as a means to interrupt a process of protection (of the men) and a recognition of the work it takes to undo deep-seated learnings, regardless of our best intentions and commitments to social justice.

Defensive Impulses: Discomfort or Unsafety?

To understand men’s perspectives of best practices for engagement, we discussed what men participants have found particularly challenging, disengaging, or alienating about existing GBSV prevention efforts. The following conversation points to some key tensions:

Jack: I think a lot of our responses also understandably focus on the victims of these things, which kind of purposefully, in a sense, excludes men from that conversation. So

there really isn't, I don't know, a thing [for men], where it's like there just needs to be that door open for that conversation to begin in some sense.

Darren: Yeah, I personally feel like it's not a space where I feel like...it almost feels like intruding into a space where the people involved in it, I mean the people impacted by it, can be there for each other, and it feels like my inclusion in that area wouldn't exactly be as beneficial as them having that space to themselves.

Ijay: I think from that point, it also sometimes feels very accusatory when a man tries to get involved. It's like men are the problem and, coming from certain perspectives, all men are the problem. Then it's like, "why are you trying to help? You're the problem or you're making it worse."

Anish: I literally saw a comment online today saying this exactly, like, generalizing behaviours of all men thing, like "don't talk about this as a man when men are the problem" [laughs].

In this exchange, participants expressed fears related to intruding in survivor-centric or women-dominated spaces, unintentionally making others feel unsafe or uncomfortable in their efforts to contribute, and being met with implicit or explicit hostility that would communicate a sense of non-belonging. It also progressed into some reflections about how sentiments that suggest "all men are the problem" make spaces feel less welcoming or possible for men to participate in. As Ijay and Anish allude to, such commentary is seen to be generalizing negative traits to all men in a way that would inhibit their engagement with profeminist, anti-GBSV spaces. This messaging implies that men should not speak about or be involved in addressing issues related to GBSV when they are seen as the "problem."

Expanding on these perceived deterrents from getting involved in the anti-violence movement, the dialogue continued:

Fahri: I think one of the things that turns me off from engaging in these kinds of conversations is the aggressiveness of people from the other side when comments like “all men deserve this” is public and popular. I think, a few years back, a trend online was, like, saying “kill all men” or something. And it doesn’t even have to be to that extent, but it’s very noticeable from the tone of the people who are, like, big in the movement.

Josh: Yeah, I agree with that. At that point, I would personally withdraw from the conversation because I’m like, “you are too aggressive to be having a conversation.

You’re not having an open mind. You clearly have some sort of a set goal, and you just want to talk about that,” and that's not something I’d want to engage in.

Some of the men cited examples of hearing about or witnessing in online spaces the ways that some “feminist” rhetoric homogenized all men as “trash” or, as Fahri notes, that solutions to ending GBSV was to “kill all men.” Such language or sentiment was seen to be alienating for men, thus causing them to become further distanced from the issue in an effort to protect themselves or avoid engaging in arguments with “people from the other side.” Participants agreed that this perceived aggression indicates that profeminist leaders who engage in these behaviours are paradoxically resistant to open and honest conversations about GBSV despite advocacy efforts that seek to draw attention to the issue through discussion.

However, there are a few important things to note. First, participants indicated that they had never expressly experienced such hostility in a direct context, whether it be in-person or online; rather, they had seen it go viral on social media sites. Second, and most notably, there seemed to be an underlying note of bitterness within this discussion. While participants appeared

to genuinely express a desire to support survivors and a fear of making them feel unsafe by intruding, there was also an unaddressed frustration with not being welcome or included in women-specific or survivor-centred spaces. Online commentary that was openly critical of or harsh toward men appeared to be deeply internalized in a way that justified men's resistance to these conversations. Furthermore, it was interesting to see how they spoke about leaders in feminist anti-violence movements: while they rebuked "all men" generalizations that sustain negative connotations, they tended to generalize people in feminist anti-violence work – many of whom have survived GBSV – as disproportionately or irrationally "angry," "aggressive," or "hostile." It was also intriguing to see how they framed these hypothetical leaders as "on the other side" of the argument, as if they are positioned as adversaries rather than allies in GBSV prevention. Alternatively, it could be seen as participants feeling subordinate to feminist leaders and, therefore, less trusted or respected. As a facilitator, it was challenging to hear these ideas propagate in our conversations as it was consistent with what I had experienced in my years of violence prevention work with men. These dynamics evoked questions for me about whether there is a place in feminist participatory research with men to challenge, educate, and capacity-build around GBSV in a way that resembles violence intervention and prevention spaces. I wonder about how this approach would affect men's engagement and responses in a co-design process and whether it would alienate them as I feared or incite further participation as I hoped.

The "How" of Talking About Violence

Expanding on our discussions about men's disengagement from anti-GBSV work, participants imagined alternative approaches and solutions as we waded into exploring what the co-design of the framework could be. In response to men's reactions to being generalized or (mis)characterized as perpetrators, participants talked about the significance of language in

ensuring that we are careful about where we locate harm. Specifically, the participants were deeply concerned that we do *not* locate harm within individual men. However, popularized terms in current anti-violence efforts were identified by participants as alienating and as a way of blaming men. As Kevin and Jack noted:

Jack: I think one thing that keeps coming up for me is just making sure that, in the framework, we avoid traditionally used language in this kind of environment. Things like “toxic masculinity” and “all men are bad.” Those things, I think, make men check out immediately.

Kevin: Oh, yeah, I agree. It’s just like, “we’re going to have a conversation about toxic masculinity.” And then you see everybody’s faces, it’s like, “alright, half the room is just left mentally.”

Jack: Exactly! And so, by avoiding that kind of language, I think you make it easier for guys to engage. And even the base, too, where we’re talking about a “first phase” [of the framework], we could frame it as, like, “this is not about toxic masculinity, it’s about having a conversation about what is happening and how men are socialized and how they are also affected by this stuff.”

Here, participants identified how certain terms are seen as automatically disengaging for men, particularly when it signals that something about a man’s embodiment and performance of masculinity is “toxic.” Interestingly, they appeared to conflate the term “toxic masculinity” with the sentiment that “all men are bad.” In my experience doing this work, most men tend to see the term in the same way despite the origins of the idea locating harm within the *imposition* of cisheteropatriarchal masculinity, *not* within individual men or their personal identities. There is

an ongoing concern that the impulse to soften language might inadvertently depoliticize the work as we avoid naming the oppressive dynamics underpinning these ideas.

Furthermore, as they applied it to the co-design of the framework, participants tended to centre how men are socialized and harmed by cisheteropatriarchy. As it applied to reaching men through the framework, participants continued to reiterate how we must acknowledge and empathize with men's hurt, fear, and anger as it is both a product of socialization and a form of violence that they experience throughout their lifetimes. While I could appreciate this reflection and agreed that how we talk about these tensions is pivotal to bringing men into the work, I was worried that we were veering into excusing and justifying men's violence as a response to being harmed by cisheteropatriarchy and focusing on men's experiences and – intentionally or not – dismissing how women are uniquely affected by men's violence. It appeared that they were focused on invitational approaches that would not perpetuate men's perceived disengagement; however, in my experience, such a commitment can often come at the expense of directly naming and challenging how men perpetuate and reify cisheteropatriarchal masculinity in a way that causes GBSV. It might also steer reflections and dialogues entirely away from the gendered nature of the harm we are talking about, which I explore further in the next subtheme. The consequences of this shift could be alienating women and gender diverse people from GBSV work that becomes too concerned with making men feel comfortable and included at the expense of calling out misogynistic dynamics.

The perceived sentiment of “all men” being at fault for GBSV and the associated defensiveness and anger that it elicits in men was also necessarily interrogated by men participants. As Felix and Sam shared:

Felix: I think for a lot of guys it creates...there's almost this anger surrounding their situations and surrounding sort of these things that happen where they feel as though, "oh, not all men, I wouldn't ever do that." And they have this anger and that kind of builds into this reluctance to actually speak about these issues.

Sam: I totally agree. And to, like, go a bit farther, I think a big barrier for what's preventing men from getting involved in these conversations has a lot to do with avoiding taking accountability for things. A lot of times, there are things that are kind of in a questionable area that a lot of men would rather not admit to themselves might actually be in the vein of sexual violence or harassment or whatnot. It's difficult to try and confront this issue when you realise that "hey, maybe I was part of this issue. Maybe what I did contributed to this issue." And so it makes a lot of men want to stay away entirely. And maybe it's not every man, but obviously there is enough of them that it becomes a problem where people stay away because they're like, "well, if I engage with this, people are going to call me a hypocrite and tell me that I've done the things that I'm saying that people shouldn't do."

As this exchange demonstrates, participants were ready and willing to reflect on where men's defensiveness might originate, particularly when they want to maintain their self-perception as a "good" man, while also identifying that they might have engaged in harmful behaviour. Felix alludes to the "good/bad" binary that frequently guides people's perspectives on anti-violence work, whereby self-declared "good" men do not feel responsible for GBSV and its prevention as they do not see themselves as perpetrators or facilitators of violence. As Sam articulates, recognizing and reflecting on instances where men might have perpetuated, engaged in, or caused harm – specifically beyond only physical or sexual iterations of it – is deeply

uncomfortable. Any attempts to identify these harms were said by participants to create the foundation for angry, defensive, and dismissive responses as men would perceive it as an attack, a condemnation, or as in the vein of a “cancel culture” that would carry personal, professional, and social consequences (e.g. alienation, loss of employment, damage to reputation, etc.).

What I found perhaps most compelling about participants’ commentary on this subject was men’s perceived fear of being “called out” or labelled as hypocritical if they were to participate in anti-violence work when and if they have engaged in harmful behaviour. Such comments are reflective of carceral logics; those who are seen to have caused harm are then automatically and irrevocably seen as “bad” and, therefore, unable to participate in or contribute to conversations or projects that aim to prevent GBSV. It was unclear initially who participants identified as the individuals that would call this out and/or bar men’s participation in anti-violence spaces; however, referring to our earlier discussions, it again seemed to relate to online rhetoric from profeminist leaders and the omnipresence of “cancel culture.” The imposition of this “good/bad” binary, in this way, makes it impossible for anyone to fully engage in GBSV prevention if we were to, as Sam discussed, make space for recognizing our complicity in the spectrum of violence (i.e. behaviours outside of only physical or sexual violence). Additionally, despite participants’ willingness to unpack where defensiveness comes from, there was a continued orientation to speaking about “other” men, thus eschewing any personal relation to the discussion. Rarely did participants speak from personal experience, such as their own reactions or moments of defensiveness, which I continue to explore in the next subtheme.

Erasure of a Gendered Lens

What became quite salient throughout the duration of the study was a continued focus on and re-orientation to the systemic and the structural, which included continued discussion of the

theoretical and immaterial rather than the personal and tangible. While this study explicitly aimed to maintain a structural analysis of GBSV – particularly in its inextricable relationship with white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy – it also sought to be clear in its gendered understanding of how sexual violence and misogyny are central to this discussion. I admired and appreciated participants' commitment to tracing the relationships between systemic harms and understand that they are inseparable; however, there were some moments where I feared that we were fully eschewing an intersectional and gendered lens when discussing harm. The following excerpt stemming from a dialogue about carceral responses to GBSV demonstrates this dynamic:

Felix: One of my profs in the [REDACTED DEPARTMENT] did some research on colonial legacies and how it carries down through generations. And one of the biggest ones is economic violence or economic colonialism. So where people are forced almost – this is might sound like a little complicated, but I promise relates – but when somebody in their own country isn't able to succeed economically because of certain colonial legacies, they're forced to come into the western world and work. And when certain jobs that migrant workers or immigrant workers are exposed to are low paying, they don't really have any benefits, they're not protected under labour legislation, they're often not able to give provide for their family back in their own country or here. And, as a result of that, it just creates this huge bubble of just anger and just overall violence that just kind of spreads out. And we've seen, especially because of certain gender rules that are more inherent in non-western countries, it really carries down and it goes into the kid and kid grows up with these same narratives. And I just wanted to say I found that really, really interesting in terms of colonialism. Just the ways that can kind of trickle down through generations is something that's so devastating.

John: I just want to add to that, like the intergenerational transmission of colonial legacies and trauma just from a bit of a psych background, because that's where I come from.

There's lots of research now that's showing the actual biological changes to our nervous system that happen that are transmitted through our genetics to future generations. So when you have, for example, an individual whose grandparents, great grandparents, suffered an extremely traumatic event or whatever it was, they're now in a situation where their actual physiology is different because of that. And then when you reflect on the fact that so many of these colonial systems are still enforced and still in place, it's like you're taking someone who's already at a "disadvantage" at a biological level and then you're holding them back and pushing them down even further. So yeah, it's just so nuanced and it is so complex and frustrating, but also academically interesting.

Analyses of colonialism and racism are essential to unpacking GBSV as a symptom of white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy. I was deeply appreciative of participants' understanding of this relationship and willingness to delve into the systemic and structural nature of the issue. However, as the conversation above reflects, there tended to be an unconscious separation of colonialism from forces of cisheteropatriarchy and misogyny.

How participants spoke of these dynamics appeared agender and, at times, as avoidant of unpacking the role of individual choice and behaviour in instances of GBSV. While I agree that we need to maintain a lens that acknowledges systemic conditions that facilitate violence, I am wary of how failing to recognize personal decision-making – particularly in considering the dynamics of power and control in GBSV – might create pathways to justify and excuse GBSV, which is something that I have continually observed throughout my time in facilitating violence intervention and prevention with men. At times, as well, there seemed to be an implicit

“Othering” while discussing colonialism, such as in assumptions that “non-western” cultures maintain gender rules that are regressive (paradoxically, without an understanding of colonial impositions of cisheteropatriarchy and the gender binary) and/or that they are more likely to engage in GBSV due to poor coping with economic and sociocultural stressors. Furthermore, participants often spoke about these issues in a high-level, academic, and impersonal way by pointing to Indigenous and racialized persons’ experiences without much attention to or reflection on their own positionality within these conversations.

Beyond the continued attention to intergenerational trauma via colonization and imperialism, participants also spoke of how violence is often framed interpersonally and not as something that a man can inflict upon himself (e.g. substance use, self-harm, social isolation, etc.). As Jack noted,

I think we talk about violence often as something that you can do to somebody else, but it’s also something you can do to yourself. And I think that’s kind of, I don’t know, a normalized thing. Like, think about men drinking or keeping emotions to themselves or not crying and all of these things where it’s just, like, you aren’t allowed to do that, and then you commit violence against yourself.

I agree that violence upon oneself is an important analysis, and participants were excited by these reflections; however, upon reflection, it also made visible the men’s tendency to centre the harms that they experience over recognizing how women and people of marginalized genders are uniquely affected by cisheteropatriarchal violence. For example, women’s experiences of these same concerns are contrastingly framed in broader society as “low self-esteem” or “mental illness,” and they are often blamed individually for failing to cope, being weak, or being dramatic. Without acknowledging that self-inflicted violence also affects people of marginalized

genders (often in unique and specific ways) in relation to experiences of GBSV, the discussion seemed to centre men's experiences of harm at the direct expense of the intention of the study. At times, it felt like we were straying quite far from GBSV as the central topic. The impulse, whether unconscious or not, to de-gender the conversation inadvertently decentred women and, thus, decentred GBSV. Such a dynamic was reminiscent of my work in violence intervention and prevention, where any attempts to discuss how women are disproportionately affected by domestic and sexual violence was followed by men participants speaking (often bitterly and defensively) about men's mental health, rates of suicide, and substance use issues. A refusal to recognize gender is an ongoing and underlying concern in anti-GBSV work.

Community Advisory Board Reflections

CAB members were both intimately familiar with men's defensive impulses in anti-violence work and deeply empathetic with the tensions of men's engagement in feminist projects. As members had experience in both mandated violence intervention services and voluntary violence prevention initiatives, they paid particular attention to service providers' carceral impulses to shame, blame, and label men's discomfort and anger as being "difficult" or indicative of being a "resistant client." As one CAB member noted, "it's easier to write it off as "they're hopeless," but it's important to resist those impulses and be open to learning about where their anger is coming from." They discussed how, while it might be easy to dismiss these reactions as personal deficit or character flaw, we must attend to these tensions in order to respond in ways that elicit further engagement, a posture of vulnerability, and a willingness to unlearn.

I agreed with and appreciated many of these reflections; however, I continued to grapple with the implications of prioritizing invitational approaches for men at the potential expense of

meaningfully and intentionally addressing harmful dynamics, such as misogyny and behaviours on the spectrum of violence that men have engaged in based on their proximity to cisheteropatriarchy. During CAB meetings, we each spoke candidly about our experiences of facilitating this work and navigating the delicate balance between creating spaces where men felt empowered to participate *and* ensuring that we focused on men's roles in confronting and preventing GBSV in its various iterations. One CAB member shared, "as a facilitator, it's about creating a space where men feel compelled to share, while also being constantly vigilant about whether the participation is reflective of the goals of the group." I resonated with this comment as there were moments in my facilitation experience in men's intervention and prevention services where men were very engaged; however, the participation was more anti-feminist than not. We spoke then about the differences between men feeling unsafe and uncomfortable in these spaces and the need to balance pushing back against defensive impulses with being empathetic and patient. The need to interrogate men's resistance as a product of socialization and a reflection of the systemic harms that men are attempting to critique was framed by CAB members as necessary. Nonetheless, as we all agreed, it is deeply challenging, tiring, and, at times, unrewarding work that is difficult to accomplish in limited capacities.

When it came to exploring how men participants spoke of feeling excluded from feminist anti-violence spaces, CAB members empathized with these concerns and added additional context related to the prevalence and significance of the digital space in forming (and excluding certain people from) community, which is a particularly relevant topic amongst anti-violence practitioners who work with men. For instance, the online "manosphere" was cited by CAB members as a place where many men might retreat to after experiencing or witnessing incidents that incite feelings of being rejected, excluded, humiliated, and/or attacked. Anger and shame

were seen to be aggravating factors in men's likelihood of engaging in and propagating anti-feminist or misogynistic rhetoric on the basis of feminist women being too "hostile," "harsh," or "mean." While men from different social positionings might engage in the manosphere differently – such as one CAB member's discussion of Black men resisting the "bullet bag" rhetoric and blaming Black women who "divest" from dating Black men – the underlying tensions remain clear. Rather than meeting such concerns with dismissal or resistance, CAB members indicated that anti-violence service providers must readily contend with and create space for these discussions to make men feel safer and more supported in expressing and unpacking these ideas. Conversely, CAB members found it interesting how men students framed violence as a conversation that inevitably and inherently excludes men, thus, as one CAB member shared "fully erases experiences where men are the victims or survivors of violence." Analyses of gender were described by CAB members as being strategically applied by men depending on the context of the discussion, such as *de-gendering* conversations about experiencing harm while *gendering* dialogues about who is included or excluded in feminist anti-violence spaces to centre men's perspectives, comfort, reactions, and emotions.

The CAB's insights were invaluable in unpacking these reflections; however, I sometimes struggled with the suggestion that men are more likely to enter manosphere spaces when they feel "attacked," particularly when provoked by the hazy image of the "angry feminist." I understood and agreed with the CAB's conclusions about this, but I am continually frustrated by the (re)assertion that feminist anti-violence work needs to be palatable and careful as it implies that survivors are to blame if and when men retreat to anti-feminist spaces on the basis of feeling "attacked." In my years of doing anti-violence work, I often left feeling complicit if I did not challenge men's defensive impulses, including centring men's mental health when we

were talking about GBSV, blaming feminists for being “angry” and “unwelcoming,” and refusing to acknowledge the gendered dimensions of the issue. Similarly, men in this study and men that I have worked with in violence intervention and prevention both tended to speak in hypothetical and impersonal terms, favouring academic and theoretical musings over personal connection and reflection, which I found frustrating and discouraging as it seemed to perpetuate the idea that most men did not need to think about their beliefs and actions in relation to GBSV. Like many of my experiences in the field, I chose not to push back on what participants contributed out of concern that it would affect data collection processes and rapport within the group.

When I shared these reflections with the CAB, they supported this decision to prioritize flow of conversation over education or trying to challenge participants’ comments. As one member aptly pointed out, creating the conditions for men to more readily and personally reflect on the content was challenging based on the limited time that I had with participants in the study and the context of the project being a research study and not an intervention or prevention space. However, as one CAB member shared, “the short presentations at the beginning of each session were a great way to integrate education in a way that felt like it was eliciting and priming men’s participation, not only as education in response to their ideas.” Building rapport and facilitating an open space for honest discussion was encouraged and applauded as the CAB meetings progressed. I appreciated and agreed with their perspectives; however, I was also unsettled about how many facilitators feel that they need to prioritize men’s comfort in these spaces, often at the expense of their own personal values. Many CAB members spoke of how they often had to “pick which hill to die on” in men’s anti-violence work, which meant frequently feeling like they had to “smile, nod, and move on” instead of confronting misogynistic or violent ideas as doing so would disrupt flow, put the facilitator in a vulnerable position, and potentially result in a hostile

space that would be ultimately unproductive for engaging men. I am deeply familiar with these tensions and continued to question the place of education in participatory action research with men; if the goal of this work is to prevent GBSV and support men in anti-violence work, we should be able to challenge harmful ideas and introduce our own knowledge, expertise, and education without fear or concern. The CAB empathized with my frustration, while also emphasizing that some of the tensions arising from the discussion provide an accurate depiction of the state of anti-violence work with men and pave pathways for interrogating it within the framework. I appreciated the validation and the collegiality of being in CAB meetings with those who were familiar with some of the central concerns emerging from anti-violence work with men.

Despite some of my frustrations, I was able to maintain a clear focus on and commitment to relationship-building within the study toward the creation of a participatory, dynamic, and engaging space where both men participants and CAB members felt like they could be honest about their views. Since the study concluded and I have been occasionally connecting with participants as we finalize the framework, I have received significant positive feedback. Men students expressed a genuine gratitude for being invited into a project to be a part of social change and to speak openly about their experiences, ideas, concerns, and hopes. In an email after the data analysis workshop, Felix wrote to me, “I had a wonderful experience. It was a privilege to listen to other like-minded individuals discuss such a pressing issue. Your research is incredibly valuable to me!” In another email, Fahri wrote, “[t]hese focus groups have been amazing, and I appreciate the opportunity to convey some of my thoughts on the matter and listen to some of the perspective-changing thoughts, statistics and case studies.” Sam added in another message, “It's been really refreshing to have these sorts of conversations with men who

share similar viewpoints to mine on the importance of involving guys in violence prevention.” CAB members were thrilled to hear this feedback as building community among men was a key goal of this project to carve pathways for men to become more involved in GBSV prevention. Similarly, CAB members expressed gratitude and excitement about the project and the possibilities of what it could offer future service provision. Constructing these spaces in direct opposition to the “community-building” that happens within the “manosphere” and other anti-feminist spaces – ones that are founded on misogyny and hate – was significant. Put simply, it felt like men students joined to unpack, challenge, and reflect in a way that was open to both unlearning and learning. While they engaged in and replicated some misogynistic dynamics, it often felt like a deliberate resistance to how men-specific spaces can re-entrench misogyny rather than challenge it. Receiving this feedback from all participants is very encouraging, even when it comes alongside some tensions regarding the reification of some anti-feminist rhetoric. It was also a very different experience for me; I felt seen, appreciated, and recognized by the men and CAB members in the room, which I did not often feel when facilitating violence intervention and prevention services.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter explored the central tensions emerging from participants’ best intentions in engaging in the project. Participants grappled with men’s disengagement and resistance to participating in anti-GBSV spaces, including feeling “unwelcome,” being wary of diction in communicating messages about GBSV, and favouring structural, esoteric, and impersonal analyses over personal reflection and sharing. While there was much common ground between the men participants’ comments and the CAB’s insights into creating invitational spaces that support men’s engagement, the CAB necessarily called attention to how men seek to preserve

their comfort and centre their experiences in a way that risks compromising the ethos of feminist anti-violence work. The subthemes that I reviewed here are not novel; rather, they reflect familiar and ongoing dynamics that are central to feminist anti-violence work with men. Defensive impulses are inherent to these discussions, which are both a product of socialization *and* a response that men make meaning of in various ways. While it can be frustrating and tiring, engaging with these reactions is necessary to building innovative and improved violence intervention and prevention services. Furthermore, aligned with the anti-carceral feminist commitments of this dissertation, recognizing these tensions is important for resisting the “good/bad” binary; even when men perpetuate and reify anti-feminist ideas, it does not negate or dismiss their willingness, excitement, and passion for participating in anti-GBSV projects, nor can it reduce men to being of “bad” character. Rather, challenging this binary is essential to facilitating and sustaining men’s engagement in the anti-violence movement. This discussion revealed that there is no “good” or “perfect” GBSV prevention space, but there is one where we can lean into and challenge these tensions.

Chapter 7: “Anti-Carceral Possibilities”

Anti-carceral perspectives and approaches remain forms of marginalized scholarship and community organizing, particularly in the context of addressing GBSV. As the issue has historically been framed as a sociolegal concern, exploring possibilities for response and prevention outside of the criminal legal system can be deeply challenging. This chapter explores the findings emerging from discussions with men student participants about what anti-carceral approaches to imagining and co-designing a framework for men’s engagement in GBSV prevention could look like. I begin by setting some important context for how participatory capacity-building, via brief information sessions at the start of focus groups #1 and #2, aided in preparing participants for conversation about anti-carcerality, particularly when they felt that the ideas were newer or novel to them. I then shift briefly into discussing moments of tension where participants struggled with or were resistant to abolition, which were organically explored via exchanges between participants and me. A central avenue for participants to imagine and enact anti-carceral ideas was then observed in our discussions about the postsecondary institution (PSI) as a *perpetrator* of state violence, not merely a neutral *site* where it happens. I then explore the anti-carceral possibilities that I identified in our discussions and how participants sought to integrate this overarching worldview into conversations with other men about GBSV. I conclude with reflections from both the CAB and me about the tensions and potentials of anti-carceral approaches to GBSV prevention.

Participatory Priming for Discussion

Most men student participants did not have much experience with anti-carceral theory or practice prior to participating in the study. However, over the course of the three meetings, participants drew on various experiences to reflect on their interest in exploring solutions to

GBSV outside of the criminal legal system and the thinking that they had previously engaged in that was aligned with this approach. They were also invited to be iterative in the design of the focus groups as we attended to what was particularly compelling, exciting, and concerning about our conversations.

At the beginning of the first focus group, I did a short presentation to orient participants to the context, statistics, key concepts, and central issues of GBSV to prime them for the conversation and offer a place to begin their reflections. Part of this information included background about under-reporting of GBSV, case examples of police mishandling of GBSV cases, and the realities of how few sexual assault cases lead to conviction or sentencing (see Appendix J). Throughout the first focus group, participants returned to this information to support and expand their analyses. For example, as Yadhu, Kevin, and Jack discussed:

Yadhu: I think we also just need to challenge the idea of the carceral system as even, right now, the correct or the best tool we have to investigate these issues. I really appreciated the stats and stuff you provided at the beginning, because, like...you had that stat about how 70% of sexual assault cases were labelled unfounded by police when they just didn't bother actually investigating them. Yeah, so it's like, this is who we right now believe is responsible for addressing it, but they aren't doing a good job. So is that the structure we should rely upon for it? And, clearly, if not, what is the next best or what is the best structure to then better respond?

Kevin: Yeah, I hadn't really thought about all this before. I feel like I noticed it, maybe on the news or social media or whatever, but didn't really make the connection until you presented that info and we started talking about it here. I don't think a lot of people see an

alternative to the carceral system, though, I guess? I mean, even now, I'm like, 'what do we do instead?'

Jack: I guess I'm also just thinking about, I don't know, I feel like we envision this, you were talking about earlier, if we're envisioning getting rid of police as a response to this issue. And then, like, I'm also almost extending this to things like social work and psychiatry and all of these other practices that are implicated in the same thing, I guess.

And so, I think, I don't know, I guess just further extend that question, I guess, what *does* exist outside of all of that?

When presented with information about carceral interventions in GBSV, participants reflected on how the perceived failures of the criminal legal system bring about questions regarding alternative solutions or approaches. Many began to reflect on how they perhaps had not previously considered or been invited to examine whether the criminal legal system was effectively addressing GBSV and other social issues; some who had worked in social work-related contexts had identified this previously in their own experiences with police during service provision, while some were newer to this information. Yadhu, Kevin, and Jack's comments reflect the group's sentiments about clearly identifying concerns within our current mainstream responses, while also finding it fairly difficult to imagine what we could do instead.

At the end of the first focus group, I asked participants what they were hopeful and interested in exploring during our next meeting. Such an approach is reflective of the anti-carceral epistemological commitments of the study, where participants' knowledges, ideas, questions, and goals are centred in the iterative design of the project. I present the following exchange as an example of how we undertook a participatory approach to the study, where

participants played an active role in dictating where our conversations went, what we focused on, and how education and capacity-building were important for them.

Anish: It would be great to talk about non-western examples or approaches to these issues and even, like, anti-carceral stuff. Maybe, also, compare it, I guess...western versus non-western approaches.

Jack: I think, like, I would love to hear more about what does filling in the gaps look like within an anti-carceral setting? So it's like if we were to do the full-on approach and abolish policing, how do those gaps that we're concerned about get filled in?

Ijay: I agree, and I think maybe looking at methods of anti-carceral work that have succeeded or how they have been incorporated would help with us understanding how those gaps can be filled.

Kevin: Yeah, for sure, examples. Pretty much all that would be great.

Yadhu: To add to that, a thought about institutions: what policies are there, what are the gaps, and how can we approach those gaps to fix these issues. Because there's definitely a lot of gaps, as we've talked about [laughs].

Aadhik: For sure. I think that I would also appreciate a discussion in terms of justice, both on the side of the victim and in terms of criminal justice as well. Like, are their shared goals and values? How do the experiences differ? How can we make it better?

Maddie: Absolutely. These are all amazing ideas. And, in terms of how we do this, what would you find helpful from me to aid in facilitating these discussions?

Anish: I think printed sheets or a handout would be great to have, if we need to refer to it as we go along would be good.

Yadhu: Like, a couple slides, just a brief overview before we start to jump into it. It's super helpful. And the discussion questions up on the slides so we can check in and make sure we're answering it.

Josh: Yeah, I really liked having the slides and some of the information beforehand.

Maddie: Great, let me write this down. I'll try to keep it short! [laughs]

Darren: No! [laughs] It can be long, as long as the questions are up there. I just really enjoyed your speech on it. I probably wasn't reading *all* of the info the whole time, but I definitely was reading and really enjoyed listening.

This discussion was particularly fruitful as participants shared several different possibilities for conversation, while also tracing similar themes between their comments and others' contributions. What stood out was (a) their interest in seeing specific examples of anti-carceral approaches and successes to ground their exploration in the next focus group and (b) their appreciation for the brief knowledge and capacity-building presentation that I provided at the beginning of the meeting. Participants expressed that they were intrigued by the expansiveness of anti-carcerality as many automatically attributed it to a dismantlement of police and prisons only rather than a range of ideas, analyses, languages, and actions to expose and challenge the interrelationship between the carceral state and colonialism, racism, and other structural oppressions. They were also interested in tracing the histories of abolition outside of western historiography to de-centre solely white, colonial approaches. While that request was particularly challenging within the context of the study – that being within a Canadian postsecondary institution – it demonstrated the interconnection between abolitionist thinking and anti-racist and decolonial epistemologies. Their interest in seeing examples of successful implementation also

aided them in imagining the co-design framework that would explore what anti-carcerality can offer GBSV prevention with non-criminalized men.

Resistance to and Re-Thinking of Carceral Interventions

While most participants expressed excitement about anti-carcerality, some participants expressed some trepidation with abolition. I was aware of this hesitation during the screening calls and chose to welcome them into the space as they were eager to expand their thinking and engage in productive discussions to imagine solutions. Other participants, as indicated above, had lingering questions about the possibilities and efficacy of alternative approaches. Aligned with my epistemological and methodological orientations, I leaned into this uncertainty rather than dismiss it as I believed it could inspire productive and necessary dialogue between and among participants.

During the first focus group, Fahri spoke openly about his wariness and uncertainty in response to our conversation about what is challenging about anti-carceral imagining. He mused:

I think one of the things that I am struggling to think about is who takes up the job of the police as first response. So, a lot of times what happens, I've seen videos, and I've seen it happen, too, where it's like, if someone's getting assaulted or anything's happening, you're always like, "okay, so who's going to step up and tell that person to stop a really violent thing?" You don't want to risk yourself, so you always go, "someone else might step up." And then no one does. And then you're like, "well, I'm not going to follow that person home to see where they live, go reach out to them and stuff to see if they're okay." You're probably just going to go on with your day, but if it's the police is there, you call them, you can hand it to them because it's their job. But in a world where there's no

police, what happens? Who would do that? That's where I'm struggling with, I think, like who's responsibility is it then?

Fahri brings up some important tensions that are common responses to abolitionist organizing. When responsibility for intervening in and preventing harm is assigned based on occupation, such as being a police officer or first responder, we assume that intervention is procedural, organized, and obligatory for those tasked with it. The absence of such a designated role evokes questions about responsibility and the possibilities and potential concerns of relying on community for effective bystander intervention. Fahri's comment also signals common refrains in bystander intervention, which is the concern that we do not have the knowledge, skillset, or capacity to effectively intervene when we see violence happen as it might put us at risk of harm, nor do we have the resources to sustain our intervention beyond the immediate incident. These tensions are not something we should shy away from; rather, we can empathize with the fear, discomfort, and frustration with the unknown and uncertain.

In response to Fahri's questions, I used GBSV as an example to discuss how, despite popular assumption, police are more often intervening *after* harm or violence has happened rather than during or before an incident. John then shared:

I'm glad that you brought that up, Maddie, about police being called after the fact because, as far as I'm aware, there's not a lot of research that indicates that police presence or police numbers actually have an impact on crime rates and that it really is the police are called after. And then to the point of who's going to investigate those crimes and that sort of thing, I think that's a whole other conversation because, even then, how are we going to address all of the issues that take place in the investigation process beyond the ones that we're just talking about today in terms of people not being believed

or people not having their stories heard? Then you've got to talk about things like race-related issues and police identification of perpetrators and that sort of thing. So it's not to dismiss what you're saying, Fahri, but it's just a really interesting conversation that, I think, needs a lot of nuance.

Throughout the focus groups, John drew on his experiences working with Indigenous populations to contextualize his perspectives, where he frequently located systemic harms within policing that are rooted in colonialism. His comments, here, were helpful for the group and elicited further interest in statistics and information that disprove the assumed link between increased police budgets and presence and reduced crime rates. His comments evoked further questions from the group about why such information is not mainstream or common knowledge as police are continued to be perceived by most as necessary and effective interveners. John, and others, also continued to point to the perceived failures within the existing system of response, where they emphasized that harms happening within investigative and adjudicative procedures and how they go unacknowledged or unaddressed. John's engagement with Fahri's concerns were embraced by the latter; while it did not fully assuage Fahri's concerns, he waded into further critical analysis of the criminal legal system throughout the duration of the study.

It was immensely productive to lean into the resistance that some participants occasionally expressed throughout our meetings as it often birthed organic exchanges that were thoughtful, respectful, and effective in expanding our dialogue. Aligned with anti-carceral imaginings, it was important to create space for naming and exploring these tensions, expressing any concerns or questions, and exploring possibilities of what alternative approaches could provide. Another dialogue between Aadhik and Jack demonstrates this dynamic:

Aadhik: When we're talking about what makes it hard to imagine abolition, I think that it makes me feel safer knowing that, especially in the context of as I get older and have to start thinking about a family and things like that, people who have been – once having the facts presented upon a fair and impartial body – determined to be a threat to society or have committed an act that's severe enough to warrant putting them in jail aren't, like, around to endanger myself and members of my family. I think that's my main concern.

Jack: I really understand where you're coming from. But I also just wanted to add...I think I actually just wrote a paper and I included this in it, but it was sort of talking about how the reason that there's so much pushback against the abolition or defunding of the police, I guess, is because those people who push back against it identify with that safety you're talking about. They identify on the side where it's like, 'I benefit from the system even if there's people who don't benefit from it. Therefore, because I benefit from it, I don't want it to change.' I guess it's kind the mindset that informs a lot of it.

Aadhik: That's really interesting! Thanks for saying that. I hadn't thought of it that way before, but I also really see what you're saying.

Similar to Fahri's comments, Aadhik points to a frequent response to abolition that focuses on safety via the incarceration and removal of perpetrators from the community. He also invokes the imagery of a future family, such as a spouse and children, in need of protection from those deemed by the criminal legal system to be a "threat" to society, a common thread that is used to frame carceral interventions as necessary to protect the innocent and vulnerable. Jack's reply was a spontaneous and natural application of anti-carceral considerations, which carefully resisted "safety" as a universally understood experience. Namely, safety is characterized as something dependent on context and social identities; as Jack notes, challenging the status quo (i.e.

policing) is complicated by those who benefit from the system not wanting it to change and/or not seeing that some are harmed by it due to systemic oppression. Jack's comments were a sound reflection of the overall tone of the dialogue throughout the study, where participants continued to re-orient our analyses to the systemic and structural, such as exploring the racist, sanist, ableist, and classist discourses underpinning mainstream motifs within the criminal legal system. This exchange is demonstrative of the tone of the focus groups, which were collegial, supportive, open to respectful disagreement, and an overall willingness to both learn and unlearn together.

The Postsecondary Institution as State Violence

Expanding on the above, identifying and understanding the interrelationship between personal and systemic factors aided participants in imagining anti-carceral responses to GBSV. A salient topic within our discussions was participants' personal experiences of institutional failures to meaningfully address cases of GBSV, which was often further marred by silence, inaction, and a lack of accountability and transparency. The primary site and agent of this violence was identified by participants as the postsecondary institution (PSI). These experiences served as an effective bridge between our conversations and applying anti-carceral imaginings to responding to social problems. As an interaction between Yadhu and Darren suggests:

Yadhu: I don't know if I know a single person who hasn't dealt with this and it's repeatedly through these issues that we get to see systematic issues. Some survivors don't want to report, which is totally fine, but then they can't get the support that they need or want. That's how they feel...like they can't get support without having to disclose and go through a whole process with the university that can be invasive and aggressive. So trying to change that is important to me...maybe there are certain ways to get support that people need without putting them through that.

Darren: Yeah, I agree. I think knowing so many people and then knowing how institutions have responded to it and how it's a very broken system is a motivator for me to get involved in this work. I'm also in [redacted department] and know a lot of people that were a part of sexual violence investigations and stuff. It's such a small department and so it's just like there's a complete lack of trust with administration and institutions and it really damages communities as a whole. So it's like we need something better because nobody is benefiting. Nobody is doing well.

Participants built solidarities around shared experiences, one of which was the highly publicized investigation into an academic department regarding multiple reports of sexual violence. Those in this department identified shared themes that other participants spoke of regarding their experiences in residence, student senate, and internal adjudication processes regarding sexual violence, particularly in similar experiences of institutional failure, mishandling of cases, (re)traumatization, silence, and inaction.

This interaction highlights how the personal and systemic intersect; knowing people who have been affected by sexual violence is often accompanied by knowing of challenges that they experience in seeking support, justice, or redress via institutional disclosure and reporting. Further, participants who know of those who did or did not choose to report could empathize with the challenges of that decision as they identified the arduous, tenuous, and distressing components of disclosing or reporting GBSV to the institution. Participants also spoke of how a lack of transparency from the PSI in sharing how they are addressing these concerns is its own kind of violence that affects survivors and those in community with them. Here, we begin to see how the state and institution are not merely sites of violence; rather, they can be an active perpetrator or facilitator of violence through its methods of intervention or lack thereof.

Participants expanded on these discussions further by drawing on adjacent experiences to make connections and name the institution as a facilitator of state violence. As we waded into further conversation about institutional and internal responses to GBSV, participants lamented the highly technical, administrative, and secretive processes that alienate the community further and dissolve trust between students and the university, such as through refusing to make investigative reports public or barring survivors from speaking publicly about their experiences.

The following exchange explores this tension:

Anish: It is also that thing just reminds...the question reminds me of the university not contacting the police and just keeping it internal. Like, are you trying to hide it? I don't know, do I ever get the reports of the investigation that you do? It's all internal, right?

Yeah. So how do I trust the process? How do I trust you guys to do this correctly? Even the [redacted department] thing that you guys were talking about, I don't think I ever found out about what happened, the report.

Darren: It was never published!

Anish: Yeah! And, like, I'm interested in reading it. I don't know I can get it from you guys. [laughs]

Kevin: It's a side tangent, but that's also HR's job is to protect the organization versus the individuals being affected by the organization, so everything's just kept undercover. They hide it as much as they can until it's blown out of proportion and *then* people take action.

Darren: Absolutely. Yeah. I think going off that, whatever the solution, there needs to be a community component, so everybody knows that what's happening in that area is growth or there's accountability being taken. Because the university just decides and you're like, "okay, did anything happen?" You see everyone walking around and it's like, "is

everything okay? Who am I supposed to talk to about this” You can’t talk to the administration about it. You don’t want to go to the survivors, you don’t want to make them bring it up again.

Maddie: Or they’re sometimes under gag orders where they can’t talk about it.

Darren: Exactly! And so you have no idea what’s happening and you’re just like, “okay, I guess everything’s fine, but just in case if anybody worked with this person, again, be careful.”

Felix: Adding to that because it’s so true, that’s why there’s like...where students just talk to each other about it privately and let each other know, like, “oh, don’t take a course with so-and-so.” But you don’t know that unless another student tells you.

Maddie: Like a whisper network.

Felix: Exactly, yeah.

Participants aptly drew from their own experiences to critique the prioritization of the university’s interests over student safety and processes to build trust, such as open communication, transparency, and accountability. Citing a significant case specific to their institution, participants expressed frustration about how the university’s failure to inform the community about the investigation and adjudication of sexual violence cases caused further harm, such as decreased belief in the ability of the university to effectively respond to these issues. The perceived secrecy and dismissal of student concerns from administration creates cultures of silence, where many students are effectively left in the dark about what happened, what has been done to respond to the concern, and how the university is working to support the community. Students find pathways to build solidarity and connect, such as through whisper network, which refers to how students build communities to keep each other safe via discreet

sharing of information about experiences of harm and advice to avoid it; however, such dynamics only emerge as a necessary response to the institution's violence and inaction. We see important questionings of the reach and influence of the carceral state in participants' reflections, thus providing a bridge into considering what anti-carceral imaginings could provide in more effectively responding to GBSV.

Imagining Anti-Carcerality

As we progressed through the study, participants integrated analyses of how anti-carceral approaches to GBSV prevention could create necessary avenues to examine and challenge the tensions discussed above. The possibilities that I noted as key themes from our discussions included: challenging binary logic of "good" and "bad" people, recognizing various types of violence along the continuum, and expanding our understandings of GBSV and its prevention beyond the western state.

Pushing Back on. the "Good/Bad" Binary

Participants were interested in unpacking the harms of social ascriptions, including being permanently labelled as "good" or "bad" via the criminal legal system. This binary logic is intrinsic to the carceral state and often contributes to how non-criminalized men eschew responsibility for addressing and preventing GBSV. In response to a question about living in a world where police and prisons did not exist, Yadhu, Jack, and Aadhik discussed:

Yadhu: I think, if we lived in that world, our responses would be about looking at people as people and human and not things to change. Because, a lot of times, we try to attribute people to black and white, good, bad, evil, whatever, but then you just get caught up in, if someone's done something harmful, you believe that they can't change. And that's a really hard concept for a lot of people to grasp, but that would be a conceptual idea that

people *can* change. It is possible to change how you are, your opinions, your views, even if you've done something harmful.

Jack: I totally agree. I think on a level of societal discourse even, we just need to look at removing the permanence of “you are a bad person for this” because I think that there is no incentive to take accountability and improve if you, no matter what happened, continue to be considered a bad person. I think that's a place that needs to have some focus on in our conversations as well...like, what does it take for this individual to recognize and what do those steps look like? But also, what does it look like to change, at a societal level, the way we view people who have purposefully done harmful things? Like, how can we expect someone to change if they don't have support?

Aadhik: I think I really agree with that in terms of if for example, I had perpetrated something like that, I would fight tooth and nail against it. Even if I felt bad and wanted to change, I would fight tooth and nail against it because I would be terrified in terms of, like, what about my job? I'm a criminal forever now, and, at least in the jobs in my industry, you have to have some sort of criminal records check done at some stage, and that's just, like, you lose everything. And so, for example, if you set a house on fire and you feel bad and you want to go get treatment for doing something like that, you're unlikely to be willing to admit to it because to plead guilty is to kind of condemn yourself for the rest of your life and to cut yourself off potentially from society.

Pushing outside of our current circumstances to imagine alternatives to carceral interventions inspired dialogue about the “good/bad” binary and the permanence of criminalization for those deemed by the state to be harmful, evil, dangerous, or bad. Participants noted that it might counterproductively deter someone from accountability for causing harm if they were under

threat of punishment. Alternatively, seeing people as more human and deliberately resisting the permanence of labels accrued after causing harm was seen by participants as a pathway to believing that people can change and creating space for them to do so without fear of punishment. As Jack notes, the presence and support of community is an important part of this process, which is often taken away from those ascribed criminality as a kind of punishment for their actions and might inhibit possibilities for healing, accountability, and the motivation to change.

As the exchange above suggests, the threat of social exclusion, incarceration, and loss of rights, privileges, and status are major deterrents to taking accountability and accessing support, thus perpetuating the cycle that makes it unlikely that people could recognize and own their own harms and commit to personal change. I was particularly struck by Aadhik's admittance as it personalized the discussion and aptly communicated the concerns about accountability under duress or threat of punishment that were central to the critique of the carceral state's responses to GBSV. The group's reflections are deeply aligned with anti-carceral perspectives of imagining and creating ways for people to exercise accountability that do not alienate them from community and sustain the cycle of harm.

The Continuum of Violence

Expanding on these comments, participants also explored the spectrum of violence and contemplated responses to normalized, everyday harms as a necessary part of anti-carceral approaches to GBSV. Specifically, after I mentioned it during my short priming presentation, participants discussed the prevalence of "rape jokes" among men, that is comments that trivialize and mock the significance of sexual violence under the veil of "dark humour." Some participants acknowledged that they had engaged with, laughed at, and/or failed to intervene when sexually

violent or misogynistic jokes or comments were made, especially as they often happened among men peers. This admitted inaction caused some internal discomfort among participants when confronting their role in preventing GBSV and situating their participation in this project. As a few participants discussed:

Darren: I think a part of this conversation is that we also need perpetrators to have the ability to take accountability or want to recognize the harm that they have done and be like, “oh, I need to change.” And I am not sure how often we’ll see that. Even this example of what we have been talking about, like, the jokes that some guys have said and then, like, eight years later they feel ashamed but don’t know how to take accountability for it. I think that’s an important example of how we need to have that shift as well for sexual violence, but generally when you’ve done harm to someone. So how do you apologize and how do you grow from that so that you can still have that connection with the people you harm?

Josh: About the joking thing and, like, thinking about violence beyond the physical stuff. This kind of just makes me think back to, I don’t even know how old I would’ve been, but I was on a hockey team while Hockey Canada established some gender-neutral policy stuff. But there was no formalized training for anybody on the team to explain it or implement it.

Kevin: Same, yeah, I remember this!

Josh: Right? Yeah. It went through the coaches, and it was the coaches’ responsibility to talk to us about it. And I distinctly remember the way that the coaches brought it up, like, they were joking about it. They were like, “I’m not allowed to say *he* had scored a good shot. I have to say *they* had a good shot,” that kind of thing. And I guarantee half the

players on that team now are in a position where it's just like they don't care at all about that kind of stuff because they've been socialized, like, "oh, this is a fun thing to joke about." And they might not see that as a harmful thing. And it's certainly not something that they're gonna get kicked off the team for, or arrested for, but it might create the path to other forms of violence.

Kevin: Yeah, and that links to, like, where does the joking come from? Who makes it so everyone thinks it's okay? And if your coach is up there, you know, like, scoffing and rolling his eyes about a policy that is about including girls or trans people or, you know, non-binary people in hockey, what are the young guy players listening to it gonna take away from it? Like, 'oh, we can laugh at trans people or girls playing hockey' or "it's okay to make jokes about this because it's stupid." And then what does that do to their views of women and trans people and how they then interact with them? Like, sexual assault doesn't come out of nowhere, you know?

Reframing harms outside of the mainstream binary understanding of violence, which usually discusses violence as something that is experienced physically and is a violation of the law, was part of participants' anti-carceral imaginings. Here, they were explicitly contending with how we address all forms of harm on the spectrum of violence, including those that are commonplace and are not necessarily criminalized or prohibited in law or policy. Furthermore, participants introduced a critical analysis of how the normalization of misogynistic or anti-trans sentiments create gateways for other forms of violence to proliferate and expand, particularly when they are not deemed harmful or "bad" by the majority, including authority figures.

Kevin and Josh examine how sexual violence does not occur in a vacuum and thrives in environments where those in positions of power subtly or openly communicate that it is

acceptable to trivialize, mock, or dismiss initiatives that seek to make spaces more gender-inclusive, thus encouraging those under their influence to propagate and extend these ideas.

Darren's comments reflect the group's intentions to integrate anti-carceral imaginings into GBSV prevention by expressly exploring how we can own these kinds of harms and those that we have caused or participated in, apologize for them, and dedicate to tangible and meaningful growth to prevent it from happening again outside of punishment or exile. As participants explored in their discussions throughout the project, imagining accountability that does not come from threat of punishment is paramount; rather, participants continued to wonder about how accountability could look and feel when borne from introspection, dialogue, and community care.

Challenging the Universality of the “Western” Experience

Further aligned with anti-carceral theory's commitments to and origins in anti-racist sociostructural analyses, participants continued to engage with systemic critiques of universalist application of western approaches, while also offering anti-racist and decolonial considerations of anti-carceral imagining. Without facilitator prompting, participants identified how Indigenous, decolonial, and anti-racist perspectives have imagined responses to GBSV outside of the western carceral state for centuries; as such, participants wanted to recognize, appreciate, and apply these teachings to their thinking as opposed to “reinventing the wheel.” While it was a challenge to do this imagining within the western context of the study, it was admirable how participants sought to integrate non-western knowledges and interventions into their conversations, thus situating their more expansive perspectives of harm, accountability, and care. Felix and John discuss:

Felix: I just wanted to say, based on alternative justice approaches, especially addressing gender-based violence, one of the biggest issues that we had in [redacted] with really trying to address this issue was not really pertaining to some of the experiences of the

individual or some of the cultural experiences of people. It seemed to just be sort of a flat generalization. “Everybody experiences violence the exact same way. Everybody experiences sexual violence the exact same way. Let’s create in general plan just to address everything at once.” When, in actuality, talking to the individual themselves, you start to really grasp that their experiences, whether that be cultural or social, are so vastly different and it’s really important that you try and navigate the system and create, I think, certain approaches that can pertain to certain groups, especially minority groups that may have drastically different experiences of their gender, race, or ethnic background. Really being able to isolate that and really focus on building groups that are safer and more specific for certain cultures or social groups, is going to, I think, have a more meaningful impact. And then being able to address it within the community and using community approaches that they’d be familiar with to address violence is so much more beneficial than really applying more of a Eurocentric approach. And I think that’s something that’s related to anti-carceral thinking, where we go beyond what we’re doing in the western context to explore, you know, like, “hey, this thing that was culturally safe and community-based had a way better impact on preventing gender-based violence than arresting them and putting the survivor through a court case.”

John: This is all so interesting. And it makes me think about the shame that some of [Maddie’s] peers in high school felt, like, making rape jokes and then feeling so terrible about it now and then feeling that they don’t have the right to participate in these types of conversations because they were part of the problem. So to tie it all together, like what Felix’s saying and what the other guys were talking about, there’s some really interesting work that’s been done by scholars in Indigenous Studies around the effects of colonialism

on masculinity and how empowering it can be for individuals to recognise that, while it doesn't excuse their behaviour, some of the things that they have, I hate to use the word, but perpetrated are things that they've been pushed towards, to a certain extent, by societal forces. And it's about looking at how can we re-evaluate our own behaviour in a way that acknowledges those societal forces *and* doesn't excuse what we've done but empowers us to partake in the solution of dismantling these larger systemic issues. And, as Felix said, there's better and more culturally relevant ways to do that, such as taking part in initiatives to rebuild community as an exercise of accountability.

Felix, and others, criticized the flattening of the western experience and broad application of its approaches to marginalized populations, particularly non-western community members. He emphasizes the significance of adapting our responses to better reflect the lived experiences and social positionings of those we are attempting to engage, particularly in acknowledging how non-settler and non-western social and cultural groups maintain rich histories in building communities and responding to harm outside of the western criminal legal system. Through the implicit assumption that we can have universal understandings of the issue and our responses, we are likely perpetuating harm and further alienating marginalized persons from practicing the kind of accountability we are seeking in our interventions.

John expanded on Felix's reflections to discuss a specific example of how decolonial epistemologies introduce necessary systemic analyses that locate the roots of interpersonal harm within oppressive systems. John makes it clear that it is not an effort to excuse the harm; rather, it is a necessary lens that might more meaningfully contend with practicing individual accountability within the context of actively working to dismantle the systems of oppression that create the conditions for harm to happen. Further, John interrogates the language of

“perpetration” to signal this epistemological shift into recognizing systemic and sociostructural influences on individual behaviour, choice, decision-making, and action. This exchange resulted in participants expressing increased desire for explorations of non-western perspectives of community-based prevention work and the reciprocal relationships that can come about from restorative justice practices. Crediting the work of anti-racist and decolonial activists was a central commitment for participants as they shifted into the more mechanical practices of co-designing the framework.

Community Advisory Board Reflections

When discussing the conversations that we had in the focus groups with men students, CAB members were compelled by participants’ seemingly natural inclinations to discuss and analyze the role of state violence in GBSV prevention work with men, particularly through identifying the institution as a perpetrator of violence rather than just a place where it happens. This reflection felt like an important shift toward a more sociostructural analysis of GBSV, something that CAB members felt was often lacking from men’s violence intervention and prevention programs. Namely, as we discussed in one of our first meetings, CAB members expressed frustration about how an excessive focus on individual decision-making, behaviour, pathology, or morality distracts from the role of the state in causing harm, creating the conditions for violence, protecting those in power, and scapegoating individual actors identified as deviant to the system. CAB members indicated that those who are criminalized are usually also experiencing other structural forms of violence, such as anti-Black racism as noted by two CAB members in particular, which further complicates the broad application of carceral constructions of “accountability” and its implications. As one CAB member described (and which I noted in my participant observation notes), “The state’s violence is seen as normal and necessary, whereas

any individual violence done by those deemed outside the system is deemed abnormal and criminal.” Here, we see the differentiation of the carceral state’s definition of what “counts” as violence; institutional or state intervention, regardless of the harm it causes, is not “violent,” whereas individual forms of harm are categorized as such.

CAB members identified with the challenges of the PSI as a space for GBSV intervention and prevention as many of the concerns that men students discussed were deeply felt by those trying to do this work on campus. Such issues include the prioritization of the institution’s reputation, gag orders, threats of punishment, a general lack of transparency about process and procedure, and a refusal of service from key populations (i.e. athletics, men-dominated departments, etc.). In particular, two CAB members had worked on postsecondary campuses in GBSV public education and prevention; both noted the challenges of radicalizing and politicizing institutionally approved and led programming as it focused on the individual and only discussed the systemic and structural in abstract, intangible ways. Furthermore, they talked about how their services were usually requested retroactively or reactively *after* some kind of harm had happened, such as one incident described by a CAB members as an undergraduate classroom where misogynistic, anti-trans, and sexually violent language and behaviour were actively happening and making the marginalized instructor feel deeply unsafe. When they were deployed to provide a public education session on GBSV, they discussed how the department had abandoned them to do this work alone, respond to agitated and defensive students in a large group setting, and introduce systemic analyses despite individual actors choosing to cause harm. This issue was not in isolation as many CAB members vehemently agreed that it is a too often occurrence, thus contradicting the purpose and scope of their prevention work. While they all were compelled to anti-carceral approaches to these concerns, CAB members also appreciated

that it can be deeply challenging to put these ideas into practice when harm is actively happening and is enabled by the institution and its actors, such as during the incident described.

Despite the importance of recognizing the systemic issues noted above, there was also an ongoing attention to the interpersonal *and* the structural in our CAB discussions that we frequently eschewed in our focus groups with men students. Namely, each CAB member was interested in how to navigate the challenging and, at times, perilous tightrope of acknowledging the harms of state violence in shaping interpersonal forms of GBSV, while also avoiding becoming fatalistic or deterministic. Framing the system as a natural perpetrator of these harms risks, at times, implicitly suggesting that violence is an inevitability on postsecondary campuses and, therefore, cannot be interpersonally contended with, nor can the institution ever be held accountable. Those on the CAB who had run public education programming on GBSV resonated with this tension; our conversation often returned to the inherent concern of focusing on the systemic to the detriment of men reflecting on their individual and interpersonal choices, actions, and behaviours. Nonetheless, CAB members were adamant that a structural analysis was necessary in GBSV prevention, which became a priority when coming together to design the framework. A recognition and a willingness to name institutions as perpetrators of harm was an important and timely analysis that both CAB members and students saw as absent from existing on-campus programming, alongside the need to name the interconnected systems of oppression (e.g. colonialism, racism, etc.) that shape experiences of GBSV. However, CAB members also noted that it is often challenging to further systemic analyses in prevention programming within institutional services, a concern that they noted might change the trajectory of where the framework would live and be used and how it would be taken up by institutional actors.

CAB members also appreciated the anti-carceral imaginings that men students expressed, particularly in challenging carceral logics imbued within the language we use to talk about violence, how we decide what violence “counts,” and the universality of western ideals in addressing GBSV. Re-thinking our language was a salient point for CAB members when applying it to their experiences in service provision, policy development and research, and community work, such as the implicit or explicit assertion that those who are criminalized and/or in mandated programming are inherently and permanently “bad.” Those who worked in mandated settings felt that this was a consideration that could be more readily integrated into service provision for those who have caused harm, which evolved into questions about whether the framework could also be used as guidance for those found to be in violation of their institution’s GBSV policy. This reflection extended into dialogue on the possibilities of alternative forms of justice, such as those that are restorative and/or transformative, and how it could be properly articulated, applied, and credited in the development of the framework. Some CAB members had direct experience with these approaches, whereas others were often confined by the scope and mandate of their respective organizations. Those who had used it noted that it is a process that requires significant time, energy, dedication, and knowledge of non-western praxis, which is often difficult to obtain. Additionally, such approaches to justice are often antithetical to the western institution and its operations, thus posing concerns about the work being depoliticized, sanitized, and deradicalized if it were to occur within the PSI. Such reflections have been echoed by survivors, Indigenous peoples, and racialized communities. However, despite these tensions, all of the CAB members were excited by considering how anti-carceral imaginings are a form of prevention and how these ideas could be applied to

reconfiguring existing and creating new services that are more humane, caring, and community driven.

My Reflections on Integrating Anti-Carcerality

Both CAB members and men students were eager to explore the possibilities of anti-carceral approaches to GBSV, which was deeply moving and exciting for me as a researcher. Simultaneously, there were some things that I noticed in these discussions that I found challenging as they made me reflect further on what is at the root of anti-carceral (re)imagining regarding GBSV. I feel that anti-carceral theory asks us to spend significant time locating ourselves in this discussion, which requires continued willingness to reflect on our lived experiences, social identities, and how they shape our perspectives of social issues and social justice. Such work requires a posture of vulnerability and a willingness to lean into the discomfort of recognizing how we have enacted, caused, benefitted from, or failed to intervene in harm, both in interpersonal and systemic forms. In my many years of doing anti-violence work, I have found it incredibly difficult to create spaces where men are willing to, can, and do this reflecting for a variety of reasons, including individual resistance and systemic conditions that make it seemingly impossible to do so (e.g. in a workplace where you fear loss of employment or harm to your reputation if you admit to “wrongdoing”).

Throughout our conversations, I observed that men students participating in the study similarly evaded personal reflection in favour of focusing on the theoretical and abstract application of anti-carceral thinking. For example, as described throughout this chapter, men students discussed anti-racist, decolonial, and abolitionist theory regularly through solely an academic lens via exploration of the media, the general, the hypothetical, or their research and education. When discussing harm, they frequently externalized it to talk about examples outside

of their own experiences, such as those found in the media, those that happened at their institution that they were not a direct part of, those that I provided in our capacity-building sections, or those experienced by communities that they were not a part of (e.g. Indigenous, Black, trans, queer, etc.). In my past research studies and social work practice, I have found that men rarely discuss examples of when they have engaged in harmful behaviour even when they are asked to do so, instead reflecting on what is external to and removed from their sense of identity or character. As a result, as men participating in the study intellectualized anti-carcerality, I found that we waded into what bordered on esotericism and what felt, at times, as very impersonal and distant.

These concerns mirror those often articulated by critics of abolitionism, which is that it can risk becoming too theoretical and, therefore, intangible and removed from or inaccessible to the broader community. A focus on anti-carceral epistemology, operations, and philosophical challenges can distract from applying it to personally unpacking, unlearning, and confronting how carcerality has been internalized and personally experienced. Similarly, application of anti-racist and decolonial thought that evades personal reflection can risk diluting the work and being hollow or tokenistic. I was frustrated, at times, by participants choosing to discuss the abstract and impersonal as it felt like a kind of posturing; by expressing intellectual certainty and philosophical curiosity, it sometimes felt like they were deliberately avoiding locating themselves in the conversation and admitting to causing, experiencing, benefitting from, and/or failing to intervene in instances of harm. Such performance could be considered gendered as men are socialized to eschew emotional vulnerability as a feminized practice and embrace neutrality, stoicism, and intellect as masculinized traits. As such, it felt like we were not fully immersed in the anti-carceral imagining that asks us to challenge “good/bad” binaries via unpacking and

challenging our own experiences, self-perceptions, and identities. In other words, it still felt like men participants were clinging to being “good” men that were willing to even have these conversations rather than wading through the deeply uncomfortable personal work of identifying how we have caused harm or benefitted from harmful systems (e.g. cisheteropatriarchy, the carceral state, etc.).

CAB members similarly focused on the systemic and structural iterations of anti-carcerality, sometimes to the detriment of contending with interpersonal harm and how service providers are tangled up with GBSV on the microlevel (e.g. working with someone who has caused harm via GBSV who is not remorseful and who is defensive). I think, partly, these reactions were due to how I described and constructed the project, where I emphasized the anti-carceral epistemological positioning and the desire to develop a framework that maintained systemic analyses. However, I think these concerns also reflect the broader challenges of creating space for people to reflect on how and where they are located in conversations about GBSV. It has evoked ongoing questions about whether it is possible to create this space and ask people to do this work when it is often happening within the context of carceral institutions. Admitting to causing harm is often perceived by men as an indicator of failure or as an invitation to be punished, exiled, or implicated in larger issues. The broader goals of anti-carceral imagining are concerned with reframing these reflections and necessary pathways to change; however, applying these principles in research practice remains difficult.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter explored how participants took up, navigated, discussed, and applied anti-carceral ideas and practices into how we can elicit and sustain men’s engagement in GBSV prevention efforts. Despite moments of uncertainty about the feasibility of these approaches or

their own understandings of it, participants delved into various aspects of abolitionist epistemologies and methodologies, such as understanding the root causes of GBSV and locating them sociostructurally, debunking and unpacking myths about men's identities in relation to GBSV, expanding our understandings of what GBSV is, framing the issue to challenge carceral logics, and creating spaces where men could reflect openly about their experiences of and engagement with harm. I was amazed by participants' willingness to imagine anti-carceral possibilities in this work and how these conversations became central to the co-designed framework. I was also challenged by men's tendency to intellectualize the dialogue, which poses ongoing questions about how to prioritize evoking personal reflection over academic debate.

Chapter 8: “Co-Designing the Framework”

As this project undertook an explicitly feminist participatory action approach, a central objective was co-designing a preventative framework for working with men around GBSV that explicitly integrated anti-carceral considerations. As such, our final focus group and the data analysis workshop were largely technical and developmental, in that we focused on what men students and CAB members wanted to see reflected in the framework. While perhaps it is not a “typical” set of findings, there was much gleaned from these more practical and procedural dialogues as they revealed what participants found most significant and valuable in engaging other men in GBSV prevention. It also mirrored much of what we discussed in the first two focus groups as participants and CAB members waded into the complexities of configuring their reflections into tangible topics and approaches that extend beyond current anti-violence prevention programming.

This chapter explores the key themes emerging from this dialogue. I begin with outlining participants’ desire to move beyond legal frameworks for talking about and addressing GBSV. I then briefly discuss how the interrogation of cisheteropatriarchal masculinity and biologically essentialist ideas of gender is a necessary part of the reflective components of the framework. Beyond the content that participants identified as being important for the framework to articulate, I then present participants’ ideas about how to create this space, including on campus messaging to invite men into the dialogue and gender-specific spaces for men to begin their work in. I shift into offering participants’ summative comments organized in a chart that I created during the discussion and had approved by participants. I then I conclude with the CAB’s reflections that were readily integrated throughout the process.

Shifting Beyond Legal Frameworks

A salient discussion point was the need to reframe GBSV outside of its sociolegal lens, in that it should be understood beyond physical or sexual assault. Rather, participants reflected on the spectrum of violence and how efforts to engage men in GBSV prevention must contend readily with different kinds of harm that men might participate in or observe in their everyday lives. Connected to our previous discussions about the violence that can occur within the criminal legal system and/or internal adjudication processes, participants spoke of how effectively addressing and preventing GBSV must contend with normalized forms of harm that often go unaddressed. As Jack and Josh discuss:

Jack: When we talk about violence, we have to be clear, like, what does that mean? And creating categories to distinguish the different kinds of violence that exist. I don't really like that idea of "categories," but I can't think of a better term off the top of my head. But I think Felix and Ijay were talking about how we often rely upon the universal approaches to...whether you've done this or this, you get the same treatment. And so, in order for it to be effective, in order for us to create a framework, we kind of have to separate different kinds of violence out a little bit, I think in a sense to make sure that our...I don't wanna say "treatment," but...

Maddie: Our responses.

Jack: Yeah, exactly. Yes, response is the word. Like, we can't have a one-size-fits-all understanding of violence, and we can't have a one-size-fits-all understanding of how to respond to it because different kinds of harm require different approaches.

Maddie: Yeah, great points. Yeah, understanding the complexity and the nuance of different types of violence, but also not a one-size-fits-all approach or response.

Josh: I think just to that point as well, almost connecting the forms of violence as we separate them...like, we need to make it clear that there's not much difference between all of these things. At the end of the day, they're all different forms of expressing the same thing. For example, you could be, like, I don't know, teasing someone in the schoolyard and you could think that it means nothing, but it's based on the same ideas, like misogyny or racism or whatever. And that same expression, the teasing in the schoolyard, can turn into these other things we're talking about, like assault or harassment. So I feel like that's a kind of way to be anti-carceral, in a sense...like understanding the root of the problem and, as Jack was saying, making sure our responses aren't just a blanket approach for any kind of harm.

Jack: Yeah, because that blanket approach is usually either doing nothing or punishing someone.

In this exchange, Jack and Josh reflect on how universal approaches to both framing and responding to violence tend to impose a perspective and approach that does not attend to the differences, complexities, contexts, and nuances of incidences of GBSV. While Josh makes a point of also emphasizing that different kinds of harm along the spectrum of violence tend to be rooted in the same beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions, such as misogyny, Jack's concluding comment asserts that a one-size-fits-all approach to GBSV relies upon a dichotomy of inaction or punishment.

Such reflections are aligned with anti-carceral considerations of how broad generalizations in our understandings and responses to GBSV tend to rely on binary perspectives of what does or does not "count" as violence, what kinds of violence require specific interventions (e.g. what warrants punishment versus inaction), who we see or categorize as

survivors and perpetrators, and who we see as deserving of intervention and support. Participants agreed that the criminal legal system reifies these issues by perpetuating this dichotomy between what kind of harm we see as legitimate and needing intervention; the criterion for being seen as deserving of “justice” makes it increasingly difficult for survivors who experience harm both inside and outside of this binary to access support and be believed. As participants indicated that different kinds of GBSV maintain the same intention and impact (e.g. misogyny and experiences of harm), relying solely on a legal framework to define, understand, and interrupt violence might remove the action from its context in a way that distracts from the systemic and structural causes.

Integrating a Critical Perspective of Cisheteropatriarchal Masculinity

Expanding on the exploration of tailored, personalized approaches to GBSV that seek to understand the root causes of the issue in systemic oppression, participants sought to integrate considerations of how we can challenge biologically essentialist ideas about men that suggest violence is an inevitability that they are hardwired to perpetrate. Such comments reflect our earlier discussions about what engages and disengages men from the work, particularly in the challenges and complexities of gender-specific content. As Fahri and Sam explain,

Fahri: I think we need to make sure that the people we’re talking to know the real causes of the issue. I think that, in itself, would be anti-carceral, you know, in challenging ideas that some people are destined to be abusers or whatever. I guess, like, we have to hit it home that you’re not intrinsically born to slap women. You’re not programmed from birth to be violent or cause harm. And a lot of these experiences of gender-based violence involve people who are disadvantaged, who are suffering economically, and there could be instances where frustrations from one side of their life are being expressed in another side of their life. So I guess being more holistic about it.

Sam: I agree, and I think anti-carcerality is about getting to the root cause and, like, debunking the myths about gender-based violence that communicate the stuff that you're talking about. And I think we also need to educate men on the reasons why violence happens because I think that could help the people who use this framework understand that it's not an attack on them because they're men, but it's understanding why men are more likely to use violence or react to situations in ways that are harmful. And that that's not because of their biology. I think we need to, like, emphasize that talking about this is an opportunity to reflect on maybe stuff we've done, decisions we've made, how we've been socialized, and also resist the idea that it's natural or, like, inherent for men.

Fahri's comments reflect the group's general commentary on challenging cisheteropatriarchal scripts that synonymize masculinity with ideas and actions that are related to using violence. As Fahri articulates, introducing the contextual factors that shape experiences of GBSV, such as socioeconomic challenges, might aid in better understanding the root causes of violence in a way that does not make men feel shamed for their gender or seen automatically as violent people.

Sam expands on these reflections by linking anti-carceral approaches to unpacking and challenging biologically essentialist ideas that frame men's violence as a natural predisposition, thus eschewing necessary context, aggravating systemic factors, and individual decision-making.

Both Fahri and Sam suggest that integrating these considerations into our framework could create a pathway for men to reflect on their experiences of socialization and how they have been subjected to these scripts to better understand men's disproportionate propensity for using violence.

The "How" of Discussing GBSV

Beyond considering the content to be covered in our framework, men participants debated the efficacy of how messages are communicated and presented if men were to take up the framework and begin to engage in feminist social justice actions via their higher education institution or a men's allyship group on campus. Participants drew upon their own experiences of seeing on-campus messages about GBSV and drew it into reflections about the "good/bad" binary, where non-criminalized men feel disengaged from GBSV prevention efforts because they do not think it applies to them. As Ijay and Aadhik discuss:

Ijay: I think the one thing that just comes to mind with having messaging up all the time is that people will start to get immune to the message and start to ignore it. And it links to what we've been talking about, you know, around the anti-carcerality...it just feels like people can very easily see these messages about sexual violence and be like, "I'm not the problem." So having just too much of the same static messaging might not have the desired effect. I do like the comment that Yadhu made, you know, how students attending university...this is kind of the first time that people are away from having that support from say, a close friend or close family, or possibly teachers or mentors. And possibly integrating these messages about sexual violence on campus is kind of like that final pep talk on something you should know. Everyone should go through this conversation with their parents when you learn about the birds and the bees. But this framework could also be incorporated by a trusted figurehead, especially one who might be more involved in the gender-based violence circles, to kind of ensure that this message gets across with actual substance.

Aadhik: Yeah, I'm just of the perspective that I think that targeting it specifically is much more useful than broad application. And that, in high-risk situations such as welcome

week, I think it makes a lot of sense to have it on full display all across campus. I think when you try to think really hard about situations where this kind of message might be able to reach people in a more meaningful manner than broad, consistent application, I think that can have a better impact. And I think that messaging can't be trying to scare people. I think it should be trying to invite people to reflect, be relatable to their experiences, and maybe even, I don't know, challenge some of that "oh, this doesn't apply to me because I'm a good guy" stuff.

Participants imagined different approaches that men could deploy in later stages of the framework – namely, when they decide to mobilize to prevent GBSV via student-led initiatives – that resist replicating dynamics that men have historically found disengaging, such as blanket, generalizing messages posted across campus and large-group presentations. These methods are popularized during more active periods on campus, such as during orientation weeks. As Ijay indicates, participants saw the design of our framework as needing to personalize and tailor the messaging to be most applicable and meaningful for the men it is attempting to engage.

While participants agreed that this education should begin earlier, they saw the framework as having potential to give mentors the tools necessary to initiate conversations about GBSV with boys earlier in life so that, when they attended university, messaging about consent, sexual violence, and allyship would feel normal and like a "reminder" rather than a comprehensive education. Aadhik adds that GBSV messaging during specific "high-risk" moments, such as welcome week, is beneficial; however, he emphasizes that *how* the message is presented is just as important as the content. Aadhik adds that attempts to engage men should also avoid being fearmongering; rather, it should create opportunities for reflection, connection, and unlearning. Participants agreed that fear-mongering tactics, which they likened to MAAD

and anti-smoking campaigns, rarely have the desired effect of changing behaviour. Rather, participants contemplated how messaging could be both consistent and specific to deliberately challenge carceral logics that allow non-criminalized men to disengage themselves from on-campus prevention efforts on the basis of being a “good guy” that does not need to think about consent or GBSV.

Gender-Specific and Transformative Spaces

As we constructed the framework, participants agreed that men-specific spaces were required as a part of ongoing reflection. However, they also wondered about the possibilities of all-gender spaces, where everyone could feel safe and supported enough to build community and pursue co-led initiatives to prevent GBSV. There was some discord about when it would be most appropriate for people of marginalized genders to be involved in the framework as participants worried about exposing them to harm if men moving through the framework did not consider how best to engage with these issues. Anish, Fahri, and Jack discuss:

Anish: I know this is...we mentioned men being the target audience for this, which I agree with, but I feel like women should also be listening to these points just so they can understand what men are learning and talking about. I think, you know, as we talked about around anti-carceral feminism, it needs to be accountable to women, too, so that they're not, like, left out entirely and have no idea what a bunch of guys are doing about this issue. And that thought led me to think about having the option of anonymized feedback maybe from all the people participating, especially when it gets to women. So having both closed and open questions to make sure that they could give their opinions on what they hear after, like whether it's a speech at an event or a group discussion or

whatever happens, and then just have that feedback ongoing so you can address anything early on if there are concerns or whatever.

Fahri: I think I'd actually disagree with that. Maybe not completely. That's a good point, and I do think women need to be involved at some stage so it's not a "men only" thing. But not during the first stage. Definitely not. But maybe at the second or third stage. I think, in the first stage, if people knew that there were women listening to it, they might pull back and be like, "oh, I actually don't want to talk about it because I'm afraid of being attacked or hurting someone's feelings or saying something and having some kind of consequence with my job or whatever."

Maddie: I like this though. It's kind of a multi-stage process.

Jack: Yeah, exactly. I think men using the framework need to start with reflective questions on things like socialization and the ways that you're brought up and the "good guy" myth thing. And then, we shift to, you know, as Felix was saying, inviting guys into a safe space where they can reflect together and talk about it with other guys.

Maddie: Right, I like this. And then, as we progress through the framework, then maybe we invite a more inclusive conversation by opening it up to hear from people that aren't men.

Jack: Totally. I think, like, aligned with the anti-carceral approach, there should be opportunities for transparency throughout, but that it's an all-gender conversation once men have done that work so they don't cause harm when they're still in a stage where they're like, "oh, my god, I have engaged in harmful stuff and I don't know what to do about that."

Anish: That makes sense. I think, because so often these things happen behind closed doors and we don't know what's happening, like we talked about earlier, that accountability to women feels important and should happen when possible.

This exchange demonstrates participants' ongoing thinking about how to ensure that the framework co-design, although led by men, remains accountable to people of marginalized genders and survivors. Connected to our ongoing considerations of anti-carceral perspectives, participants challenged the lack of transparency and accountability from institutional intervention and prevention efforts by emphasizing the need for open feedback lines, honesty and clarity about what men are exploring as they move through the framework in individual and men-specific spaces, and inclusion of all genders *after* men have done the necessary work to be open to conversations with those most impacted by GBSV. As Fahri also notes, maintaining gender-specific spaces until a later stage would also potentially facilitate more willingness for honest reflection and discussion so that men are not concerned about causing harm or being judged as they begin to engage in conversations about GBSV. Jack summarizes the group's discussion by beginning to articulate a pathway guiding the framework co-design. This approach became central in our data analysis workshop alongside the CAB, which is reflected in the final product (Appendix H).

While men-specific spaces remain a central component of best practices for GBSV prevention, there is an unresolvable tension in gender-specific spaces. Specifically, while I can appreciate that men require space to be open, honest, and uncensored about GBSV among other men, there is a concern about such a space being unaccountable to people of all genders, particularly those who are survivors, where harmful norms and ideas go unchecked or are perpetuated and reinforced. Additionally, all-men spaces assume that it is automatically safer for

men; however, it does not necessarily attend to how marginalized men – such as those who are trans, queer, and/or survivors of violence – might be put at risk in a space where other men might communicate harmful ideas without understanding that those in the room are affected.

Furthermore, in the progression of the framework, there is an issue with men becoming the gatekeepers of such a space and then possessing the ability to “invite” other genders into the conversation when they see fit. There is a long and complex history of men misappropriating profeminist movements against violence, assuming ownership and leadership over its operations and outcomes, and erasing the work of women and people of marginalized genders. Men maintaining the ability to include/exclude all genders from these discussions based on their own perceived readiness for dialogue maintains the potential to perpetuate the very problems that the work is trying to address. While gender-specific spaces for men continue to be considered best practices and are critical for facilitating openness, honesty, and reflection, we must be very careful and vigilant about replicating cisheteropatriarchal dynamics that position men as experts, owners, and gatekeepers of GBSV prevention and reify gendered binaries.

Participants’ Summation of Key Considerations

Aligned with the central objectives of the study, we spent considerable time discussing how anti-carceral considerations could be effectively incorporated into a framework to elicit and sustain men’s engagement in GBSV prevention. As participants shifted their perspectives of anti-carcerality beyond solely the abolition of police and prisons, they explored how the integration of key ideas, such as the socialization of cisheteropatriarchal masculinity and systemic analyses of what facilitates GBSV, could aid in deconstructing carceral logics and imagining alternative approaches. The box below presents summative notes that I took during our discussion on what

we would like to see centred and communicated in the framework; these notes were then distributed to participants for their review and approval.

- Integrating a fulsome and comprehensive understanding of how socialization shapes our understandings and experiences of these issues
 - Removing individual blame/shame from men that might facilitate defensiveness or reluctance to enter these conversations – locating it systemically/structurally and how we’ve been conditioned
 - Challenging biologically essentialist ideas about masculinity that tie it to violence (e.g. you’re programmed to express anger in x way)
- Integrating a structural analysis of the conditions that facilitate violence and how it connects with forms of oppression (e.g. classism, racism, colonialism, etc.)
- Understanding the complexity/nuance and shared themes of violence – seeing it as a spectrum, not “is/isn’t”
 - Shared theme: regardless of what kind of violence it is, all are all expressing the same/a similar sentiment/value/belief (e.g. misogyny)
- Personalizing the issue for men to bolster their engagement; connecting to their own experiences
- Resisting one-size-fits-all approaches that hyperfocus on “treatment” or “rehabilitation” of a singular person or “perpetrator”
- Being mindful and critical of language – do certain terms automatically disengage men? Why? How do we frame it differently? (e.g. “toxic masculinity”)
- In a later stage, bridging gaps between men and gender diverse people to facilitate meaningful dialogue where co-learning can happen
 - Transparency and accountability of this framework to survivors of violence – ensure that they know what men are talking about, what information is being shared, etc.
 - Using feedback throughout these conversations to make it iterative and responsive to emerging concerns/questions
- Incentivizing the work – how do we invite people into the conversation?
- Consistent, dynamic, intentional, and context-specific messaging about GBSV on campuses
 - E.g.) consent signs during welcome week → can it then evolve into something personalized and specific over the course of the academic year?

Table 2: Notes from the discussion on priorities for co-designing the framework, generated by Maddie with edits and approval from men student participants.

Participants’ comments spanned various interrelated concepts, including how GBSV prevention with men via an anti-carceral lens is not only represented and communicated in content; rather, it can be within how we invite men into the space, how we frame the issue, what language we use to describe and discuss it, and how we endeavour to personalize and humanize the work in a way

that is aligned with abolitionist principles. Many of these summative points reflect the central themes that I noted in the earlier findings chapters, such as integrating systemic analyses of GBSV, moving beyond binary carceral logics about who causes harm, and expanding our understanding of the issue to encapsulate the spectrum of violence.

Community Advisory Board Reflections

CAB members joined the men students during the data analysis workshop both to co-analyze themes emerging from the first two focus groups and to participate in the co-design of the framework. They actively contributed to the discussion and were well-represented in the summative notes that I compiled during the workshop. Specifically, CAB members drew on their experiences of facilitating anti-violence services with men to support participants' assertions about a gender-specific space and content that explicitly names cisheteropatriarchal masculinity. CAB members agreed with men students that externalizing embodied masculinity to name the systemic and structural influences might aid men engaging with the framework to identify processes of socialization that are harmful and not see such critique as an attack on their identity. CAB members drew in important thinkers, such as bell hooks, to ground these contributions and indicate that interrogations of masculinity can be done in a humane and community-focused way. However, aligned with my cautions above, CAB members were vocal during the data analysis workshop that such work must remain accountable to and rooted in feminist anti-violence work that makes the content, themes, and discussion points of the framework transparent, open access, and subject to change based on men's engagement with organizations and services doing GBSV work in their community. CAB members introduced and reaffirmed that idea that the framework cannot live independently from organizations and people with expertise and experience in GBSV

intervention and prevention as there is a risk of the framework being misappropriated, misused, and misunderstood by men, whether well-intentioned or not.

The CAB also spoke of how intentional language use and/or change can make a significant difference in how men participate in the space. They agreed that carceral language, such as “perpetrator” or “abuser,” can disengage men from the work, particularly when they have been criminalized and/or are a part of a community that is surveilled and criminalized (e.g. Black, Indigenous, and racialized persons) as it communicates absolutes about character and perpetuates the “good/bad” binary. However, CAB members emphasized the delicate balance between being invitational while also being willing to call in ideas, beliefs, words, and actions that are harmful, regardless of if they elicit discomfort among men. They appreciated men students’ perspectives on engaging men via strengths-based approaches, such as viewing those that participate as potential allies with the power to make a difference. Simultaneously, CAB members were cautious about becoming too focused on creating invitational spaces so that the intent and purpose of such programming – to prevent GBSV – becomes diluted, erased, or softened. As a few CAB members openly discussed during the data analysis workshop, this work “*should* feel uncomfortable for many men” as it seeks to directly confront the normalization of harmful ideas that men often are subjected to, participate in, benefit from, and re-enact with others. Men participants appreciated these comments and agreed that the framework should create space for unlearning and learning, both in personal self-reflection and education and in discussions between and among men.

CAB members also appreciated men students’ willingness to extend beyond binary logics and definitions of GBSV to capture both systemic violence and harm that occurs outside of solely physical and sexual forms. They agreed that a scaffolded approach to building the

framework – whereby men begin with personal reflection and peer discussions between and among men *before* shifting into all-gender spaces – was reflective of best practices and their own positive experiences of facilitating violence prevention programs. However, aligned with CAB members’ caution about the work becoming a closed space that excludes all genders, there was further conversation about the merits and concerns of all-men spaces and who is responsible for ensuring that the work remains on track. CAB members and men students agreed that typical best practices for facilitating GBSV prevention spaces include men facilitators; however, CAB members, many of whom were women, challenged this as an automatic solution. As one articulated during the data analysis workshop, “Having only men in that space, including as a facilitator, perpetuates the idea that men only listen to, trust in, and believe other men. It’s not addressing the problem of misogyny, it’s confirming it.” I was thankful for this comment as it is a reflection that I have maintained throughout my time doing anti-violence work with men. Men students were also compelled to consider the ethical concerns of all-men spaces, which resulted in them expressing appreciation for me as a facilitator and the women CAB members for speaking up about their experiences. It also evoked reflections about people of marginalized genders with knowledge of and experience with GBSV prevention co-leading the work to ensure that the framework is used appropriately and effectively.

The CAB and men students engaged in open, mutually respectful, and fruitful discussions during the data analysis workshop that played a significant role in shaping the framework. CAB members were particularly struck by how anti-carceral considerations were thoughtfully applied by men students and imagined in the creation of a space where men can reflect on their own experiences and actions without fear or threat of punishment. CAB members took these reflections with them and indicated that they would also be helpful for approaching their own

work within their respective organizations. The dialogue between men students and CAB members greatly enhanced the overall experience as there were budding synergies, excitement, and passion for the work.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter briefly explored the major themes emerging from our mechanical discussions in co-designing the framework with men postsecondary students and anti-violence service providers included in the CAB. These discussions were important as they made tangible the reflections, comments, dialogues, tensions, and possibilities that the study facilitated via the focus groups and the data analysis workshop. Participants were able to mobilize their ideas and experiences into concrete suggestions that they believe would better engage men positioned similarly to them, which were then represented in the final draft of the framework. Additionally, the project integrated both the perspectives of young men and the expertise of anti-violence service providers to ensure that the framework could be most engaging for those it is attempting to represent and those who would use it in their work in the field. The co-design of the framework was a product that both men students and CAB members were particularly excited by as it maintains the potential to be transferable, usable, and tangible knowledge that could effectively engage men in GBSV prevention. It is something that we all are very proud of and eager to share beyond this dissertation.

Chapter 9: Discussion

This project brought twelve men postsecondary students and seven anti-violence service providers into parallel conversations to imagine and co-design an anti-carceral feminist framework for engaging men in gender-based and sexual violence prevention. The findings of this study both affirm and contribute to the growing field of research and practice on engaging men in the feminist anti-GBSV movement. Our discussions offered both epistemological considerations of what GBSV prevention work must contend with and a tangible exercise in co-designing a framework to support other men in getting involved in this work. Both men students' and CAB members' contributions to this project were vital in conceptualizing and applying abolitionist prevention strategies that could both honour the histories of feminist anti-violence work *and* foster new ideas outside of our current frameworks.

In this chapter, I delve into the meanings, connections, and implications of participants' contributions within the four major themes that I identified in the findings of the project. I begin with discussing men's (dis)engagement from current anti-violence projects and how they link to literature on best practices for facilitating GBSV prevention with men. I then review the tensions within participants' best intentions in engaging in GBSV prevention, specifically in men's tendency to centre their own experiences, emotions, and comfort, often at the expense of the feminist orientation of the project. I then focus on the challenge of witnessing and addressing how men in this study moved between perpetuating and interrupting of carceral logistics, which suggests the possibilities of anti-carcerality in better engaging men in anti-GBSV work. Finally, I shift into a technical examination of what participatory methodology can offer anti-violence projects with men, particularly focusing on how our approaches to the work are as important as

its central messages. I conclude with a consideration of the strengths and limitations of this project and the implications for future research.

Revisiting the State of Things: Men's (Dis)Engagement and (Dis)Location in Anti-Violence Work

The major themes emerging from conversations with participants about how and where men are located and engaged in GBSV prevention work are consistent with and reflect those found in the literature. Specifically, men participants spoke about motivations for being involved in this work as being personal and requiring men's participation to pursue and implement effective solutions (Piccigallo, Lilley & Miller, 2012; Casey et al, 2018; Tolman et al, 2019; Flood, 2020). An additional facet of men's engagement that participants spoke about was anti-violence work's interrelationship with challenging systems of racism, colonialism, and classism. Such ideas echo the recommendations for best practices for intersectional and critical understandings of GBSV that were articulated in recent literature on bystander intervention and consent education (McMahon, Burnham, & Banyard, 2020; Brush & Miller, 2022; Riggs & Yoshimura, 2023). Defying some prevalent patterns of how GBSV is consistently framed as a "women's issue" (Katz, 2006; Flood, 2024), participants viewed an intersectional approach to anti-violence work as necessarily disrupting these misconceptions to instead frame GBSV as a community issue that requires attention to people who have experienced harm, people who have caused harm, *and* those who are in relationship with and/or witnesses to these concerns (Godderis & Root, 2017; Kim, 2020).

Our conversations extended beyond the technical and mechanical understandings of how to elicit and sustain men's participation in feminist anti-violence work that are frequently explored in key literature on the subject (e.g. Casey et al, 2018; Flood, 2020; Graham et al,

2021). While we did speak about these factors, our discussions focused more so on epistemological considerations of the *what*, *why*, and *how* of GBSV prevention with men, which both reflected and extended themes in the literature (Casey & Smith, 2010; Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Flood, 2020). Participants' contemplation of the binary logics of the carceral state revealed understandings of how the state, and subsequently individuals within the state, draw firm lines between who we see as "good" or an "ally," as monstrous or "bad," as deserving of support or punishment, as believable or untrustworthy, and as someone whose experiences are "not that bad" or "harmful." For example, participants grappled with how certain forms of violence are seen as unacceptable, such as violence *against* the state or those deemed "innocent," whereas other forms are seen as normal and decidedly *not* harmful, such as violence *by* the state or against those deemed "criminal." These reflections raise questions about how anti-GBSV work might challenge or re-entrench carceral logics by implicitly or explicitly aligning with the state's determination of whom is deserving of state intervention and/or violence and when such actions are deemed (un)acceptable. As the literature also indicates, prevention work requires a more nuanced, intersectional perspective to examine how systemic factors, like carceral logics, shape interpersonal interactions and decisions to intervene in GBSV (McMahon, Burnham, & Banyard, 2020; Brush & Miller, 2022; Riggs & Yoshimura, 2023).

As participants discussed, distinctions of deservingness are made based on social positionality; in this process, marginalized persons are often automatically cast as unbelievable, monstrous, dangerous, or deserving of state intervention that causes harm (Ahmed, 2013; Taylor, 2018). Interestingly, participants pointed out how, regardless of how violence is expressed, different kinds of harm along the continuum of GBSV express the same sentiment, particularly misogyny and anti-trans and anti-queer beliefs (Dowd, 2010), which they concluded is the

foundation of the state. These reflections evoked considerations of *how* prevention is theorized, *who* is considered as the audience for prevention and as the facilitators of prevention programming, and *what* messages are constructed as necessary for these spaces. Here, we see how participants' theorizations of prevention were consistent with those expressed in the literature, particularly in emphasizing the significance of designing and facilitating gender-transformative spaces that readily contend with men's simultaneous complicity and entanglement with cisheteropatriarchy (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Casey et al, 2018; Flood, 2020). However, their dialogues about how carceral logics are inherent within the state's interventions in GBSV evoke further questions about theorizing state and individual accountability within prevention work. Specifically, as men in this study noted that the state determines who and when deservingness of both care and punishment are appropriate, their understanding of the barriers to engaging in prevention work extended into an epistemological tension of who facilitates prevention work and whether their messaging is aligned with the state or its systems (i.e. postsecondary institutions). Put simply, participants identified a tension and barrier in men's participation in anti-GBSV work: the prevention initiative, itself, might perpetuate binary logic that allows non-criminalized men to engage further with complicity, both in self-identifying as "good" and, therefore, not responsible for GBSV and in perpetuating the state's ideas about punishment against those deemed "criminal," "unbelievable," and "deserving" (Pease, 2014; Taylor, 2019; Brush & Miller, 2022; Brockbank, 2023).

What emerged was an inherent tension within who designs, facilitates, and evaluates GBSV prevention, particularly when it is an internal product of the postsecondary institution (PSI). Institutionally led prevention programming might only focus on interpersonal forms of these harms to distract from how the PSI itself is an agent of the state and, therefore, perpetrates,

perpetuates, and sustains violence (Phipps, 2020; Colpitts, 2022; Carey et al, 2022). In applying intersectional and anti-carceral perspectives to this conundrum, participants' reflections affirm the analysis of how "criminality," monstrosity, and deservingness of state violence are assigned based on Otherness, strangeness, and deviance, which is raced, classed, gendered, and (dis)abled (Ahmed, 2013; Taylor, 2018; Brockbank, 2023). Simultaneously, the violence that is deemed normal, necessary, or "not that bad" both sustains ongoing systems of harm and facilitates complicity among those who benefit from the binary logic, particularly those in proximity to white, colonial, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy (Maynard, 2017; Taylor, 2018). Here, participants struggled with notions of accountability and the impossibilities of practicing it within a punitive state, which is further complicated by institutional prevention efforts that do not acknowledge or contend with these contradictions (Jordan, 2019; Brush & Miller, 2022).

These binaries extend into constructions and social impositions of cisheteropatriarchal masculinities. Participants spoke of how socializing agents, such as media, formal education, family, and culture, can reify tenets of traditional masculinity and create the conditions for violence to proliferate, which is consistent with major findings in gender-transformative violence prevention work (Giaccardi et al, 2017; Casey et al, 2018; Rivera & Scholar, 2020). These reflections allude to a broader complicity in the normalization and prevalence of GBSV that stems from both interconnected states of oppression and the socialization of cisheteropatriarchal masculinity. Participants aptly identified that GBSV is often viewed by the general public as an inevitability and that part of their motivations for getting involved are to imagine solutions to an issue that should have been adequately addressed by now. They also sought to interrupt biologically essentialist assumptions that men's violence is inherent and natural, thus supporting

similar disruptions articulated by researchers working with men (Jordan et al, 2022; Burrell, 2023).

Men students emphasized that recognizing and challenging the agents of socialization that impose traditional masculinity should not be seen as a justification or excuse for GBSV. Simultaneously, they sought to locate these systems – such as media, family, and education – within the carceral state and as a conduit for its foundational assumptions, including communicating what violence counts, who is deserving of support, and who is seen as believable. This understanding was central to our conversations about complicity: when violence is dismissed as inevitable and natural within the state’s imposition of cisheteropatriarchal masculinity, it creates the conditions for men to disengage from prevention work, locate unacceptable and punishable forms of violence solely within “problem people,” and perform traditional masculinity in a way that is excusable, normal, and necessary (Brockbank, 2019; Burrell, 2023; Carian, 2024). Returning to Connell’s theorizations of masculinities, these concerns – paired with how participants disrupted the “good/bad” binary – reaffirmed that performances of complicit masculinity often mirror and embody hegemonic masculinity in their collusion with GBSV (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jordan et al, 2022; Burrell, 2023; Carian, 2024).

In this analysis, men also continued to explore how they, too, are victims of the cisheteropatriarchal carceral state and experience various harms within its social systems. These reflections are well-documented in the literature and often cited as a necessary dynamic for prevention programs to engage with (hooks, 2004; Casey et al, 2018; Bola, 2019). hooks’ (2004) commentary on how the patriarchy “demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves” (p.66) was intimately linked

with participants' conversations about how the harm that men inflict upon themselves (e.g. substance use, self-harm, suicidality, social isolation, etc.) is rarely recognized in conversations about violence. This concern was further explored as both men students and CAB members focused on how experiences of state violence and impositions of cisheteropatriarchal masculinity are complicated further for marginalized men, including those who are racialized, queer, trans, disabled, poor, and non-Canadian (Bola, 2019). They examined the relationship between experiences of intergenerational trauma stemming from non-conformity to the white, colonial, capitalist, carceral state and how they facilitate the conditions for GBSV, which offered a necessary anti-carceral analysis that might be absent in how we currently talk about hegemonic masculinity and complicity in westernized prevention programming (Bola, 2019; Wei et al, 2024; Salter et al, 2025).

These reflections also mirrored what I discussed previously about the colonial and imperialist roots of GBSV and how Black, Indigenous, and racialized men have been subjected to sexualized violence for the purposes of subjugation, humiliation, and degradation (Razack, 2005; 2016). In this project, half of the men student participants were Black or racialized, with two of the six also being international students. However, naming and unpacking their proximity to the colonial, white supremacist roots of GBSV was less tangible in the focus group discussions. When analyses of racism were invoked, it was not done in reference to self or via self-reflection; rather, it was discussed in the context of considering other men's experiences and how colonial and racist trauma is intergenerational. Frankly, when race was considered in the group, it was usually communicated by one of the white participants, such as through John's experiences working with Indigenous populations. This was an interesting dynamic that evoked questions for me about why racialized men did not connect our conversations to their personal,

lived experiences. I also wondered about how they perceived white men in the study openly identifying colonization and racism as the foundational system of GBSV. I do not intend to speculate on the reasons why racialized men did not speak about their experiences, nor do I think that they should have felt obligated to do so as these disclosures are a form of uncompensated and unrecognized labour that racialized people are asked to do frequently by white people for their benefit, education, and comfort (Gregory, 2021). However, I wonder if the space did not feel safe enough to do so or if part of this disinclination originates in the concerns noted above, whereby racialized men have been subjected to violent impositions of emasculation that synonymize vulnerability and identification of these dynamics as weak, effeminate, or humiliating (Razack, 2016). This tension is an area of concern that requires continued attention in GBSV intervention and prevention research and practice.

Expanding on this reflection, it is important to recognize how participants frequently pointed to “other” men when discussing both their experiences of harm within the carceral state and their complicity in reinforcing and enacting cisheteropatriarchal masculinity. Within this process, they unintentionally or unconsciously practiced complicity; despite claims that GBSV prevention work must personalize the issue for men, participants distanced themselves from the discussion by speaking about experiences outside of their own and de-centred women from explorations of harm. Such dynamics have been observed and discussed by researchers and practitioners facilitating anti-violence work with men, particularly in the challenges of encouraging men to be reflexive *and* avoid positioning themselves at the centre of feminist anti-violence work (Jordan, 2019; Brockbank, 2023; Burrell, 2023). Interestingly, the impulse to point to “other” men is also observed in the literature among men who have been criminalized for using violence, particularly in perpetuating carceral logics that their own behaviours (e.g.

domestic violence) are “not that bad” compared to other forms of violence (e.g. child sexual abuse, sexual assault, etc.) (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Rich et al, 2010; Stokoe, 2010; Dagirmanjian et al, 2017). Here, we see how carceral logics about what “counts” as violence present a barrier to engaging both criminalized and non-criminalized men in conversations about GBSV and men’s complicity.

This tension poses an ongoing concern for imagining GBSV prevention with men. Here, we see how asking men to reflect on their complicity is often perceived as a barrier to meaningful and sustained engagement that is less often named and challenged by men (Jordan et al, 2022; Burrell, 2023). There is a delicate balance between asking men to personalize the work via examining their own attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and experiences, while also ensuring that they do not make personal connection in a way that only centres *their* experiences of harm, *not* of their experiences of participating in, causing, or failing to intervene in harm. Additionally, while pointing to experiences outside of their own (i.e. those in media) might make men more comfortable and aid them in participating in anti-GBSV spaces, this practice risks suggesting to men that their engagement in GBSV prevention is to stop *other men* from causing harm, not challenging their own ideas, language, and actions. It also evokes questions about how to challenge these reactions in a way that is not perceived as an “attack” on or “threat” towards men, which is a continued reflection amongst practitioners (Carlson et al, 2015; Denborough, 2018). However, this question in itself perpetuates the misogynistic idea that identifying and naming men’s complicity and harms *is* an attack and not a necessary practice for facilitating meaningful engagement. As I have articulated previously (Brockbank, 2023), herein lies the feminist tightrope, an unresolvable tension between invitational and accountability-driven approaches to GBSV prevention and intervention.

Simultaneously, there is a concern that identifying men's complicity in prevention work might reify and perpetuate carceral logics that eschew a systemic analysis of state harm and apply a punitive approach. Participants' theorizations of carceral logic in GBSV prevention work reveal the challenges of hyperindividualistic understandings of harm that rely on carceral conceptualizations of accountability and deservingness of intervention or care. Striking a careful balance between confronting individual acts of complicity and maintaining our focus on the systemic and structural complicity of the violent state is challenging but essential work. Too often, we are distracted by the "good/bad," "innocent/guilty," and "victim/perpetrator" binaries in ways that are ultimately counterproductive to meaningfully addressing GBSV. As Russo (2018) summarizes:

Those who support the one harmed become invested in punishing, banishing, or criminalizing the person who did the harm, and those who support the person who did the harm become invested in defending that person and demonizing or blaming the one harmed [...] The consequences of this binary are either that people deny, ignore, and/or minimize the mistreatment, abuse, and violence so as not to "take sides" or that people do take sides and the communities break apart along those divides. (p.98)

Here, we can see how excessive focus on the individual and interpersonal results in a culture of punishment that fractures community solidarity and lays blame on "problem people." The consequences of such an approach can include dismissing and/or re-entrenching harm. As our discussions in this project suggest, unpacking and challenging the carceral logics of complicity can aid us in building communities where we can reimagine accountability, centre care, and dismantle the systems that facilitate violence (Godderis & Root, 2017; Heiner & Tyson, 2017; Kim, 2020). We can also deliberately resist the carceral, colonial, and imperialist logic that use

GBSV as a tool for punishment and control to shame and humiliate criminalized people, particularly Black, Indigenous, and racialized men (Gilmore, 2007; Sharpe, 2016). Creating spaces where we identify and challenge men's complicity without fear, threat, or perception of such practices as punishment could be a tangible and meaningful step toward dismantling existing barriers to men's engagement.

Re-Considering Best Intentions and Tensions: Complicity and Defensiveness among the “Good Guys”

This study's epistemological positioning demanded attention to the sociostructural and systemic, particularly in how those forces are invisibilized and individualized via a focus on interpersonal violence (Kim, 2018; Taylor, 2019). However, it also necessitated a feminist and gendered lens throughout all aspects of analysis to align with the ultimate goal of this work in improving women's experiences and ending GBSV (Pease, 2008; Casey, 2010; Flood, 2020). Here, we intimately feel the “feminist tightrope” that I have previously written about (Brockbank, 2023): it is an ever-present challenge in this work to navigate appreciating men's experiences of harm, being invitational in our approach, and maintaining a systemic view of the issue, *while also* being accountability-driven in our efforts to recognize and own harms that we have caused. The former risks feeling like pandering, where we focus on discourses of allyship, celebration of engagement, and empathy about men's experiences (Pease, 2008; Casey, 2010), while the latter risks alienating participants in ways that counterproductively distance men from the conversation and becoming overly carceral (e.g. policing their engagement, being punitive, etc.). This presents as an unresolvable tension in anti-GBSV work with men: the delicate balance between creating a space where men feel it is possible to engage, while also ensuring that men's

complicity and participation in GBSV is addressed and challenged. It also presents a question about whether both of these *can* or *should* happen in the same space.

When I have facilitated mandated and voluntary spaces for men to talk about violence, I have observed various tensions and dynamics that persist regardless of the space, whether it be the PAR program or bystander intervention workshops. During this project, the same themes appeared, including conflating discomfort with unsafety, (re)centering men's experiences of harm, de-gendering the conversation, and depersonalizing their analyses via focus on the theoretical and hypothetical. In my review of existing literature, there is a continued emphasis on creating spaces where men feel safe to engage via empathizing with how men are socialized through cisheteropatriarchy to be unemotional and invulnerable (hooks, 2004; Heilman, Barker, & Harrison, 2017; Casey et al, 2018; Bola, 2019). However, as many have articulated, this recognition cannot eclipse the feminist analysis that demands attention to how men enact, benefit from, and reinforce cisheteropatriarchy through various forms of GBSV (Pease, 2008, 2014; Flood, 2020). Participants in this project both acknowledged men's defensive impulses and engaged in them, which aptly summarizes the central tension of doing feminist violence prevention with men.

To further analyze men's defensive responses, I have reviewed commentaries of feminist scholars, practitioners, and activists found within grey literature. Three, in particular, capture the core tensions emerging from my experiences that were mirrored in key moments during this dissertation project. What emerged as significant across these accounts was men's practice of "whataboutism," a colloquial term that refers to the rhetorical strategy of responding to a perceived accusation with a counteraccusation (Aikin & Casey, 2024). For example, Taylor (2023) writes of her contrasting experiences in anti-GBSV work and men's mental health

advocacy; whereas the former garnered significant vitriol from men that focused on how conversations about women's experiences of abuse neglect to recognize men's, the latter only evoked supportive responses that were empathetic to men. Many of these comments were explicit and hostile (e.g. claims that focusing on women's experiences of violence is "sexist" to men), whereas others more implicitly aimed to shift the conversation to how men, too, are harmed by cisheteropatriarchy. In contrast, when Taylor (2023) was situated within men's mental health organizing, she did not observe any "whataboutism" that detracted or attempted to distract from the central issue at hand. Here, she acknowledged that conversations about men's mental health are often deliberately invoked by men as a rhetorical counteraccusation to move away from discussing men's violence against women (Taylor, 2023).

Dierks (2023) discusses how "whataboutism" consistently refuses to recognize the "elephant in the room": that the underlying cause for both men's and women's homicide is men's violence, and that all violence is a "direct consequences of [cishetero]patriarchy and the systems it enforces" (para.4). Bardswich (2019) writes of a similar dynamic in her piece published on behalf of Women's Shelters Canada. When the Canadian Femicide Observatory of Justice and Accountability publishes their annual report documenting women killed by violence each year, Bardswich (2019) notes that their social media pages are consistently flooded with comments that claim men are murdered at a higher rate than women and that, consequently, the report is "sexist." There are also frequent comments that allude to men's mental health, suicide rates, and substance use and claim that such issues are not adequately recognized in discussions about pressing social issues. She aptly notes,

[I]f the only time you purport to care about violence against men is to interrupt conversations about violence against women, it's not because you care about men. It's

because you don't want to talk about violence against women, and you don't want others talking about it either. (Bardswich, 2019, para.12)

These reflections are important as they locate, name, and challenge men's defensive responses that are consistent in GBSV prevention and intervention. Frankly, they go beyond mere recognition to instead note how men's defensiveness about feeling "attacked" often hypocritically morphs into an "attack" on feminism, women, and anti-GBSV work.

It is challenging to disrupt these dynamics within the broader context of a system that is also overwhelmingly defensive and unaccountable about its role in perpetuating and facilitating state violence (Bumiller, 2008; Phipps, 2020). As men are often actors of cisheteropatriarchy, their efforts to distract from and silence conversations about violence against women are reflective of the state's self-protective practices to absolve itself of responsibility, blame, and, therefore, material consequence. It is an attempt to preserve a system that men see themselves as largely benefitting from, even when cisheteropatriarchy creates the conditions that harm men, too (hooks, 2004). In her analysis of media coverage of gang sexual assaults at an elite private school in Toronto, Sunderland (2025) describes how attempts to identify men's violence as a product of "toxic masculinity" or "rape culture" might initially appear critical, while actually enacting a "privilege diffusion" that disperses blame "across vague systemic forces [...] in ways that ultimately obscure responsibility" (p.9). Here, we see the tensions within navigating both individual and systemic accountability, whereby locating responsibility for causing harm requires a balance between recognizing men's complicity *and* the broader complicity of the systems that they are living within. Furthermore, connecting back to earlier analyses of the carceral state's interrelationship with neoliberalism, perceived threat of material consequence – usually loss of status, reputation, and revenue – makes it difficult to identify, name, and challenge GBSV,

misogyny, and other systemic oppressions that are foundational to the cisheteropatriarchal state as both individuals and systems will aim to protect their interests over exercising accountability (Phipps, 2020; Ostridge, 2025).

Such reflections are consistent with key themes emerging from feminist reflexive accounts of anti-violence research and practice and the dynamics observed in this study (Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Peacock & Barker, 2014; Casey et al, 2018; Ging et al, 2024). Patterns of men's tendency to locate harms outside of the self via intellectualization, posturing moral superiority, and neutralizing conversations about violence have been discussed and documented, and they, too, have been examined for their roots in systemic practices of cisheteropatriarchy. For example, Carian's (2024) conversations with self-identified feminist men point to how their impulses to position themselves as intellectually and morally better than incel/anti-feminist men counterintuitively re-entrench binary logic and complicity. Put simply, when men who voluntarily take part in dialogues about misogyny and GBSV posture as inherently "good," the reliance on biologically essentialist assumptions about men's propensity for leadership, intellect, and strength of character might prevent men from engaging in reflexivity about their participation in harmful dynamics (Jordan et al, 2022; Burrell, 2023; Carian, 2024). These tensions are intimately felt and navigated by women in feminist anti-violence work. When faced with consistent resistance and defensiveness, women facilitators and researchers are frequently tasked with considering when and where their intervention would be effective (McCallum, 1997; Tyagi, 2006; Olive & Thorpe, 2011). Simultaneously, facilitators are burdened with considering how to empathize with men's indoctrination by cisheteropatriarchy alongside naming and challenging their expressions of misogynistic ideas, languages, and behaviours.

In the context of this project, I was keenly aware of my previous experiences and the consequences of my influence in shaping the flow of conversation. When men participants in the study engaged in some of the tensions I identified, such as de-gendering the conversation and framing feminists/women as hostile and violent, I did not intervene. I passively noted dynamics that were all too familiar in their casual misogyny but felt no desire or impulse to challenge, educate, or draw on the comment to elicit group reflection about the tensions within their commentary. In the moment, I was exhausted, and I did not give it much thought. If there was any consideration for why I was making this decision, it was fear that my interruption would be negatively received by men, thus disrupting rapport, and concern that my intervention would compromise the authenticity of the research, which is an often cited tension in FPAR. Furthermore, I was heartened by participants' engagement, excitement, and passion, and I justified any regressive comments as unintentional and, therefore, less important than their progressive contributions. I did not view a voluntary space where men joined for the purposes of research as a site where education and pushback would be welcome, productive, or necessary. The CAB supported these reflections and mentioned the limitations of a brief project in interrupting harmful ideas; I welcomed their reassurances wholeheartedly as it affirmed my decision and did not force me to think differently about my inaction. However, upon reflection after data collection, I wondered about the possibilities of education in violence prevention research with men and what my intervention could have offered the men in the study.

Subsequently, and in the context of a feminist participatory action project, this study has evoked further questions about how to mobilize the principles underpinning FPAR toward developing tools for educating men about GBSV. FPAR is cited as a methodology that is explicitly concerned with capacity building and equipping participants with tangible knowledges,

skills, and strategies that are applicable to the pursuit of social justice and liberation beyond the project (Reid, Tom, & Frisby, 2006; Reid & Frisby, 2008; Lorenzetti & Walsh, 2014). Within this framing, FPAR can extend beyond technical skill-building, such as in learning how to collect and analyze data, and into building knowledges and understandings about GBSV, misogyny, and its interrelationship with the carceral state. Interestingly, I felt that I was able to do this when we were talking about abolition, but not when misogyny and ideas that support GBSV were discussed. I think that I justified pushing back against carceral ideas through viewing men as open, uncertain, and curious about abolition (decidedly *not* self-identified experts) and their identities as separate from carcerality. Contrastingly, men and their perspectives of GBSV felt inseparable and personal as I could not de-gender their identity or challenge their experience of being men. Their continued attention to men's mental health and experiences of interrelated harms (e.g. colonialism, racism, violence, etc.) felt like an implicit indication that any intervention would be perceived as an attack and a dismissal, which I worried would disengage them from the research.

Reflecting on these tensions, I am curious about how future FPAR projects could be more explicitly educational in their efforts to build capacity and inspire tangible social change (Reid, Tom, & Frisby, 2006; Reid & Frisby, 2008; Lorenzetti & Walsh, 2014). For example, Greene et al (2018) structured their community-based research project around the idea of research for action via education and capacity-building with their participants. As such, there is immense potential for lessons to be learned and applied from anti-racist and anti-oppressive education, research, and community work. As I made the comparison in this thesis that men's complicity in GBSV is similar to white persons' complicity with racism, locating the interconnection between these social issues as symptoms of the white, colonial, capitalist, cisheteropatriarchal, carceral

state provides ample and necessary pathways for a merging of anti-racist and anti-GBSV projects (McMahon, Burnham, & Banyard, 2020; Brush & Miller, 2022; Riggs & Yoshimura, 2023).

Namely, decolonial and anti-racist research and praxis has offered considerations of how research efforts can be (re)imagined as spaces for collective reflection and action that necessitate unpacking racism and educating participants about challenging the normalized harms of white supremacy (Bola, 2019; Wei et al, 2024; Salter et al, 2025). Furthermore, anti-racist pedagogies have sought to frame complicity as an inherent tension within structural oppression, which similarly navigates the unresolvable tension of calling out interpersonal iterations of these harms *and* maintaining a systemic and structural gaze of its origins (Varcoe, 2006; Applebaum, 2010; Evans-Winters & Hines, 2020; Zembylas, 2022). In this process, we can learn to abolish our own carceral impulses when we are met with resistance, while simultaneously pushing back against the idea that naming white cisheteropatriarchal harms is an attack on white men.

I conclude these reflections with an acknowledgment of how these tensions can co-exist: while men continue to internalize and express anti-feminist sentiments at times, particularly when they feel confronted by GBSV and their own roles in it, every participant in the study volunteered for it and expressed that they were there because they care about these issues and want to be part of the solution. Men's engagement is an imperfect tangle that requires continued reflexivity, empathy, and accountability. The feminist tightrope is one that I continue to balance on, and feminist setbacks and opportunities for developing new insights are a natural part of the process. Maintaining a systemic and sociostructural analysis of GBSV is essential, yet it must happen alongside individual practices of accountability.

Reflecting on Anti-Carceral Possibilities: Paving a New Path Forward

I was inspired to pursue this project based on my own experiences and observations of a gap in anti-carceral feminist approaches to imagining GBSV prevention with non-criminalized men. The eagerness and willingness to engage in these conversations across the twelve men who volunteered – paired alongside their sustained participation over the course of the focus groups – was reflective of how abolitionism is a project that many are curious and hopeful about. In the screening process and the focus groups, participants expressed some uncertainty about abolitionism and worried that their lack of expertise would inhibit their contributions to the framework. Some even focused explicitly on the roles of police and prisons as they did not consider that abolition extended beyond these systems and into our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. This revelation emphasized that anti-carcerality needs to be demystified more broadly in anti-violence work (Kaba, 2021; D’Avolio, Cavalcanti, & Dadusc, 2023; Battle & Powell, 2024). Returning to my reflections in the previous section, feminist participatory projects work well with anti-carceral feminist theory as capacity building and knowledge sharing can be mobilized to educate participants about abolition and inspire decarceral action.

The themes emerging from our discussions exposed how carceral logics are binary, complicit, and foundational to the construction and propagation of rape myths. For example, when participants positioned the carceral state and its interventions as necessary, they often invoked concerns about safety of the innocent and responsibility for managing and stopping the dangerous and guilty. Here, we see how carceral logics and rape myths rely on each other; the carceral state will always be seen as necessary and helpful when violence is seen as a product of unruly, deviant, strange, criminals being uncontrolled and unmonitored in the broader, safe, innocent community (Ahmed, 2013; Taylor, 2019; Levine & Meiners, 2020). While participants were able to organically identify and challenge these logics in their conversations, their

continued location of GBSV as outside of themselves and their men peers reflected how the intertwinement of carceral logic and rape myths create the conditions for self-identified “good” men to disengage from anti-violence work and the image of the Othered, “bad,” strange perpetrator to persist (Ahmed, 2013; Gottzén, 2013).

Within participants’ concerns about who would be responsible for GBSV intervention and prevention in the abolition of police and prisons, there was an underlying connection to how carceral logics are also neoliberal. Specifically, participants struggled to imagine a response to GBSV that did not include paid positions, professionalized procedures, and ethical obligations within a profession, such as a police officer, security guard, or other actors within the criminal legal system. This assessment links to the carceral state’s impulse to hyperindividualize GBSV and assign responsibility for addressing the issue in a binary way (e.g. state actors deployed to control “problem people” as a sufficient intervention). As many anti-carceral feminists have discussed, neoliberal and carceral logics work together to frame GBSV as an individual concern that prevents community care and collective responsibility (Creative Interventions, 2019; Baird, 2023; Battle & Powell, 2024; Kim, 2024). Anti-carceral imaginings allow us to consider what community accountability could offer GBSV prevention; if we were to disrupt neoliberal assumptions about responsibility for intervention, we would see addressing and ending GBSV as a project that we all have an obligation to pursue. Similarly, in disrupting the “good/bad” binary, collective responsibility challenges the dynamics that allow self-identified “good” men to both disengage from anti-violence work out of the belief that it is not meant for them and practice self-adulation and seek reward for perceived moral and intellectual superiority in a way that is consistent with neoliberal and carceral logic (Battle & Powell, 2024; Carian, 2024).

Returning to my earlier discussions of campus control and institutional betrayal, men in this study identified the PSI as state violence and as a central source for the proliferation of carceral logics about GBSV. Participants spoke about how the PSI's processes for responding to GBSV within their respective departments lack transparency, perpetuate secrecy, and ultimately lead to inaction, thus making them feel unsettled, angry, and unsafe. Here, we see how campus control practices that prioritize the comfort and reputation of the PSI facilitate institutional betrayal beyond only people who have experienced harm. I argue that institutional betrayal is a symptom and consequence of not only the neoliberal university as many have argued (e.g. Quinlan, 2017; Prior & de Heer, 2021; Gardiner & Felix, 2022), but also the carceral state and its values. By positioning itself only as a site where GBSV happens and a state that intervenes in GBSV, the PSI refuses to recognize how it can both cause and perpetuate harm in how it responds directly to survivors *and* the broader community. As Heiner and Tyson (2017) note, “[f]or the state to take on this role, the community must be disappeared, the person who experienced the harm reduced to a victim, and the person who committed the harm transmuted into a monster” (p.15). This dynamic mirrors the self-protective mechanisms of the criminal legal system; by only focusing on interpersonal forms of violence, the carceral state obfuscates and erases how its processes and procedures are violent, such as in its methods of investigation, adjudication, and sharing its findings (Deer & Barefoot, 2018; Pilipchuk, 2021).

For example, in responding to the alleged sexual violence in 2020 at McMaster University, the institution perpetuated further harm among students, staff, and faculty through isolating those making the reports in their department via gag orders, only publishing a summary instead of the full report on its investigation, and being vague about how it planned to respond to prevent further harm from happening in the future (Polewski, 2020; Mitchell, 2021; Brockbank

et al, 2025). In this, both the neoliberal orientations and the carceral logics that are the foundations of the PSI prevent transparency, accountability, and justice to, instead, facilitate and ultimately invalidate experiences of institutional betrayal. Put simply, the individualism of the institution's response dismisses the broader community's concerns and often leaves them reeling without support or a plan of action to prevent harm from happening again in the future (Quinlan, 2017; Christl et al, 2024; Dufour, 2024).

Participants also noted that, when campus control protects the institution and depicts it as separate from the carceral state, the community can be implicated in practicing and perpetuating complicity on an interpersonal level. In particular, the normalization of violence and the secrecy that is often practiced within the PSI in cases of GBSV were seen by men students as a contributing factor to how GBSV remains prevalent. While the PSI might claim to take these concerns seriously, participants identified various iterations of institutional failure to meaningfully address violence without causing further harm to those involved and the broader campus community. In many ways, they saw PSI intervention as a means to further individualize the issue and perform obligatory care rather than a way to get to the root of GBSV. The institution's refusal to identify how it facilitates, perpetrates, and perpetuates GBSV was discussed as a gateway for individual community members to also eschew responsibility for addressing and redressing harm (Salvino, Gilchrist, & Cooligan-Pang, 2017; Colpitts, 2020; Ostridge, 2025). If men align themselves with the state and self-identify as "good," they then further the complicity that justifies state violence against those deemed "criminal" or "deserving," protects people in positions of power who cause harm, silences and (re)traumatizes survivors, and discourages the broader community in reporting or calling out GBSV and its

interconnections with carceral violence (Quinlan, 2017; Russo, 2018; Jordan et al, 2022; Burrell, 2023).

As our conversations progressed in the focus groups and CAB meetings, anti-carceral imaginings became a salient possibility for offering a necessary alternative to experiences and discourses of campus control and complicity. For example, participants spoke about the continuum of violence and how we need to reimagine practicing accountability for forms of harm that are not labelled as “criminal” by the carceral state, including “rape jokes” and casual misogyny. Furthermore, participants resisted the function of “shame” in carceral responses as it counterproductively pushes men further away from engaging meaningfully in GBSV prevention. Returning to my earlier review of the colonial and imperial roots of GBSV, ritualizing humiliation and shame are, ironically, the root of both “rape jokes” *and* the criminal legal system’s responses, thus pointing to how they are borne from the same state. Tracing this genealogy is essential to deconstructing the carceral, colonial, imperialist state and deliberately challenging the impulse to humiliate and punish those who do not confirm to white cisheteropatriarchy (Ahmed, 2013; Razack, 2016).

Men students and CAB members were interested in imagining accountability outside of penal practice. Rather than it being a reaction to threat of punishment, they wanted accountability to be a collective praxis that was not rooted in shame, blame, fear, or anger, but hope, care, and a genuine desire to change. These hopes are entwined with the imaginings of abolitionist feminists. As Battle and Powell (2024) note,

Abolition feminist worldmaking involves identifying and dismantling oppressive institutions and collaboratively (re)envisioning how to build communities that center care while grappling with nuanced everyday needs, fears, and concerns. (p.533)

Within this perspective, we cannot shy away from the normalized forms of GBSV that occur in our daily contexts, nor can we avoid questions and concerns about how to respond to harm outside of a penal system. Anti-carceral feminism provides a worldview that necessarily engages with both the systemic and the interpersonal, where the overarching work of challenging the cisheteropatriarchal carceral state cannot come at the expense of interrupting individual iterations and expressions of its values (Godderis & Root, 2017; Kim, 2018; Burrell, 2023).

This imagining is enormously difficult within the context of the PSI, where they criminalize dissent, individualize responsibility for harm, and maintain complicity in creating the conditions for GBSV to thrive (Quinlan, 2017; Russo, 2018; Ostridge, 2025). This project evoked ongoing questions for me about whether this work is even possible within western, colonial, carceral institutions and the state. At times, it seemed quite hopeless, which is consistent with my experiences in facilitating public education programming on GBSV within workplaces, elementary and high schools, PSIs, and sports organizations, all of which are entangled in the carceral web.

However, I am reminded of the ways that abolition is practiced, lived in, and imagined every day in our communities. Locally in Hamilton, I have observed and participated in anti-carceral projects that are founded on mutual aid and community care, including prisoner rights' movements (Barton Prisoner Solidarity Project, n.d.), support and advocacy for people living rough (Hamilton Encampment Support Network, 2021), food justice initiatives (Roots2Justice, 2021), and community solidarity against GBSV (Take Back the Night, n.d.). Even within oppressive systems and the carceral state, abolition is material, tangible, and possible; we have practiced and sustained alternative pathways to respond to and prevent social issues outside of the criminal legal system and fostered community care. Similarly, despite the identified tensions

in imagining anti-carceral responses to GBSV within the PSI, participants emphasized the significance of community in coming together to support, dream, and build new initiatives outside of the carceral state for reimagining accountability and community care (Kaba, 2021; Davis et al, 2022). Here, we see anti-carcerality *as* prevention; deliberately shifting away from reactivity and toward addressing the conditions that facilitate GBSV is an abolitionist imagining and should be credited as such. As participants concluded, doing so would expand our worldviews in a way that is deeply compassionate, humanizing, and community driven.

Returning to Participatory Research and Co-Design with Men

When I was first imagining this project, I was committed to producing something beyond the dissertation that could be usable and applicable to anti-GBSV work in my community. I also wanted to extend my previous research into participatory co-design to actualize the major findings of my MSW thesis, which emphasized how men need to be involved in creating and evaluating GBSV prevention programs with men (Brockbank, 2020). Stemming from the need for collaborative anti-violence spaces, emerging research has considered the potential for feminist participatory action projects that engage men in GBSV prevention and intervention. In my review of the literature, there were three key examples of what these strategies could offer praxis in this area. These projects engaged with men from various social positionings, particularly with those who are racialized, to name, identify, and analyze how men are entangled in oppressive social dynamics that shape their ability and willingness to participate in liberatory projects (Bernard, 2012; Eckstein & Pinto, 2013; Lorenzetti & Walsh, 2022).

Lorenzetti and Walsh (2022) drew on FPAR methodology to imagine GBSV prevention with a group of men from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds. The authors outline their various strategies for recruiting and sustaining men in the project, and they conclude with recognizing

the critiques of such an approach. These reflections were deeply relevant for my own project and considerations of my role in the work, including mediating how white women facilitators can resist paternalistic and patronizing notions of “giving voice” to participants and acting as gatekeepers to the resources that could support liberatory projects in the academic/community partnership. Furthermore, while my project and Lorenzetti and Walsh’s maintained a diverse group of participants, there is ongoing concern about how the exclusion of certain identities – whether intentional or not – translates to designing a framework that could be applicable in various contexts and with diverse populations. Mirroring the major dynamics that I discussed above, Lorenzetti and Walsh (2022) assert that this work needs to contend with the connections between colonialism, state violence, and GBSV, which they note is often missing in existing prevention work.

Expanding on Lorenzetti and Walsh’s (2022) project, Eckstein and Pinto (2013) used participatory action research to co-develop a primary prevention program for GBSV prevention in an American postsecondary context with a diverse group of university-aged men. The program used survey and interview data from men on campus and was explicitly interested in how the relationship between (re)negotiating healthy masculinities and healthy relationships could positively benefit anti-violence work with men. By readily engaging with the insights of young men from this research, Eckstein and Pinto (2013) developed numerous action strategies, ranging from “integrating women’s perspectives” to employing men as facilitators, to inform the development and implementation of a pilot program for preventing GBSV. Echoing what I experienced in my own project, the authors found that young men in their study appeared to genuinely desire and express gratitude for the space to “honestly re-envision their identities” (Eckstein & Pinto, 2013, p.248) in relation to masculinity and violence.

Eckstein and Pinto's (2013) final reflections on the potential for participatory projects to facilitate identity (re)negotiation was further explored in Bernard's (2012) study on how working with Black men from the African diaspora in a participatory action project created space for them to define themselves and their identities (Bernard, 2012). Participants were able to both challenge the tensions between their personal values and those imposed upon them by expectations of cisheteropatriarchal masculinity *and* (re)build identity in a way that centred their personal values and goals. As participants in my study expressed a similar desire, these reflections are relevant to considering how co-design of the framework created the avenues for men to consider socialization and social imposition of traditional masculinity. Bernard (2012) concludes that PAR is an effective tool in mobilizing and empowering Black men to collectively define and lead social change, which participants in my study also articulated in their decolonial and anti-racist inclinations.

These works offer a perspective of how participatory research can be mobilized as a tool for intervention to build capacities and communities that confront and prevent GBSV. Here, action is inherent within the research process and can be mobilized to co-create spaces and projects where something tangible is produced, like a program or a framework. The integration of men's ideas, concerns, and goals in this work allows for developing informed GBSV prevention initiatives that do the complex work of contending with men's social identities, considering methods for engaging other men in the work, and remaining accountable to feminist analyses and commitments (Lorenzetti & Walsh, 2014; Casey et al, 2018; Flood, 2020). Returning to the efficacy of gender-transformative GBSV prevention initiatives, my project expands the literature on FPAR with men to emphasize that prevention work must create space for critical reflection on the imposition of cisheteropatriarchal masculinity via various types of

socialization, such as family, sport, peer relationships, media, and education (Giaccardi et al, 2016; Casey et al, 2018; Rivera & Scholar, 2020). Furthermore, it has evoked questions for me about how we can facilitate the exploration of masculinities as temporal, cultural, and contextual to resist biological and western essentialism despite operating within a western context. As personal reflection is cited as a best practice for engagement in the literature and within this project, how do we create and sustain prevention spaces where men can get personal in this work?

Co-design by and for men in a community-building space was seen by participants as a necessary alternative practice to name and resist campus control and carceral logic, thus presenting the possibilities of FPAR projects as capacity building and community care (Lorenzetti & Walsh, 2014; Brush & Miller, 2022). Here, we see participants' suggestions that the *how* of anti-violence work is just as important as the *why*. Returning to the literature on best practices for eliciting and sustaining men's engagement in GBSV prevention, participants critiqued how campus control and the PSI's self-protecting mechanisms significantly limit what is achievable within current on-campus frameworks. Namely, participants spoke of how generalist and broad initiatives – such as consent posters and large-scale and optional orientation week presentations – were disengaging and insufficient. They debated solutions that would be possible on campus and concluded that multi-stage interventions that primed men for engagement before they joined in an all-gender space would be ideal to minimize harm and sustain participation. Such ideas reflect many of the best practices cited in the literature (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Peacock & Barker, 2014; Casey et al, 2018; Flood, 2020). This commentary also demonstrated the importance of men being involved in co-design and

participation; to combat the disengagement found in generalist approaches, men being part of the work is an essential step toward personalizing GBSV prevention.

Despite the numerous promising themes emerging from this project's co-design, there are ongoing tensions that require continued reflection and consideration. Specifically, men designing and evaluating what anti-violence approach works best is steeped in a complex history of men's (mis)appropriation of feminist projects against GBSV (Goldrick-Jones, 2004; Messner, Greenberg, & Peretz, 2015; Carian, 2024). While FPAR in this context sought to shift responsibility for preventing GBSV toward men to disrupt scripting that frames it as a "women's issue," there are rational concerns that men taking leadership in anti-violence work could replicate the cisheteropatriarchal dynamics that this work is attempting to identify and dismantle. Furthermore, messaging about men's involvement in GBSV prevention as a necessity because of their "roles" risks perpetuating biologically essentialist ideas that men are natural leaders who need to protect women, which reinforces traditional gender roles in counterproductive ways (Jordan et al, 2022; Burrell, 2023). I am left wondering about how we can avoid falling into familiar traps of men gatekeeping and exercising authority over these spaces while also inciting their participation in co-design, facilitation, and evaluation. This project, like others, offers a promising roadmap for the potential of FPAR projects with men about GBSV; however, the future of this work requires ongoing attention to challenging cisheteropatriarchal dynamics.

What emerged as particularly exciting from the technical discussions of designing and implementing a framework among both men students and the CAB was the plans to mobilize the framework in a tangible way. Namely, members of the CAB expressed that they wanted to use the framework in their respective workplaces and organizations, which included PSI anti-GBSV work, policy and research development, public education with men and boys, workplace training

of GBSV, and broader campaigns to engage men in anti-GBSV work at large. Men students indicated that they were very interested in participating in knowledge mobilization, dissemination, and translation efforts, including academic publications and conferences, public workshops and demonstrations, online webinars and presentations, and arts-based engagement with other men to get them involved in preventing GBSV. Such findings indicate the merit and promise of participatory approaches to data collection, analysis, and mobilization with both men and anti-violence service providers as it might aid in bridging the gap between both populations to make more meaningful interventions.

Strengths

This project provides a promising direction for future research that integrates anti-carceral feminist approaches to GBSV prevention with men. It draws upon a fruitful and meaningful theoretical foundation to explore an area of this work that has not yet been fully realized. Specifically, while anti-carceral work is expansive and tangible in our communities, there has been somewhat of a gap in identifying GBSV prevention as an anti-carceral imagining, in that addressing the root of the issue and building supports outside of the criminal legal system is aligned with both prevention work and the broader abolitionist project. In my experience, GBSV prevention and intervention work tends to rely on carceral logics and discourses to elicit and sustain men's engagement. However, as this project has demonstrated, anti-carceral feminist considerations – including differently conceptualizing complicity, allyship, and accountability – can support men in both interrogating the cisheteropatriarchal, carceral state and reflecting on their participation in its systems.

Additionally, this project has emphasized the significance of co-design and community engagement in imagining solutions to GBSV. In particular, it reaffirms that engaging and

sustaining men's participation in creating anti-violence initiatives can aid in reaching a broader audience of men and better reflecting their lived experiences. As FPAR is usually considered an approach for work with people of marginalized genders, I (and others) have explored how feminist epistemology and methodology can strengthen projects with men through remaining accountable to the broader goals of liberation from cisheteropatriarchy. When men are engaged in feminist participatory projects, there is immense potential for capacity building, education, reflection, and social justice action that supports, sustains, and extends the extensive work of feminist anti-violence activists and practitioners. Here, FPAR with men could create pathways for men to more equitably take on responsibility for addressing and preventing GBSV in their communities without replicating patterns of men appropriating feminist interventions.

I think what is most significant about this project is the production of a tangible framework that is co-designed and will be used by those who are currently doing GBSV intervention and prevention work with men in various contexts. While this project is a contribution to the scholarship on GBSV prevention work with men, it was important to the entire team to offer a tool, framework, and/or resource that would be readily applied and effective in community work beyond the academy. Mobilizing the insights, reflections, and recommendations of those with expertise and experience in this work has resulted in the co-design of a framework that is accessible, usable, and applicable to both intervention and prevention work across different contexts, including education, sports, workplaces, and more.

Limitations

Some of the key reflections that I explored earlier in this chapter could be considered limitations, including the tensions of doing FPAR with men about anti-violence work without the oversight of survivors. While I attempted to grapple with my own positionality in this work and

justified the decisions that I made to involve men, I recognize that a full reflexive account of how power and participation played out in this project would have revealed various tensions and epistemological concerns about the (im)possibilities of FPAR, many of which I wrestled with in my comprehensive exam. In brief sum, I struggled to resolve the tensions inherent within western constructions of participation, social justice, inclusion, and representation, whereby the researcher assumes a gatekeeping position that inevitably perpetuates oppressive dynamics that exclude marginalized persons. My position in this project, regardless of intent, remains entangled in those tensions.

Another limitation that I alluded to in this chapter is exploring anti-carceral feminist approaches to violence prevention within the PSI. As the PSI is a system of the carceral state, deploying a prevention framework for working with men on campus will be inevitably bound by the confines of campus control. The framework could be adaptable to similar spaces, including workplaces and sports teams, but they, too, are tangled up in the carceral web, thus maintaining the risk of becoming deradicalized. However, this project's transferability to adjacent contexts is limited by the privileges within the PSI, such as academic freedom and the resources in the institution to pursue abolitionist projects. Much abolitionist community work is underfunded and decentralized, thus making the usability of the framework outside of organized contexts more complicated and less accessible. This tension reflects the ongoing challenges of formally evaluating and collecting feedback about the project in proving the efficacy of participatory and anti-carceral interventions.

Participants represented a specific demographic that limits the transferability of the framework to diverse populations. All men participants were university-educated in a western institution, between the ages of twenty and thirty, and English-speaking. All CAB members were

university-educated, English-speaking, and employed. While there was representation of various social identities and experiences across all participants, I wonder about whether the major reflections in the framework would be relevant to those who do not have access to formal education and were not socialized by the western PSI. Similarly, the usability of the project in CAB members' working contexts might be affected by whether the setting maintains thematic connections to the PSI and its operations. For those in grassroots and macrolevel practice contexts, applying the framework and major findings might be more challenging and might not reflect the experiences of diverse communities.

Lastly, FPAR projects are comprehensive and require sustained engagement, investment, and time. Within the context of a dissertation, the timeline allowed for three focus groups with men participants, four meetings with the CAB, and one data analysis workshop. Ideally, I would have liked the project to involve more meetings and ongoing cycles of feedback that would compensate participants for their participation in designing and peer reviewing the framework. It became increasingly difficult to keep all participants involved in the production and review of the framework itself as time passed and many men students graduated. Many remain connected to the project and express ongoing interest in knowledge mobilization and translation; however, the participatory ethos of the project is diluted by timeline restrictions, loss of contact, and diminished capacity among all people participating in the project.

Nonetheless, this project has offered an encouraging direction for future research in anti-violence work with men, particularly in how anti-carceral feminist approaches could bolster and sustain men's engagement in GBSV prevention.

Implications, Recommendations, and Possibilities for Future Research

This project demonstrates the challenges and the potential for men to be actively involved in co-designing approaches to engaging other men in GBSV prevention. What is particularly compelling is its application of anti-carceral feminist theory in challenging binary carceral logics, complicity, and the structural roots of GBSV, which is a necessary extension of abolitionist feminism. This work offered a clear and tangible bridge between anti-carceral feminist literature and research on men's violence prevention programming; while they are often framed as distinct, this study sought to position prevention as an anti-carceral imagining and not as a radical, marginalized practice.

As I progress into the next stage of my career as an academic, I am hopeful that I can continue to facilitate research projects that are participatory, social change oriented, and innovative in their application of anti-carceral feminisms. Below, I review three key sites where this research could be integrated, extended, and practiced.

Implications for Practice

This project offers a novel contribution to imagining GBSV primary prevention with men that undertakes an explicitly anti-carceral feminist lens, which maintains transferable links to decarceral approaches to mandated intervention programs with men. I am particularly interested in further examining how constructions and impositions of shame in mandated violence intervention programs are carceral impulses that are specific to those who have been criminalized. As we have explored it in this project in a voluntary setting, it would be ideal to bring these findings to violence intervention work to disrupt the binary carceral logics that diametrically oppose men who are criminalized with men who are not. Put simply, doing so might challenge our assumptions that the only people who have caused harm are those who have been identified by the carceral state.

During the study, I was troubled by the possibilities of implementing our co-designed framework – that was explicit in its anti-carceral feminist orientations – within these institutions in a way that could become diluted, deradicalized, neoliberalized, and used by the PSI as a performance of care and not a meaningful commitment to addressing GBSV. I have seen how abolitionist projects and concepts have been misappropriated and abused within the PSI, including claims of practicing restorative justice in cases of GBSV when, in reality, it did not reflect its central principles and caused further harm by being deployed to avoid formal adjudication processes (Llewellyn, Demsey, & Smith 2015; Salvino, 2024). Within the context of campus control, participants' reflections in this study demonstrate the need for anti-violence work that extends beyond the technocratic and legal oversight of the PSI and the carceral state. Throughout the project, participants spoke of how legal framings of GBSV are insufficient and do not contend with the continuum of violence that creates the conditions for GBSV to thrive. When prevention work is designed, facilitated, and evaluated by the PSI, the framing of what “counts” as violence will always be constricted and focused on avoiding liability as opposed to naming forms of harm that students are experiencing (Phipps, 2020; Colpitts, 2022; Carey et al, 2022).

However, aligned with a decarceral approach, there may be opportunity to work within the structures we seek to dismantle and aid in divesting from its carceral operations. Further implications for practice of this research are in the CAB's intentions to mobilize and pilot this project within their respective organizations, including postsecondary institutions, public education, policy development, workplaces, and sports organizations. I plan to collaborate with McMaster's INSPIRE Office and the Office of Community Engagement to convert the framework into a self-paced module that can be completed for a microcredential. This

development could expand the accessibility and usability of the framework in a way that could support on campus prevention work, while also ensuring that it remains an academic practice and not an institutional intervention.

Implications for Research

I have been particularly interested in how projects with men about GBSV enact what Chennault and Sbicca (2024) call “gaze-shifting,” which signals moving beyond anti-carceral analyses of the criminalized and feminist research for social change on people of marginalized genders. Instead, we reframe responsibility for addressing social issues as both a community responsibility and one that must be taken up by people in positions of power and privilege. Community-engaged research and co-design with those who have power and influence over oppressive systems might facilitate tangible change and relieve some of the burden of social change that is disproportionately shouldered by marginalized communities.

Future research in men’s violence intervention and prevention must further examine how carceral logics are imbued within their content and functioning, including how accountability continues to be synonymized with punishment. A particularly salient discussion point in this project was the manosphere and how online communities are seen as sites of “cancel culture,” public shame, and the proliferation of misogynistic ideas and cisheteropatriarchal masculinities. I think there is immense potential for future research to apply anti-carceral feminist considerations to notions of “cancel culture,” technology-facilitated GBSV, and men’s subsequent engagement with the manosphere. As much of our social connection and socialization now happens online, it feels particularly relevant to consider how state violence is enacted through digital platforms and men’s participation in misogynistic online rhetoric.

Concluding Remarks

Through an analysis of four central themes, this discussion critically engaged with participants' reflections on men's (dis)engagement with and (dis)location from anti-violence work, the inherent and unresolvable tensions of the feminist tightrope in empathizing with and challenging men's complicity, the reproduction and disruption of carceral logics to imagine abolitionist possibilities, and the promising directions and everlasting conflicts of feminist participatory action research with men in co-designing solutions to GBSV. While this study maintains limitations that should be carefully considered, it offers important implications for scholarship, policy, and practice. It points to the necessity of anti-carceral feminist frameworks that are responsive to the complex, often contradictory, realities of engaging men in liberatory and transformative social change efforts.

Chapter 10: Conclusion – Notes from a Feminist Researcher

Central to this project was a reflexive praxis that is foundational to feminist research and community work. Earlier in this dissertation, I offered a brief retrospective on my decade of feminist anti-GBSV work to situate my epistemological positioning. It feels prudent to revisit these reflections briefly within the context of completing my PhD and concluding this project that is within scaffolded research, practice, and activism. This conclusion engages with existing feminist research that details the experiences of women doing anti-violence work with men to ground my own reflections from practicing in the field and doing data collection and analysis for this project. I end with some final thoughts about feminist research with men.

Being a Woman (and a Feminist) in Anti-Violence Work

Based on my various positionalities, it is important for me to discuss my experience of being a woman doing explicitly feminist anti-violence work with men. As I discussed earlier, as a white, cisgender woman, my location in this conversation is complex as it is situated at the intersection of a longstanding history of centring white women's narratives in mainstream discourse about GBSV (Grey, 2004; Phipps, 2016; Phipps, 2020; Sheehy & Nayak, 2020). White women have historically been given the space to discuss these issues for the purposes of advocating for strengthened laws and investment in programming for survivors (Phipps, 2016). As such, white women are often credited for advances to GBSV response and prevention, which erases and obfuscates Black, Indigenous, and racialized women's continued organizing to support survivors in grassroots contexts, build collectives and communities, and imagine transformative and restorative approaches to justice that explicitly rebuke the harms of the criminal legal system (Kendall, 2020; Phipps, 2020). Recognizing this complexity is not an attempt to soften or dismiss white women's experiences of GBSV; rather, it is a necessary history

to identify and engage with as failing to do so perpetuates the marginalization of racialized feminist organizing.

When I take up a position in anti-violence social work practice and research as a woman working with men, I must attend carefully to the interaction between whiteness, cis-femininity, and power. While I frequently feel powerless, I have maintained the ability to gatekeep services, weaponize my feelings and reactions (and, thus, my social positioning) to expand the carceral gaze on service users, decide when to step in and out of the work, and perpetuate oppressive gendered dynamics (e.g. communicating cisheteronormative expectations of masculinity in programming). My reflections echo Allen's (2005) discussion of how all-men spaces can unintentionally reinforce cisheteropatriarchal masculinity, with women facilitators inadvertently reifying what is deemed acceptable for men based on assumptions about their personal and social identities. While I could easily focus on my gender as the primary factor that shapes my role in these contexts, I aim to resist simplifying or dichotomizing my social positionings. In other words, my cis-womanhood and whiteness are inseparable; neither aspect is more visible or significant than the other. Instead, they intersect, thus shaping my experiences and how I navigate anti-violence work. These identities cannot be separated or reduced to individual components; they have deeply rooted histories of white women sustaining colonial, imperialist, cisheteropatriarchy, which remain crucial to centre in these discussions (hooks, 2004; Joseph, 2015; Gregory, 2021).

At the same time, my experiences often as the sole woman in a men-specific space doing this work have frequently been isolating, where I have been viewed as a representation of or asked to speak on behalf of all women in a room full of men. The labour of challenging misogynistic discourse has typically fallen on my shoulders in both voluntary allyship and

mandated settings, particularly when my co-facilitator has been a man. Here, I turn to the existing literature on women's experiences of facilitating men's violence prevention and intervention to support my reflections. Gender is a salient topic within literature on facilitation; research indicates that men prefer men facilitators, yet co-gender models are frequently pursued in anti-violence work due to its demonstrated efficacy and alignment with program goals (McCallum, 1997; Tyagi, 2006; Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Flood, 2020). Co-gender models refer to programs that are co-led by a man and a woman. McCallum (1997) explicates that the inclusion of women in facilitation roles aims to emulate egalitarian gender relations, challenge gendered stereotypes, and encourage men to see value in women's experiences, empathy, and engagement. Similarly, Flood (2020) emphasizes that women facilitators can connect with men participants by sharing their own experiences and concerns from a woman's perspective, which creates natural pathways for men to become personally connected to the issue and relate it to the experiences of other women in their lives.

I can appreciate this approach for its intentions; however, I have found that co-gender models often result in disproportionate labour undertaken by the woman facilitator. In my experiences, I was often identifying, challenging, and even experiencing misogyny in group settings. Contrastingly, my co-facilitator was automatically favoured by men in the room and was able to be funny, light-hearted, and invitational in his approach. I share these concerns with Tyagi (2006), noting that women facilitators often face uncomfortable or hostile environments, especially in mandated group settings, where participants might direct misogynistic remarks or "gender-specific anger" (p. 5) at the only woman in the room as they assume that she is there to challenge or police them. Additionally, Flood (2020) and Tyagi (2006) suggest that men may not take women's roles in anti-violence work seriously, instead seeing them as gendered tokens

required to satisfy program quotas, a symbol to uphold cisheterosexual group dynamics, or a stereotype (e.g., the “nurturing,” “maternal,” or “empathetic” woman). These issues become particularly visible in a co-gender model, where the man facilitator might take up more space and undermine the woman facilitator’s authority, such as by “rescuing” her or constantly qualifying her statements (Tyagi, 2006). Furthermore, women facilitators often bear the responsibility of sensitizing men to the topic of violence by sharing personal experiences or encouraging participants to consider how violence might affect someone they care about (e.g., framing scenarios like “What if this happened to your sister/partner/friend/mom?”). These challenges can create significant barriers for women’s participation in anti-violence work.

I have personally experienced the dynamics that have been discussed in the literature. In this project, I experienced them as the only woman in the room. Often, I have felt what Olive and Thorpe (2011) name “feminist failures”; that is, the sense that feminist researchers and practitioners experience when they distance themselves from their feminist identities to navigate misogyny, relationality, and survival in anti-feminist spaces. I push back against this term to instead consider how such moments are more aptly identified as feminist opportunities and teachable moments that inspire me to keep expanding my thinking and practicing. For example, there have been times where I have chosen not to intervene when hearing or experiencing misogyny and/or ideas that rely on and perpetuate harmful perspectives of GBSV, which has resulted in me feeling like a failure in my research and practice. However, a feminist reframing of this experience allows me to reckon with the reality that this dynamic often happens in research spaces, where I have chosen to preserve the rapport built between a participant and me and create space for their open, honest, and organic reflections at the expense of intervening in harmful ideas, language, or behaviours. This decision in itself is a feminist praxis that is

reminiscent of the ways that women so often put the comfort of others over their own needs via various kinds of emotional labour. In fact, I wrote about these experiences for a chapter in a feminist autoethnography book, where I coined the term the feminist tightrope to describe the challenges of navigating invitational and accountability-driven approaches to men's violence intervention and prevention (Brockbank, 2023).

When looking back on my ten years in the field, I have come to appreciate the praxis of feminist reflexivity, where we recognize the contextual expressions and performances of our feminist identities, navigate and strategically articulate our values, and challenge androcentric assumptions about knowledge when possible. Emotion and perspective are often framed as subjective and unreliable forms of knowledge particularly in professional spaces. However, embracing a feminist reflexivity is a deeply meaningful practice that has urged me to continue to evolve and expand my thinking and approach to this work.

I have also come to see feminist reflexivity as a gendered labour, one that women disproportionately shoulder the burden of in anti-violence work at large (Tyagi, 2006; Olive & Thorpe, 2011). I found that I was consistently thinking about where I was located in these conversations and how I could resist reifying harmful dynamics, both as a service provider/researcher with power *and* as a young woman in a men-dominated space. Contrastingly, the men that I have worked with as professional peers, service users, and research participants did not frequently appear to be considering their position in this work and how it perpetuated some of the dynamics that we were openly trying to discuss, challenge, and change. Such a reflection is not a generalizable erasure of men's reflexivity; however, naming this dynamic is important as it continues to occur in my research and social work practice experiences in men's violence intervention and prevention.

Reflections From the Project

I entered this dissertation project with the tensions and reflections of a decade of anti-violence work that I have participated in. Locating myself in this discussion was an essential feminist praxis; through the use of both participant observation and FPAR, I drew on the works of feminist researchers to frame myself as an active participant in the process and a firsthand observer of dynamics that underpinned the major themes emerging from the discussion (Sampson, Bloor, & Fincham, 2008; Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Weber & Thomas, 2021). Having done this work for so long, this dissertation offers a brief retrospective that chronicles both how I have grown in my research and practice and how I have been exhausted by it. I began in my undergraduate research with a keen interest in and passion for social justice research that “held men accountable” and was motivated by anger and hope. As I progressed to my MSW project, my thinking evolved into compassionate considerations of how men are entangled in the cisheteropatriarchal web, which were largely rooted in my practice experiences of working with men who had been criminalized. By the time I started to imagine this project, I was moved by anti-carceral feminist analyses of how the state is culpable and individualism is insufficient.

When I began the data collection for this project, I was bogged down by nearly three years of full-time work in managing and facilitating a public education portfolio for men about GBSV. I had been in locker rooms, schools, workplaces, and community organizations. I had facilitated presentations ranging from sixty minutes to eight hours. I spent most of my time trying to convince men in my community that GBSV is a real issue and that talking about violence against women is not at the expense of men’s mental health or experiences of violence. I was constantly managing defensive, hostile, dismissive, and misogynistic responses. I was feeling deeply cynical about it all; at the end of an eight-hour presentation, I would still

experience misogyny in a condescending parting comment from a participant or an anonymous evaluation that deemed the work “bad, too feminist, and useless.” Quite frankly, I felt so tired, and I was actively battling my own disengagement from the subject matter. It was a stark contrast from my overeager, passionate, and determined feminist beginnings that I felt deeply. Connecting with the CAB validated these feelings, while also pushing me to consider how my own position in these conversations shaped what emerged. However, I continue to wonder about where these feelings live in the ever-changing context of doing long-term anti-violence work and research with men. Where do these reflections live in a research project, in public education, in social work practice, and in my everyday experiences as a woman?

In my experiences, there is a persistent impulse within men to centre their own hurt, anger, and hopelessness – often alongside framing women as *also* violent – whenever they are confronted with the issue of GBSV. For example, in running workshops for skilled tradesman about workplace GBSV, I was often interrupted by men attendees who stated iterations of women as perpetrators that can be “just as bad as men,” men’s higher rates of suicide and complex mental health concerns, popular discourses about the “male loneliness epidemic,” and the barriers to men accessing support for these concerns and/or for experiences of harassment, violence, or abuse. No matter how often I spoke about these concerns, men continued to re-orient the conversation to men’s experiences of harm and actively sought to de-gender the discussion via framing women as violent, untrustworthy, dishonest, and uncaring about men’s issues. Facilitating these spaces has felt like a constant internal battle about how to address it without breaking rapport, feeling complicit and like a failure when I chose not to directly confront it, and feeling like a pariah when I did call it out as attendees then treated me differently (e.g. rolling their eyes when I spoke, using their cellphone, whispering to each other and laughing, or

constantly refuting and interrupting me). A common refrain among my women co-workers whenever we encountered these issues was “do we die on this hill?”

When I encountered some of these tensions within the data collection phase of this project, I felt no inclination to intervene. I was at my limit. I listened passively and accepted that this is an inevitable part of doing anti-violence work with men. In many ways, I perpetuated biologically essentialist ideas: confronting men about GBSV will naturally produce defensive responses, and you merely have to take it on the chin and move on. I was not so concerned about men students’ expressions of troubling ideas about misogyny and GBSV as they occurred within a context where I was not obligated or ethically bound to intervene, like in my practice work. Their participation was also very collegial and eager, so I was merely thankful that I did not have to deal with hostility. I was not angry or disappointed; I was just tired.

And yet, in analyzing the data through listening to the recording, reviewing the transcripts, and speaking with my supervisor, I felt some anger resurface. It was a familiar dynamic that centred men’s feelings and experiences at the expense of the broader goals of the feminist project. When I looked back on those moments, I felt that “feminist failure” pang and was being overly critical of myself. I worried that I had facilitated the very space that I was so critical of, as in one that is de-gendered, sanitized, and anti-feminist. This perceived shortcoming felt especially painful within the context of my dissertation research and my commitment to a project that sought to be accountable to survivors. I was concerned about presenting this account honestly and, thus, having to confront my own complicity in men’s misogyny and violence. So often in this work, I have been met with vitriol, dismissal, and condescension from men who are unwilling to or uninterested in talking about GBSV. When thinking back on how frustrated I was with myself, it became evident that I had internalized the impulse to criticize my facilitation

rather than push back against men's defensiveness and the challenges of addressing it as a woman in GBSV prevention work.

Returning to my conceptualization of the feminist tightrope, I wonder about when the right time is to challenge misogynistic ideas and when a facilitator should let conversation flow. I worry that this decision is often applied in a carceral way; for example, perhaps I would have been more inclined to interrupt harmful ideas in a mandated context where I view the people in the room as having caused harm as opposed to a voluntary setting for research purposes. Furthermore, I have seen such carceral practice enacted disproportionately with men who read as resistant, a label that is more often applied to men who are "Othered" on the basis of race, class, ability, mental health, language, culture, and nationality. Many white women that I have co-facilitated mandated violence intervention with tended to reify racist, classist, ableist, and sanist discourses through applying the image of the "resistant client" to those that did not perform white, western sensibilities (e.g. proficient English, eye contact, open posture, etc.).

In many ways, my decision to not intervene is reflective of how allyship spaces operate as facilitators prioritize eliciting and sustaining men's participation over challenging misogyny. In voluntary settings, facilitators often do not see participants as "at risk" for escalated violence and, instead, view participants as potential leaders for inspiring other men to get involved (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012; Peacock & Barker, 2014; Casey et al, 2018). Similarly, I saw participants in this project as open, willing, and determined to discuss how men can be involved in ending GBSV, which could be mobilized to create a framework that would better engage men in comparable social positions. Here, I return to the reflection about where researcher positionality and emotion lives in this research. When my own biases and assumptions inevitably affect how I conceptualize and facilitate the project, how do I challenge my own complicity with

sustaining men's misogyny, deciding who is deserving and when is appropriate for intervention, *and* enacting the carceral gaze (Russo, 2018)?

In writing this dissertation, I return to a reflection that I learned early in my feminist beginnings. In 2018, I had the opportunity to see Tarana Burke speak in Hamilton at Mohawk College. During the portion of the night where Burke answered audience questions, a young person approached the microphone and disclosed that they were a survivor of sexual violence. Voice shaking, they asked Burke how to continue advocating for survivors and in feminist anti-GBSV spaces when they were tired, angry, and grieving. I remember that the week before I attended this talk, I had just wrapped up organizing a campus-wide event to engage men and boys in GBSV prevention. I was so angry and exhausted from navigating campus politics and men's consistent refusal to participate in this work. I resonated with the question that the survivor had asked.

In response, Burke commended those that continue to do this work even when it is difficult; however, she emphasized that, sometimes, it is okay to take a step back and let someone else shoulder the responsibility for a while. It is important to know your own limitations and assess when you feel like you *can* do this work in a way that cares for yourself and the broader community. I sat with that for a long time. I felt a burning responsibility to continue with this work as I did not view my own experiences within rape culture as "that bad" as those the survivor had experienced. I felt like if I did not continue, the work would fall on the shoulders of someone who was already doing too much of it.

Looking back at how immersed I have been in anti-GBSV work with men for the past ten years, my exhaustion going into this project is something that I need to more readily attend to in the future. I remain committed to this work; however, I also need to recognize when it would be

more beneficial for me to shift my focus and step away from certain spaces when necessary. It is easy to feel like a “feminist failure” when you acknowledge your own shortcomings or challenges in engaging in the work; however, it is also an opportunity and teachable moment that could greatly benefit the broader community of feminists committed to this work. Externalizing this analysis to recognize just how challenging it is to do this work in the cisheteropatriarchal state is crucial as, too often, feminists shoulder the burden of feeling like anti-GBSV work is failing or hopeless because of their approach, *not* because of the systems and institutions that render it so challenging. I recognize that it is a privilege to be able to step away as misogyny and GBSV remain pervasive and life-threatening issues in many people’s lives. Nonetheless, creating communities where we can support each other in various stages of our capacity for engagement is essential to building sustainable movements against violence.

I write this chapter now a few months out of the full-time public education work. It is palpable how different my outlook is now that I have taken some time and space and supported anti-GBSV work in different ways that were not on the frontline. I am surrounded by a community that has supported me in doing so and has continued the work in my absence. I think that an important takeaway in feminist research, practice, and advocacy more broadly is Kendall’s (2020) imagining of “hood feminism” in community care, where we all take up interconnected, dynamic, and evolving roles in addressing social issues that both practice interpersonal empathy and are focused on social justice and liberation for the whole community simultaneously.

Final Thoughts

This project contributes epistemological insights and practical directions for future anti-violence work with men. The participants in this study were passionate about and dedicated to

imagining futures free from violence, where feminist and abolitionist prevention strategies could be readily integrated into eliciting and sustaining men's participation in GBSV prevention. This project was a labour of love that recognized the foundational contributions of feminist anti-violence scholarship and activism *and* pushed beyond our current frameworks to consider how anti-carceral feminism *is* prevention.

Anti-carceral feminist approaches to working with men in GBSV prevention maintain significant potential for reconfiguring how we address harm and those who have caused it. Men are necessary to this conversation and embracing their unique roles in social change around GBSV is essential. Engaging men in GBSV prevention from a feminist standpoint remains a challenge that requires community care and an appreciation of the tensions as feminist opportunities and teachable moments to support future generations in their expansions of this work. I will continue to navigate the feminist tightrope between facilitating interpersonal accountability while also remaining open, invitational, and focused on systemic violence. As Angela Davis urges us, we must work collectively to imagine futures that we have not seen yet that are free from all forms of violence.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Recruitment Email to CAB

E-mail Subject line: McMaster University Study – Developing an Anti-Carceral Feminist Violence Prevention Framework for and with Men

Hi, _____ (name):

I hope this message finds you well!

I am emailing to invite you to become a member of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) overseeing my forthcoming Ph.D. thesis, titled “Developing an Anti-Carceral Feminist Violence Prevention Framework for and with Men.” I feel that you would be a great fit for the CAB based on your experience, knowledge, and passion for anti-violence work with men, and your openness and willingness to explore anti-carceral feminist approaches to this work.

As a member of the CAB, you would be invited to participate in approximately five two-hour meetings spanning from February 2024 – February 2025. These meetings will focus on: (1) supporting recruitment of men postsecondary students to participate in three focus groups about anti-carceral feminist approaches to gender-based and sexual violence prevention with men; (2) exploring narrative and thematic data analysis and findings emerging from these focus groups; and (3) knowledge translation and mobilization for dissemination purposes, such as having the option to participate in authorship and presentation of the findings. The ultimate goal of the study is to produce a written framework for facilitating anti-carceral feminist gender-based and sexual violence prevention with men.

These meetings will take place either on Zoom or in-person, depending on the group’s availability and preference. The CAB will be comprised of 4-5 other individuals with experience and interest in these topics from a service provision lens. The meetings will not be audio recorded; rather, I will take fieldnotes during the meetings to capture general feedback, themes, and narratives that will be used in the thesis as data to be analyzed. You will have the option of your contributions to the study being anonymized (via the use of a pseudonym), or you can be publicly identified as a contributor/collaborator and member of the CAB.

The risks in this study include potential emotional discomfort and/or distress when discussing some sensitive topics, such as gender-based and sexual violence and anti-carceral responses to the issue. Additionally, there is a social risk in the event of a breach in confidentiality, meaning that you are able to be identified in the study as a participant, particularly if you are not comfortable being identified. These risks include a violation of privacy that may cause you distress. Disclosure of personal information may result in a significant impact on your everyday life in the event of a breach of confidentiality. Though I will take every precaution necessary to protect your confidentiality and privacy, you should be aware of the psychological and social risks involved in the study.

You can stop being in this study at any time during the study or refuse to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with. Attached to this email is a copy of a letter of information that gives you full details about your potential participation as a CAB member in the study. You are invited to review this package and contact me with any questions, concerns, or with your intention to participate in the study.

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the McMaster Research Ethics Board (#6803).

If you feel that this is something that might be of interest to you, please let me know. Any questions or concerns can be answered by me over email or through a phone call. Once you feel comfortable with the information provided and want to participate, I will contact you with the dates for CAB meetings.

Your participation is entirely voluntary! Take your time to think about whether or not you would like to be a part of the study. Your participation would be compensated with a \$500.00 stipend, paid out via cheque or e-transfer in four installments over the next year. You can review the Letter of Information attached to this email, which provides more detailed information about the study and your participation.

Thank you very much in advance for your time and consideration!

Take care,
Maddie Brockbank
brockbam@mcmaster.ca

APPENDIX B: Letter of Information for CAB

Letter of Information for Community Advisory Board (CAB) Members



Developing an Anti-Carceral Feminist Violence Prevention Framework for and with Men

Student Investigator: Maddie Brockbank – brockbam@mcmaster.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Saara Greene – greenes@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study

This project seeks to co-design a gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) prevention framework – created by and for men – with both men identified postsecondary students and people with knowledge of and experience in anti-violence work. Specifically, we begin this study by recruiting a Community Advisory Board (CAB) comprised of people who are currently leading, facilitating, and/or imagining anti-violence prevention initiatives with men to oversee the project. The purpose of the CAB is to aid in recruiting men identified postsecondary students to participate in the study, provide insights about emerging narratives and themes in the data, and engage in knowledge mobilization and translation efforts to produce the framework. Importantly, engaging people who are connected to GBSV work will ensure that the research findings will have considerable uptake in the community via integrating the framework in existing and emerging anti-violence programming.

Then, by inviting men identified postsecondary students into a series of group discussions about GBSV and their roles in challenging men's ambivalence toward anti-violence work, this participatory project aims to facilitate and reimagine accountability and engagement in violence prevention. Participants will co-design the framework and share it through public community events.

The ultimate goals of this research are to (1) contribute to emerging scholarship on community-based and anti-carceral solutions to the issue of GBSV and men's roles in taking up this work and (2) co-design and produce a written framework for facilitating this kind of work.

This study is being carried out as my dissertation for my Ph.D. in the School of Social Work at McMaster University. This project is being supervised by Dr. Saara Greene.

Procedures involved in the Research

I am inviting you to join the Community Advisory Board (CAB), which will involve approximately **five (5) two-hour meetings** between February 2024 and February 2025. These meetings will be scheduled approximately every 2.5 months depending on the CAB's availability. These meetings will happen either in-person at McMaster University OR online on Zoom, depending on the CAB's preference and availability. If in-person, I will book us a private conference room at McMaster. If online, I will email you a link to join a Zoom call on the selected dates (where you can keep your camera on/off and use a pseudonym if you prefer to protect your confidentiality).

During these meetings, you will be invited to participate in discussions about:

- (1) Methods and strategies for recruiting men postsecondary students, which you may participate in depending on your connections to and networks within this population;
- (2) Reviewing and providing insight/ideas/feedback about emerging narrative and thematic findings from the focus groups, which will be provided in a summarized format by the student researcher; and

- (3) Knowledge mobilization, translation, and dissemination, including invitations to participate in co-authorship of the written framework and any other emerging pieces (e.g. journal articles) AND/OR co-presentation of the study findings in a public event/forum, where you will be identified as a collaborator on the research and member of the CAB.

These meetings will not be audio recorded; rather, I will take written fieldnotes to capture general themes and narratives emerging from the CAB meetings. These notes will be included as forms of data for analysis in my study. Fieldnotes will not include identifiable information about CAB members or direct quotes. You will be welcomed/invited to review these notes at the end of each meeting to ensure that it is fairly representing the conversation and your contributions.

Use of Data

This data will be used in my Ph.D. thesis, the written framework for GBSV prevention with men, and any future or emerging pieces from the study (e.g. journal articles, conference presentations, etc.).

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts

There are minimal risks involved in participating that you should be aware of and consider when taking part in the CAB. You may feel uncomfortable or anxious when answering some of the questions about GBSV intervention or prevention work with men and any examples/experience you have facilitating similar programs that may have been distressing. As this study also undertakes an explicitly anti-carceral approach – in that we are seeking to shift away from and critique existing approaches in the criminal justice system (e.g. police, prisons, etc.) – you might also feel some discomfort or distress when discussing what this could look like or hearing others' critiques of these systems.

Additionally, there are some social risks to this study. I will not breach your confidentiality, but a risk is still present. As CAB meetings might take place online, there is risk of a data breach in an online setting; however, I will be taking steps to protect your confidentiality (see below). In the event that your confidentiality is breached, you may experience social concerns depending on what you discussed and/or disclosed in CAB meetings. As a reminder, the purpose of these meetings is to draw on your ideas and expertise in facilitating anti-violence work with men. I will create space for you to discuss your past experiences of facilitating; however, the focus is on creating a newer framework that is anti-carceral, and you will not be required to comment on anything specifically related to your organization/agency. I will also provide you with resources and supports in the event you want to discuss these experiences or any feelings that come out of the CAB meetings further with a professional. With this in mind, I will try to stay on topic as possible to focus on overseeing the project and co-designing the framework.

During the meetings, you will have the option of using a pseudonym and (if online) keeping your camera off to maintain your privacy. If online, the Zoom meeting will be password-protected and a waiting room will be enabled to screen participants entering the call. No recordings of in-person or online meetings will be taken. I will take every necessary and possible step to maintain your confidentiality; however, given the nature of this study, you may choose to publicly identify as a member of the CAB based on your contributions and role in dissemination/co-design. While I will remove any identifying information from your comments during the meetings (including names, places, programs, agencies, etc.), please keep the risks I've outlined above in mind before you share anything.

To alleviate any potential stress, anxiety, or discomfort, you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. Moreover, you can withdraw from the study at any time; however, please keep in mind that your contributions made up until the point of withdrawal cannot be removed as they will already be anonymized and unidentifiable in my fieldnotes. You will still receive your compensation up until the point of withdrawal, but any future installments after you withdraw will not be given to you. If you need a break during the meetings, you can let me know and I can check in with you at a later date.

Potential Benefits

As this study aims to be participatory in nature, the benefits of the study include: (1) contributing to the co-design of a tangible framework for anti-carceral approaches to GBSV prevention work with men; (2) potentially contributing to future journal articles, conference presentations, or other forms of dissemination of the study results; and (3) the creation of a space for men postsecondary students to actively participate in imagining GBSV prevention work that is informed by

their perspectives, experiences, and ideas. This could have potentially beneficial impacts on your future service provision and your career/education (e.g. adding this experience to your CV or resume).

Compensation

You will receive a \$500.00 stipend, paid out via cheque or e-transfer, for your participation as a member of the CAB. Please note that you will receive this compensation in four installments (February 2024, June 2024, October 2024, and February 2025). If you withdraw during the study, you will receive your compensation up until the point of withdrawal. Any installments scheduled for after your withdrawal will not be provided to you.

If CAB meetings take place in person at McMaster University, you will also be reimbursed for any transportation and/or parking costs by submitting your receipts to me and receiving an e-transfer payment.

If you miss three or more of the five scheduled CAB meetings, you may be asked to exit the study and you will not receive your full compensation.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified without your express permission, other than the fact that you are a service provider leading or facilitating GBSV intervention and prevention programming in Ontario. Your consent will be documented via an oral consent log, which will be stored on an encrypted, password-protected laptop and deleted following the defense of Maddie's thesis (projected April 2025). Dr. Greene will not be present for any CAB meetings. Dr. Greene will only have access to the anonymized data (thematic summaries).

However, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell. Others, including peers and friends among the school community, may be able to identify you on the basis of references you make. Please keep this in mind when deciding what to tell us during CAB meetings. Additionally, as mentioned above, there are social risks that come with a potential breach in confidentiality, so please keep that in mind when answering the questions during the focus group.

I ask that you respect the privacy and confidentiality of others participating in the CAB. In this process, you are not permitted to share identities of participants or what they spoke about with others. It is your responsibility to follow these conditions. I cannot guarantee that people in the focus group will abide by these confidentiality requirements; however, every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality. Please keep this in mind when you participate in CAB meetings.

Once the study is complete, thematic summaries of CAB meetings will be deleted/shredded after Maddie defends her thesis (projected April 2025). The reason for this retention length is that I hope to use some of the anonymized data from this study in future journal article authorship and in my thesis.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw from) the CAB for whatever reason, even after giving oral consent or if you are part-way through the meetings. If you want to stop being in the CAB, you can exit the chat/hang up on the Zoom call (or leave the room or stay quiet if in person), but it will not be possible for you to pull out your data from the flow of the conversation because of the interconnected nature of this type of group discussion where a person's comments can stimulate the sharing of comments made by others in the group.

If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. If you withdraw prior to the beginning of the CAB meetings, any correspondence with you will be deleted. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

Information about the Study Results

Given the participatory nature of this study, you will be invited to participate in study dissemination at various stages, including in co-authoring the written framework, co-authoring journal articles, and/or co-facilitating a public event to share the findings of the study.

If you do not want to participate in dissemination, I can send you my thesis and/or a brief summary of the results via email (you can indicate your preference during the oral consent process).

I will be submitting my dissertation to my committee for completion of the Ph.D. in February 2025, which signals the conclusion of the study. This does not include dissemination options that you are welcome to participate in, which may take place throughout 2025 and that you are not obligated to participate in.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact:

Maddie Brockbank – brockbam@mcmaster.ca

Dr. Saara Greene – greenes@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board (#6803):

McMaster Research Ethics Office
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

APPENDIX C: Recruitment Poster for Men Student Participants



PARTICIPANTS WANTED

Research Team

Maddie Brockbank
(she/her)
Ph.D. Candidate and
Vanier Scholar
brockbam@mcmaster.ca

Dr. Saara Greene (she/her)
Supervisor
Director and Professor
greenes@mcmaster.ca

ARE YOU:

- 18 years of age or older?
- Currently enrolled in a postsecondary program at the college, undergraduate, or graduate level?
- Men-identified (cisgender, transgender, masc, etc.)?
- Open to, interested in, knowledgeable of, or curious about approaches to solving social problems outside of the criminal justice system (e.g. police, prisons, etc.)?
- Committed to gender-based and sexual violence prevention?



STUDY TITLE: DEVELOPING AN ANTI-CARCERAL FEMINIST VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM WITH MEN

This study seeks to invite men postsecondary students into a participatory space to co-design a framework for gender-based and sexual violence prevention – by and for men – that deliberately divests from the carceral state and its operations (e.g. police, prisons, arrest, surveillance, punishment, etc.) and invests in community-based and community-informed solutions/approaches.



STUDY PROCEDURES:

- Screening call with Maddie to determine eligibility
- Three in-person focus groups at McMaster University during the winter semester (two hours each in length)
- Optional fourth workshop to participate in data analysis
- Optional participation in study dissemination efforts (co-authored publications, public workshops, etc.)



BENEFITS



Have your say about co-designing gender-based and sexual violence prevention approaches that reflect men's experiences, goals, and needs and positively contribute to ending violence!



Participants receive **three \$75 gift cards**, paid out in installments after each focus group as compensation for participation!



INTERESTED?



Click on the link to read the Letter of Information

Email Maddie at
brockbam@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance from the McMaster Research Ethics Board (#6803).

APPENDIX D: Screening Form for Men Student Participants

SCREENING FORM

Thank you for your interest in our study *Developing an Anti-Carceral Feminist Violence Prevention Framework for and with Men*, led by Maddie Brockbank and under the supervision of Dr. Saara Greene for Maddie's Ph.D. dissertation.

Our study has some eligibility criteria – some qualities that all participants need to have in order to take part. To save you some time, we are hoping you will answer a few questions now, before going through the consent process, to determine if you are eligible to take part.

If you are eligible to participate based on your responses to the screening, your information will be retained by Maddie on a password-protected, encrypted laptop OR stored in Dr. Greene's office (if a hard copy is produced). These forms will be deleted or shredded upon Maddie's submission of her thesis to her committee (approximately February 2025). If you are ineligible to participate based on your responses to the screening, your information will be deleted or shredded after Maddie sends you an email indicating that you will not be participating in the study.

Now that we have gone over this information, do you have any questions?

We'll now proceed with the screening.

- 1) Are you 18 years of age or older?
- 2) Do you identify as a man? Are you cisgender, transgender, or do you identify in a specific way?
 - a. For cisgender men: An expectation of this study is honouring the diverse lived experiences of men from various social identities and positionings. How do you feel about participating in a focus group with transgender men? Are you committed to creating a space that is inclusive for trans men?
 - b. For transgender men: This study aims to include both cis and trans men and honour their unique – and, at times, conflicting – lived experiences of gender-based violence and its prevention. How do you feel about participating in a focus group with cis men? Is there anything that you need to feel safer and more included in that kind of focus group space?
- 3) Are you currently enrolled in a postsecondary program (college, graduate, or undergraduate)? In Ontario or in Canada?
- 4) What is your knowledge of or familiarity with anti-carceral kinds of thinking?
 - a. If yes, can you share some of what you know or understand about this topic?
 - b. If no, what are your thoughts about approaches or movements that seek to divest from policing and prisons?

- 5) Are you open to exploring approaches to violence prevention that do not rely on or engage with the criminal justice system, including police, prisons, surveillance, arrest, punishment, etc.?
- 6) What is your general availability over the next 2 months?

Thank you so much for answering my questions. As for next steps, if you are deemed eligible to participate in the study, you will receive an email from Maddie asking about your availability to participate in the focus groups. If you are deemed ineligible, you will receive an email from Maddie to let you know.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

APPENDIX E: Letter of Information for Men Student Participants



Letter of Information and Informed Consent Form for Men Student Participants

Developing an Anti-Carceral Feminist Violence Prevention Framework for and with Men

Student Investigator:

Maddie Brockbank
Ph.D. (c), Social Work
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

E-mail: brockbam@mcmaster.ca

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Saara Greene
Professor, Social Work
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140 ext. 23782

E-mail: greenes@mcmaster.ca

Research Sponsor: Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Thesis, funded by SSHRC's Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship

Purpose of the Study

This project seeks to co-design a gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) prevention framework with men identified postsecondary students. Men identified postsecondary students will be invited to participate in a series of group discussions about GBSV and their roles in anti-violence work. By the end of the study, participants will co-design the framework based on their own ideas about what GBSV prevention should look like and share it through public community events. The ultimate goals of this research are to (1) contribute to emerging scholarship on community-based and anti-carceral solutions to the issue of GBSV and men's roles in taking up this work and (2) co-design and produce a written framework for facilitating this kind of work. This participatory project aims to facilitate and reimagine accountability and engagement in violence prevention.

A key aspect of the study is the involvement of people with knowledge and experience of facilitating GBSV prevention as members of the Community Advisory Board (CAB). The purpose of the CAB is to aid in recruitment of men identified students to participate in the study, provide their insights about emerging narratives and themes from the data, and engage in knowledge mobilization and translation efforts to produce the framework. Importantly, engaging people who are connected to GBSV work will ensure that the research findings will have considerable uptake in the community via integrating the framework in existing and emerging anti-violence programming.

This study is being carried out as my dissertation for my Ph.D. in the School of Social Work at McMaster University. This project is being supervised by Dr. Saara Greene.

Procedures involved in the Research

Prior to participating in the focus groups, potential participants will participate in a short (15-minute) screening call with Maddie to determine eligibility. After you are deemed eligible to participate, you would then be invited to participate in three in-person focus groups with 6-8 men identified postsecondary students at McMaster University, scheduled two weeks apart from each other during the winter 2024 semester. Each focus group will be approximately 2 hours. You would also be invited to participate in a fourth optional workshop to support data analysis of the focus groups. Maddie will be facilitating the focus groups; Dr. Saara Greene and members of the CAB will not be present for the focus groups.

At the beginning of the first focus group, Maddie will facilitate a brief (15-20 minute) presentation to provide background and context about key concepts within the study, including "gender-based and sexual violence," "carceral," "anti-carceral," and why men are involved in this conversation. This presentation is to ensure that everyone is on the same page

as we proceed through the study, specifically in focusing on anti-carceral approaches to gender-based and sexual violence prevention that shift away from the criminal justice system and toward community-based, alternative ideas.

Following this presentation, you will be asked a series of questions to kick off our discussions. You may review these questions prior to the focus group for preparation purposes (sent to your email).

You will have the option of exploring these questions via arts-based methods as you engage in dialogue with other participants (e.g. collaging, drawing, etc.). The second and third focus groups will be co-designed by you based on what you identify as exciting, intriguing, or of interest to further discuss as it relates to co-designing a framework for gender-based and sexual violence prevention by and for men.

The focus groups should take approximately two hours each to complete. With your permission, Maddie will audio record these focus group for the purposes of written transcription, meaning that we will only keep the audio file until Maddie has submitted the audio for AI-transcription and manually cleaned the recorded dialogue from the focus group. The focus group will be recorded via a Digital Pocket Dictaphone Mini Player (dB9PRO). Files (audio and transcriptions) will be stored on Maddie's encrypted, password protect laptop. When listening to the audio recordings for transcription, Maddie will do so in a private office space with earphones. Maddie will first submit the audio to Zoom for transcription, then will be the only person who will listen to it again for cleaning purposes. Once this is completed, the audio recording of the focus group will be deleted. Maddie will also request to use some direct quotations from the focus group and, with your permission, might include them in her thesis or any manuscript completed and submitted for academic publication.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts

There are minimal risks involved in participating in this study, however, you should be aware of and consider how you might feel when answering some of the questions about gender-based and sexual violence, its prevention, and any experiences that you have had participating in anti-violence programs or initiatives. As this study also undertakes an explicitly anti-carceral approach – in that we are seeking to shift away from and critique existing approaches in the criminal justice system (e.g. police, prisons, etc.) – you might also feel some discomfort or distress when discussing what this could look like or hearing others' critiques of these systems.

Additionally, there are some social risks to this study. You may experience social concerns regarding what you discuss/and or disclose to your peers while participating in the focus group discussions. As a reminder, the purpose of these meetings is to draw on your ideas about how to co-design a framework for gender-based and sexual violence prevention with men. I will create space for you to discuss your past experiences of seeing, hearing about, and/or participating in anti-violence programs or initiatives; however, the focus is on creating a newer framework that is anti-carceral, and you will not be required to comment on anything specifically related to your personal experiences. I will also provide you with resources and supports in the event you want to discuss these experiences or any feelings that come out of the focus groups further with a professional. With this in mind, I will try to stay on topic as possible to focus on co-designing the framework.

During the focus groups, you will have the option of using a pseudonym. Audio recordings will be taken solely for transcription purposes; during transcription, all identifying information will be removed, and then audio recordings will be deleted. I will take every necessary and possible step to maintain your confidentiality; however, you may want to answer questions during the focus groups in a way that you would do so publicly just in case there is a breach of confidentiality.

Given the nature of this study, you may choose to publicly identify as a member of the study based on your contributions and role in dissemination/co-design. While I will remove any identifying information from your comments during the focus groups (including names, places, programs, agencies, etc.), please keep the risks I've outlined above in mind before you share anything.

To alleviate any potential stress, anxiety, or discomfort, you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. Moreover, you can withdraw from the study at any time; however, please keep in mind that your contributions made up until the point of withdrawal cannot be removed as they will already be anonymized and unidentifiable in my fieldnotes. You will still receive your compensation up until the point of

withdrawal, but any future installments after you withdraw will not be given to you. If you need a break during the meetings, you can let me know and I can check in with you at a later date.

Potential Benefits

As this study aims to be participatory in nature, the benefits of the study include: (1) contributing to the co-design of a tangible framework for anti-carceral approaches to GBSV prevention work by and for men; (2) potentially contributing to future journal articles, conference presentations, or other forms of dissemination of the study results (that you are interested in contributing to); and (3) the creation of a space you and fellow men postsecondary students to actively participate in imagining GBSV prevention work that is informed by your perspectives, experiences, and ideas. This could have potentially beneficial impacts on your future career/education (e.g. adding this experience to your CV or resume).

Compensation

You will receive three \$75.00 gift cards from Amazon for your participation in the study, which will be paid out via physical copy or e-gift card (your choice) at the end of each focus group. Please note that you can keep the gift card(s) even if you decide to withdraw during the focus group. You will receive your compensation up until the point of withdrawal; however, you will not receive future installments (e.g. if you withdraw after the second focus group, you will receive two of the three gift cards).

You will also be entitled to receive reimbursement for any transportation and/or parking costs at McMaster University (where the focus groups will be hosted). You will receive this reimbursement by submitting your receipts to me and receiving an e-transfer payment.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified without your express permission, other than the fact that you are a postsecondary student in Ontario. Your informed consent will be documented via signing the form attached to this letter prior to the first focus group, which will be stored in a locked file cabinet in Dr. Greene's office and shredded after my thesis is defended (projected April 2025). Dr. Greene will not be present for the focus groups, nor will any member of the Community Advisory Board. Dr. Greene will only have access to the anonymized data once audio recordings are deleted and transcriptions are typed with your identifying information removed. The CAB will not have access to recordings or transcripts, only thematic summaries generated by Maddie.

However, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell. Others, including peers and friends among the school community, may be able to identify you on the basis of references you make. Please keep this in mind when deciding what to tell us during the focus group. Additionally, as mentioned above, there are social risks that come with a potential breach in confidentiality, so please keep that in mind when answering the questions during the focus group.

I ask that you respect the privacy and confidentiality of others participating in the focus group. In this process, you are not permitted to share identities of participants or what they spoke about with others. It is your responsibility to follow these conditions. I cannot guarantee that people in the focus group will abide by these confidentiality requirements; however, every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality. Please keep this in mind when you answer focus group questions.

Once the study is complete, audio recordings of the focus groups will be deleted by August 2024. The focus groups will be maintained in the form of the written transcriptions with no identifying information and will be deleted in August 2025. The reason for this retention length is that I hope to use some of the anonymized data from this study in future journal article authorship.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw from) the focus groups for whatever reason, even after signing the informed consent form or if you are part-way through the study. If you want to stop being in the focus group(s), you can remain in the room and

stay quiet, or you can exit the room, but it will not be possible for you to pull out your data from the flow of the conversation because of the interconnected nature of this type of group discussion where a person's comments can stimulate the sharing of comments made by others in the group.

If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. If you withdraw prior to the beginning of the focus group, any correspondence with you will be deleted. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

Information about the Study Results

You will be invited to participate in a fourth optional workshop to participate in data analysis of the focus groups, which will provide space for you to shape dissemination of the study's findings. Further, due to the participatory nature of this study, you will be invited to participate in study dissemination at various stages, including in co-authoring the written framework, co-authoring journal articles, and/or co-facilitating a public event to share the findings of the study.

If you do not want to participate in dissemination, I can send you my thesis and/or a brief summary of the results (you can indicate your preference on the informed consent form) via email.

I will be submitting my dissertation to my committee for completion of the Ph.D. in February 2025, which signals the conclusion of the study. This does not include dissemination options that you are welcome to participate in, which may take place throughout 2025 and that you are not obligated to participate in.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact Maddie Brockbank at:

brockbam@mcmaster.ca

Or Dr. Saara Greene at:

greenes@mcmaster.ca

905-525-9140, ext. 23782

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board (#6803).

McMaster Research Ethics Office

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

INFORMED CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Maddie Brockbank and Dr. Saara Greene of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that I am agreeing to protect the confidentiality of other focus group participants by not sharing information about them with others.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time, although my contributions in the focus group cannot be withdrawn due to the interconnected nature of the conversation.
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

1. I agree that the focus groups can be audio recorded.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

2. I would like to use a pseudonym rather than my real name for the study.

- ☐ Yes, I would like to use a pseudonym
☐ No, I am comfortable being identified by my real name

3. I agree to have direct quotations of the focus group used in any written products or presentations.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

4. I agree to not share the identities of other participants in the study or violate their confidentiality.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

5. I agree to be contacted about the fourth optional workshop for data analysis and I understand that I can always decline the request.

- ☐ Yes, please contact me at: _____
☐ No

6. I would be interested in participating data dissemination efforts, including co-authorship of written materials and/or co-facilitation of a public event.

- ☐ Yes, please contact me at: _____
☐ No

7. I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

- ☐ Yes, please contact me at: _____
☐ No

APPENDIX F: First Focus Group Guide

Focus Group Guide (for 1st Focus Group)

NOTE: TEXT WRITTEN IN ITALICIZED BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS CONSTITUTES ADDITIONAL REMINDERS MEANT TO GUIDE THE FOCUS GROUP FACILITATOR ONLY.

[THE COMPLETION OF THE INTRODUCTORY SECTION OF THE FOCUS GROUP SHOULD TAKE APPROXIMATELY 10-15 MINUTES]

I) INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS:

Hello, my name is Maddie Brockbank. I am a Ph.D. Candidate at McMaster University. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group meeting. Just to remind everyone, I'm looking at co-designing a framework for gender-based and sexual violence – produced by and for men – that specifically seeks to divest from carceral approaches (e.g. those that rely on the criminal justice system, like police, prisons, etc.).

What is a focus group?

A focus group is an interactive group discussion where we can gain several perspectives about a topic and members of the group can think about and comment on what others have said in the group.

[POINT OUT that people should use their first name or pseudonym only].

In a minute, we will all introduce ourselves – first names only or you can use a pseudonym if you prefer. But first, I would like to walk you through the consent form that is in front of you.

[FOR FACILITATOR: REVIEW INFORMED CONSENT FORM AND ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT IT. OBTAIN SIGNED CONSENT FORMS PRIOR TO GROUP BEGINNING.]

Confidentiality: *[READ ALOUD]* - Before we begin our discussion, I want to spend a few moments talking about confidentiality and to go over some basic ground rules for our focus group discussion today:

- Everyone's views are welcomed and important.
- The information which we will collect today will be attributable (connected or associated) to you as a group.
- We will not identify quotes or ideas with any one person of this group. Because of the nature of small communities or groups, it is possible that people could link participants in this focus group to quotes used in study dissemination (e.g. written thesis, publications, etc.). This is why we need to talk about confidentiality.
- We are assuming that when we learn about one another's views, they remain confidential. In a small community (group) like this, people are identifiable to some degree by their views and opinions.

- Having said this, and having made these requests, you know that we cannot guarantee that the request will be honoured by everyone in the focus group.
- So we are asking you to make only those comments that you would be comfortable making in a public setting; and to hold back making comments that you would not say publicly.
- If you want to stop being in the focus group, you can leave the room or stay and remain quiet, but it will not be possible for you to pull out your data from the flow of the conversation because of the interconnected nature of the group discussion where one person's comments can stimulate the sharing of comments made by others in the group.
- Anything said during this focus group should not be repeated outside of this focus group or recorded by you.
- All voices are to be heard, so I will step in if too many people are speaking at once or to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak.
- I may also step in if I feel the conversation is straying off topic.
- You can expect this discussion group to last about 2 hours.

Use of Tape Recorder

- As you will recall, this focus/discussion group will be recorded to increase accuracy and to reduce the chance of misinterpreting what anyone says.
- All tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key by the researcher.
- Names will be removed from transcripts. Participants will have coded pseudonyms attached to their name which only I will know.
- Only this research team, including myself and Dr. Saara Greene, will have access to transcripts (with your personal names removed) of this focus group.
- I'll also ask that when using abbreviations or acronyms, you say the full name at least once to aid transcription.

Respect, Safety, and Inclusion

The purpose of this study is to draw on the diversity of perspectives within this group to co-design a framework for engaging other men in gender-based and sexual violence prevention. Everyone in this room will have different lived experiences that inform their different perspectives. Namely, as discussed in the screening call that I had with each of you, this focus group includes the participation of both cisgender and transgender men. While disagreement and dialogue are welcome, we need to commit to creating an inclusive, respectful, and safer space. Please create space for everyone to share and do not argue or debate about their disclosure of lived experiences, particularly related to their identity. If anyone engages in inappropriate, harmful, or hateful behaviour – such as anti-trans discourse – I will interrupt and respond, which might result in the focus group ending or the participant being asked to leave if it is escalated or if the harm is severe.

[AT THIS POINT, GROUP MEMBERS CAN QUICKLY INTRODUCE THEMSELVES – remind them that it is 'first names only' or pseudonyms.]

II. PRE-FOCUS GROUP: CONTEXT-SETTING (EDUCATION)

Maddie will provide a brief (15-20 minute) presentation that provides background/context to participants about key terms, including:

Gender-based and sexual violence: violence that is perpetrated on the basis of one's perceived or actual gender; could be physical, sexual, emotional/verbal/psychological, financial, cultural or identity-based, or technological.

- *Includes some statistics to ground realities of this violence (e.g. 1 in 3 women, 1 in 6 men, and 1 in 2 trans or non-binary people will experience sexual violence in their lifetime; only 6% of sexual assaults are reported to police; less than 1% of sexual assault cases that go through the criminal justice system lead to conviction)*

The Carceral State: the interconnected web of ideologies, logics, languages, policies, practices, systems, institutions, and structures that facilitate criminal justice proceedings, such as surveillance, arrest, punishment, and confinement.

- *Examples of what this looks like includes language that deploys carceral logics (e.g. "creeps," "bad guys," "evil monsters," etc. to refer to perpetrators)*

Anti-Carceral: bodies of knowledge and practices that seek to divest from the carceral state and invest in alternative, community-based strategies and approaches to social problems that do not rely on or reify carceral logics of punishment, surveillance, etc.

- *Examples of what this looks like includes survivor-led organizations, Circles of Support and Accountability, restorative/transformative justice, etc.*

Why We're Here: how involving men in gender-based and sexual violence prevention aligns with anti-carceral approaches – seeking to stop violence before it happens by challenging the foundations/conditions that facilitate violence.

III. INTERVIEW

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION BEGINS WITH THE FACILITATOR ASKING THE FIRST QUESTION. (PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE QUESTIONS AVAILABLE ON PAPER DURING THE FOCUS GROUP).

OPEN UP DISCUSSION FOR GENERAL RESPONSES OF PARTICIPANTS TO EACH QUESTION.

PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE THE OPTION OF ENGAGING WITH THIS QUESTION VIA ARTS-BASED METHODS (E.G. COLLAGING, DRAWING)

- 1) What motivates you to be involved in ending gender-based and sexual violence?
- 2) Are there barriers for men to become actively involved in initiatives that seek to end gender-based and sexual violence?
 - a. If yes, what are those barriers?
 - b. How do we challenge/confront/address those challenges to elicit engagement?
- 3) How do we sustain men's engagement in gender-based and sexual violence prevention? What keeps them involved or reaffirms their commitment to the cause?

- 4) If we lived in a world where police and prisons didn't exist – and where punishing perpetrators wasn't an option – how would we approach gender-based and sexual violence as a social problem? What would we do instead?
- 5) What is difficult or challenging about anti-carceral approaches to thinking about gender-based and sexual violence? How might we contend/engage with, manage, overcome, and/or sit with those challenges?

IV. NEXT STEPS

PARTICIPANTS WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN DETERMINING THE STRUCTURE OF THE SECOND AND THIRD FOCUS GROUPS.

For our next focus group in two weeks, what do we want to focus on? What themes were most exciting to us as a group to explore?

DOCUMENT ANSWERS ON WHITE BOARD.

V. WRAP-UP:

- REMIND PARTICIPANTS THAT “WHAT IS SAID IN THIS FOCUS GROUP SHOULD NOT BE REPEATED OUTSIDE OF THIS FOCUS GROUP”.

THANK THE PARTICIPANTS.

NOTE: the second and third focus groups will be co-designed by participants. Potential topics will likely focus on:

- Proposed topics for a framework re: anti-carceral approaches to gender-based and sexual violence prevention with men
- Methods for integrating structural perspectives in prevention programming (e.g. moving away from hyperindividualization of the issues)
- Proposed methods for engaging men in these programs

APPENDIX G: Second Focus Group Guide

Focus Group Guide (for 2nd Focus Group)

NOTE: TEXT WRITTEN IN ITALICIZED BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS CONSTITUTES ADDITIONAL REMINDERS MEANT TO GUIDE THE FOCUS GROUP FACILITATOR ONLY.

[THE COMPLETION OF THE INTRODUCTORY SECTION OF THE FOCUS GROUP SHOULD TAKE APPROXIMATELY 10-15 MINUTES]

II) RE-INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS:

Confidentiality Reminders: *[READ ALOUD]*

- Everyone's views are welcomed and important.
- The information which we will collect today will be attributable (connected or associated) to you as a group.
- We will not identify quotes or ideas with any one person of this group. Because of the nature of small communities or groups, it is possible that people could link participants in this focus group to quotes used in study dissemination (e.g. written thesis, publications, etc.). This is why we need to talk about confidentiality.
- We are assuming that when we learn about one another's views, they remain confidential. In a small community (group) like this, people are identifiable to some degree by their views and opinions.
- Having said this, and having made these requests, you know that we cannot guarantee that the request will be honoured by everyone in the focus group.
- So we are asking you to make only those comments that you would be comfortable making in a public setting; and to hold back making comments that you would not say publicly.
- If you want to stop being in the focus group, you can leave the room or stay and remain quiet, but it will not be possible for you to pull out your data from the flow of the conversation because of the interconnected nature of the group discussion where one person's comments can stimulate the sharing of comments made by others in the group.
- Anything said during this focus group should not be repeated outside of this focus group or recorded by you.
- All voices are to be heard, so I will step in if too many people are speaking at once or to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak.
- I may also step in if I feel the conversation is straying off topic.
- You can expect this discussion group to last about 2 hours.

Use of Tape Recorder

- As you will recall, this focus/discussion group will be recorded to increase accuracy and to reduce the chance of misinterpreting what anyone says.
- All tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key by the researcher.
- Names will be removed from transcripts. Participants will have coded pseudonyms attached to their name which only I will know.

- Only this research team, including myself and Dr. Saara Greene, will have access to transcripts (with your personal names removed) of this focus group.
- I'll also ask that when using abbreviations or acronyms, you say the full name at least once to aid transcription.

Respect, Safety, and Inclusion

The purpose of this study is to draw on the diversity of perspectives within this group to co-design a framework for engaging other men in gender-based and sexual violence prevention. Everyone in this room will have different lived experiences that inform their different perspectives. Namely, as discussed in the screening call that I had with each of you, this focus group includes the participation of both cisgender and transgender men. While disagreement and dialogue are welcome, we need to commit to creating an inclusive, respectful, and safer space. Please create space for everyone to share and do not argue or debate about their disclosure of lived experiences, particularly related to their identity. If anyone engages in inappropriate, harmful, or hateful behaviour – such as anti-trans discourse – I will interrupt and respond, which might result in the focus group ending or the participant being asked to leave if it is escalated or if the harm is severe.

[AT THIS POINT, GROUP MEMBERS CAN QUICKLY INTRODUCE THEMSELVES – remind them that it is ‘first names only’ or pseudonyms.]

II. PRE-FOCUS GROUP: CONTEXT-SETTING (EDUCATION)

Maddie will share notes from previous focus group + some additional background info as a refresher for participants. This information will focus on: (1) examples of successes in anti-carceral praxis, (2) different kinds of “justice” that can be pursued, and (3) non-western examples and approaches to gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV).

III. ARTS-BASED ACTIVITY – approx. 30-45mins

Maddie will provide materials to in-person participants to engage in an arts-based activity (e.g. collaging). Online participants will be sent the information beforehand that they can complete individually if interested.

- 1) Using these materials available to us, how would we define and/or perceive violence?
 - a. Where are men located in these conversations?
 - b. How is masculinity communicated and codified via media? How does this relate to experiences of violence?

IV. INTERVIEW

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION BEGINS WITH THE FACILITATOR ASKING THE FIRST QUESTION. (PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE QUESTIONS AVAILABLE ON PAPER DURING THE FOCUS GROUP).

OPEN UP DISCUSSION FOR GENERAL RESPONSES OF PARTICIPANTS TO EACH QUESTION.

PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE THE OPTION OF ENGAGING WITH THIS QUESTION VIA ARTS-BASED METHODS (E.G. COLLAGING, DRAWING)

- 6) Stemming from the activity, what did we discover about how we define or view violence?
 - a. Via personal reflection? Via media representations?
 - b. Where do we see men positioned in this conversation? Are they absent from representations of who can experience violence?
 - c. How does this link to engaging men in the conversation? To changing our understandings of how we respond to violence?
- 7) Referring to our background document, what are some of our reflections about:
 - a. Non-western experiences and approaches to gender-based and sexual violence?
 - b. Examples of alternative justice approaches?
 - c. Examples of anti-carceral praxis in the community?
- 8) When thinking about creating a framework for engaging men in violence prevention, how do we envision this looking/feeling like?
 - a. What should be key topics?
 - b. How should it be organized/structured?
 - c. Who should it address?

V. NEXT STEPS

PARTICIPANTS WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN DETERMINING THE STRUCTURE OF THE THIRD FOCUS GROUP.

For our final focus group, what do we want to focus on? What themes were most exciting to us as a group to explore?

DOCUMENT ANSWERS ON WHITE BOARD.

V. WRAP-UP:

- REMIND PARTICIPANTS THAT “WHAT IS SAID IN THIS FOCUS GROUP SHOULD NOT BE REPEATED OUTSIDE OF THIS FOCUS GROUP”.

THANK THE PARTICIPANTS.

APPENDIX H: Data Analysis Workshop Guide

Data Analysis Workshop Guide

III) RE-INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS:

Confidentiality Reminders: *[READ ALOUD]*

- Everyone's views are welcomed and important.
- The information which we will collect today will be attributable (connected or associated) to you as a group.
- We will not identify quotes or ideas with any one person of this group. Because of the nature of small communities or groups, it is possible that people could link participants in this focus group to quotes used in study dissemination (e.g. written thesis, publications, etc.). This is why we need to talk about confidentiality.
- We are assuming that when we learn about one another's views, they remain confidential. In a small community (group) like this, people are identifiable to some degree by their views and opinions.
- Having said this, and having made these requests, you know that we cannot guarantee that the request will be honoured by everyone in the focus group.
- So we are asking you to make only those comments that you would be comfortable making in a public setting; and to hold back making comments that you would not say publicly.
- If you want to stop being in the focus group, you can leave the room or stay and remain quiet, but it will not be possible for you to pull out your data from the flow of the conversation because of the interconnected nature of the group discussion where one person's comments can stimulate the sharing of comments made by others in the group.
- Anything said during this focus group should not be repeated outside of this focus group or recorded by you.
- All voices are to be heard, so I will step in if too many people are speaking at once or to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak.
- I may also step in if I feel the conversation is straying off topic.
- You can expect this discussion group to last about 2 hours.

[AT THIS POINT, GROUP MEMBERS CAN QUICKLY INTRODUCE THEMSELVES – remind them that it is 'first names only' or pseudonyms.]

II. FREE WRITE ACTIVITY

Before we begin, let's take a minute to do a quick exercise to get our ideas flowing. You can type, write, draw, and/or reflect on the following prompt:

What is one thing that calls you to be a part of gender-based violence prevention?

III. GUIDED DISCUSSION ON THEMES/NARRATIVES

Maddie will provide a list of themes/narratives that have emerged from the previous focus groups and CAB meetings.

- 1) How do we feel about the narratives/themes that have been emerging from our discussions? Is there anything missing or something we want to explore further through discussion?
- 2) What do we see as important themes for us to focus on and translate into the framework that we are intending to build?

IV. FREE WRITE ACTIVITY + SAM SHARES GRAPHIC NOTETAKING PROGRESS

As we pause here to check out Sam's progress, please feel free to take a bio break!

Upon returning, let's do another quick writing/reflecting prompt to shift to the next stage of the discussion. You can type, write, draw, and/or reflect on the following prompt:

In a perfect world, what is one thing that you would do to help end gender-based violence?

V. GUIDED DISCUSSION ON DESIGNING FRAMEWORK

Maddie display the Google Doc to participants.

- 1) What are the main takeaways that we want users to leave with? How do we envision the framework being taken up?
- 2) When examining what we currently have, how do we envision this framework being structured?
 - a. E.g.) as a mini-pocketbook/zine, as a toolkit, etc.
- 3) What are things that we feel we need to centre/build around?
 - a. E.g.) internal prompts for reflection? Intra-group structure for men?
- 4) What are some key considerations for how key concepts are framed/discussed?
 - a. E.g.) do we need to cite specific materials?
 - b. How do we integrate anti-carceral perspectives?

VI. SAM PRESENTS FINAL DRAFT OF GRAPHIC NOTETAKING + TIME FOR FEEDBACK

VII. NEXT STEPS

Maddie to share next steps re: eliciting ongoing feedback on the framework and dissertation writing. Maddie also to discuss potential for knowledge mobilization and sharing as a team.

VIII. WRAP-UP:

- REMIND PARTICIPANTS THAT “WHAT IS SAID IN THIS FOCUS GROUP SHOULD NOT BE REPEATED OUTSIDE OF THIS FOCUS GROUP”.

THANK THE PARTICIPANTS.

APPENDIX I: The Framework

Framework for anti-carceral approaches to Gender Based Violence prevention with men



APPENDIX J: Slide Decks from Focus Groups

Brief Overview of Key Terms/Topics

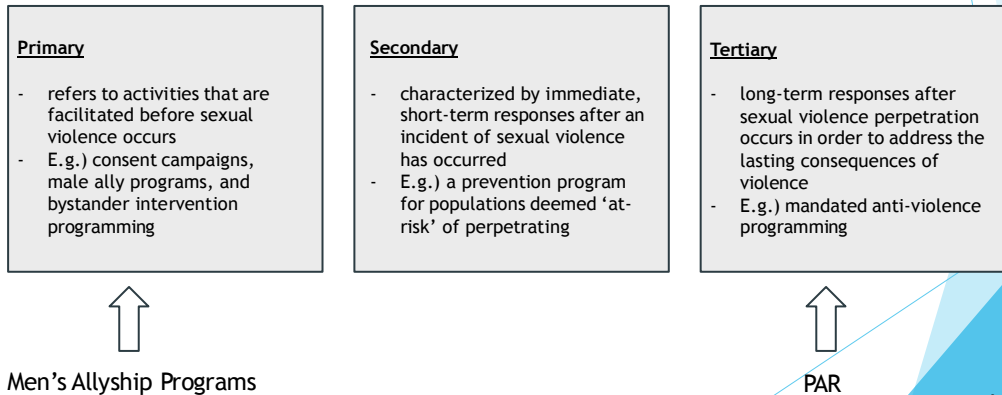
1

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence (GBSV)

- ▶ Refers to violence that is perpetrated on the basis of one's perceived or actual gender; can be carried out via sexual means or by targeting sexuality
 - ▶ Includes physical, sexual, emotional/verbal/psychological, financial, cultural or identity-based, or technological forms of violence
- ▶ Key Statistics:
 - ▶ Half of Canadian women report experiencing some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime
 - ▶ 1 in 3 women, 1 in 6 men, and 1 in 2 trans or non-binary people will experience sexual violence in their lifetime
 - ▶ Intimate partner violence has been declared an epidemic in several municipalities across Ontario
 - ▶ Only 6% of sexual assaults are reported to police
 - ▶ Less than 1% of sexual assault cases lead to conviction (most are unreported)

2

The Spectrum of Violence Prevention



3

How do we typically respond to GBSV?

- ▶ Increased security and police budgets and reliance on technocratic improvements (e.g. security, better lighting, cameras, training, etc.)
- ▶ Tightening/strengthening laws and policies in the name of furthering legal protections (e.g. [Bill 251](#))
- ▶ Partnering with carceral systems to deliver services (e.g. mental health, immigration, children's aid, GBSV, etc.)
- ▶ Calling for [carceral responses](#) to crime or harm - e.g. #MeToo in 2017 demanded that perpetrators be arrested, incarcerated, and/or barred from positions of power
- ▶ Using carceral logics/language when talking about harm/crime (e.g. "bad/good," "criminal," "abuser," "creep," "monster," etc.)
- ▶ Note: postsecondary campuses in Ontario are mandated to have their own standalone policies for responding to GBSV that can facilitate responses outside of the criminal justice system (e.g. internal investigation/adjudication)

4

Why might this be a challenge?

UNFOUNDED

WHY POLICE DISMISS 1 IN 5 SEXUAL ASSAULT CLAIMS AS BASELESS

In a 20-month-long investigation into how police handle sexual assault allegations, The Globe and Mail gathered data from more than 870 police forces. The findings expose deep flaws at every step of the process

BY ROBYN DOOLITTLE LONDON, ONT.
PUBLISHED FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2017

Home / News / Crime / 70 Per Cent Of 'Unfounded' Hamilton...

70 per cent of 'unfounded' Hamilton sexual assault cases closed incorrectly

Cases dismissed because witnesses not interviewed, forensic tests not requested, disproportionate weight was given to the accused's version of events, or reliance on rape myths

NEWS Nov 20, 2018 by Nicole O'Reilly The Hamilton Spectator

Should police always be called when a student reports a sex assault to a university or college?

Mandatory policies about how Ontario's colleges and universities deal with allegations of sexual assault will be in place this fall. Advocates say the guidelines fall short, while critics insist it's a job better left to the police.

NEWS Aug 07, 2017 by Peter Giffin Hamilton Spectator

5

What is the Carceral State?

- ▶ "[T]he carceral state encompasses the formal institutions and operations and economies of the criminal justice system proper, but it also encompasses logics, ideologies, practices, and structures, that invest in tangible and sometimes intangible ways in punitive orientations to difference, to poverty, to struggles to social justice and to the crossers of constructed borders of all kinds." - [Ruby Tapia, U-M English and Women's Studies](#)
- ▶ "The term carceral state often calls to mind institutions of confinement like jails, detention centers, prisons, but... it also comprises a wide range of policies, practices, and institutions that scrutinize individuals and communities both before and after their contact with the criminal justice system." - Nora Krinitsky

6

What is an Anti-Carceral Approach?

- ▶ Rooted in abolitionism and the works of Black feminism
 - ▶ “a radical analysis that exposes the carceral logics of colonialism, anti-Blackness, and racism that make specific people and communities expendable” (Bergen & Abji, 2020, p.36)”
- ▶ Challenging what has been uncritically accepted as “normal”
- ▶ Can span a range of responses, including “non-reformist reforms” to fulsome abolition
- ▶ Divesting and abolishing the carceral state and investing in community-based supports, services, and movements
- ▶ Imagining a future we haven’t seen yet

7

What does anti-carcerality look like?

- ▶ Community-based and survivor-led organizations, resources, and supports
- ▶ Divesting from police and security budgets and investing in preventative, community-based services
- ▶ Responding to social issues without police, prisons, and punishment
 - ▶ [Restorative justice](#)
 - ▶ [Transformative justice](#)
- ▶ Getting to the root of social problems and addressing them
- ▶ Moving away from carceral logics/language/discourse in constructing and framing social problems

8

Why might this be a challenge?

- ▶ It is hard to imagine a world without prisons and police - many people are afraid to think of what that could mean!
- ▶ The carceral state is massive and powerful → deeply intertwined in various systems (e.g. healthcare, social service provision, education, etc.)
- ▶ Angela Davis → abolition is both material and ideological, in that we have to abolish the prisons within ourselves before we can imagine physically dismantling carceral systems
 - ▶ Carceral values/logics are often conditioned within western frames of thinking - how do we push beyond this?
- ▶ Reframing accountability - how do we contend with people who have caused harm (and who may not feel “bad” about it)?
 - ▶ How do we also support survivors who seek carceral responses?

9

Why we're here!

- ▶ Research indicates that involving men in GBSV maintains numerous benefits for creating programs/frameworks that better reflect men's experiences, concerns, and goals...and contributes positively to reducing violence on campus and in the community!
- ▶ Prevention aligns with anti-carceral approaches via seeking to stop violence before it happens by challenging the foundations/conditions that facilitate violence
 - ▶ In this process, we do not need to contend with prisons/police in our focus group if we do not want to; rather, we can focus on carceral logics/language and how reimagining this might aid us in dreaming up new responses
- ▶ How can we imagine a framework for doing this work that focuses on engaging men sustainably, getting to the root of the problem, avoiding hyperindividualism, and creating new pathways for community care and accountability?

10

Focus Group (2)

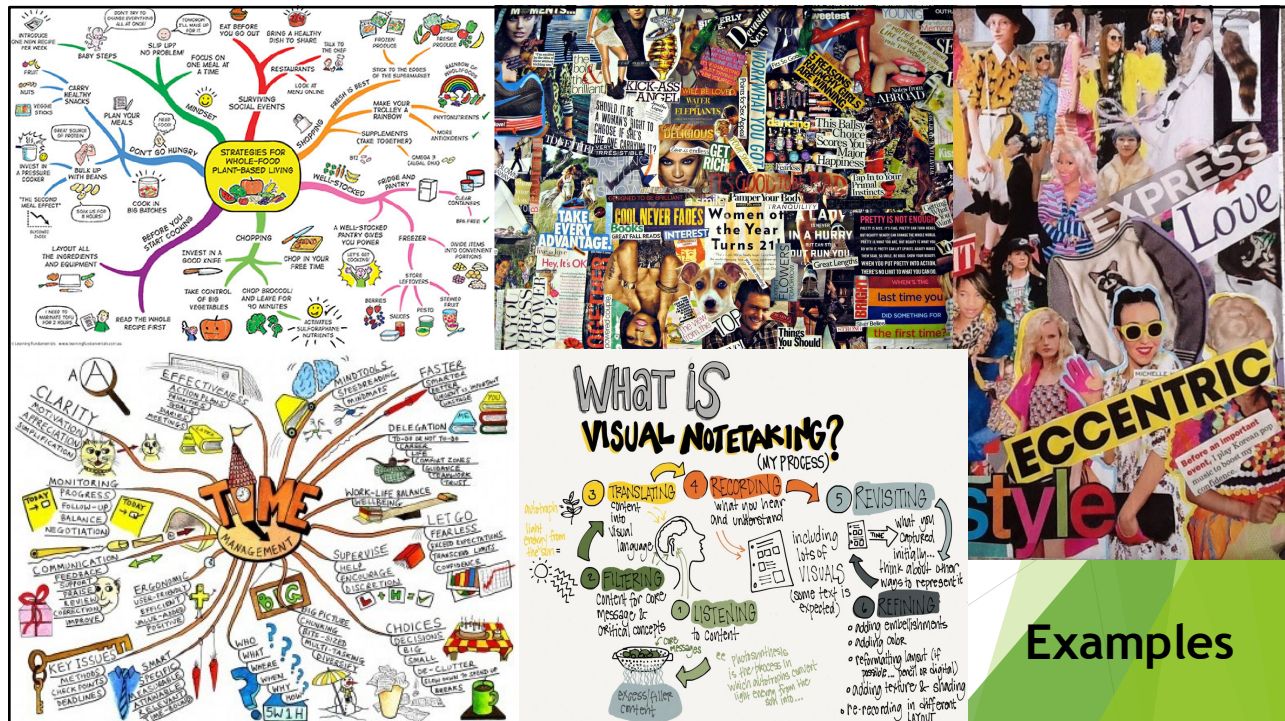
Thursday, May 2nd, 2024

1

Arts-Based Activity

- ▶ **Using the materials available to us, how would we define and/or perceive violence?**
 - ▶ Where are men located in these conversations?
 - ▶ How is masculinity communicated and codified via media? How does this relate to experiences of violence?
- ▶ For online participants: you can:
 - ▶ Collage on Canva or a related platform
 - ▶ Create a mind map/brainstorm
 - ▶ Draw
 - ▶ Etc.!

2



3

Activity (30-45mins)

- ▶ Using the materials available to us, how would we define and/or perceive violence?
- ▶ Where are men located in these conversations?
- ▶ How is masculinity communicated and codified via media? How does this relate to experiences of violence?

4

Question #1

- ▶ Does anyone want to present their piece/talk about it?
- ▶ Stemming from the activity, what did we discover about how we define or view violence?
 - ▶ Via personal reflection? Via media representations?
 - ▶ Where do we see men positioned in this conversation? Are they absent from representations of who can experience violence?
 - ▶ How does this link to engaging men in the conversation? To changing our understandings of how we respond to violence?

5

Background

- ▶ Global responses to GBSV
 - ▶ “Gender-based violence is more prevalent in countries that have faced a history of colonization, oppression along ethnic lines, and homophobia, as well as where there are higher levels of inter-personal violence, weak legal infrastructure, and higher levels of gendered economic disparity.” ([Stanford](#))
 - ▶ [Facts and Figures: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls \(UN Women\)](#)
 - ▶ [What We Heard: Métis Women’s Responses to GBV](#)
 - ▶ [CDA of Survivor-Centered Humanitarian Approach](#)
 - ▶ [Regional Action Plan to Address GBV in the Middle East and North Africa](#)
 - ▶ [GBV in the Global South: Ideologies, Resistances, Responses, and Transformations](#)
 - ▶ [The Shadow Pandemic: Policy Efforts on GBV](#)
 - ▶ [Preventing Gender Violence: Lessons Learned](#)
 - ▶ [Global Responses to Sexualized and Gendered Violence](#)

6

Background Handout

► Transnational Abolition

- Included several examples of the ways in which anti-carceral praxis/organizing originated in the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, which discussed examples of interrelationship with colonialism and imperialism in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, etc.
- [Global Prison Abolitionist](#) indicates that there have been “protests and hunger strikes inside detention centers and prisons in the U.S., Iran, Italy, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Lebanon, France, Canada, India, Egypt and elsewhere, as well as prison breaks in Iran and Brazil.”
- There are prison reform movements globally; however, many are seeking alternatives to current models of incarceration due to overcrowding, underfunding, understaffing, etc.
- “Although histories of incarceration cannot be collapsed into each other, I believe that there are significant links between disparate carceral systems. In my own research, I have discovered repeatedly that the architectures, economies, and techniques of modern punishment are transnational and linked.” ([Golnar Nikpour](#))
- Abolitionist thinking is largely derived from non-western perspectives/worldviews (via ties to decolonization and anti-imperialism)

7

Background Handout

► Alternative Forms of Justice & Anti-Carceral Praxis

- “International standards are in line with modern-day transformative justice and prison abolition movements...by addressing the root causes of crime” ([Goodman](#))
- Examples of toolkits/initiatives:
 - [Creative Interventions Toolkit](#)
 - [Cops Off Campus](#)
 - [Local Peace Committees](#)
 - [In Our Own Hands](#)
 - [CAT Groups](#)
- Various global iterations of restorative justice
 - [US-wide study of RJ](#) indicates that recidivism is 9% lower, victim satisfaction is 22% higher, victim fear of revictimization is 13% lower, offender satisfaction is 9% higher, and completed restitution is 23% higher; [Canadian study](#) indicated that recidivism drops by 12%
 - Success case example: Circles of Support and Accountability ([CoSA](#))

8

Question #2

- ▶ Referring to this background/context, what are some of our reflections about:
 - ▶ Non-western experiences and approaches to gender-based and sexual violence?
 - ▶ Examples of alternative justice approaches?
 - ▶ Examples of anti-carceral praxis in the community?

9

Question #3

- ▶ When thinking about creating a framework for engaging men in violence prevention, how do we envision this looking/feeling like?
 - ▶ What should be key topics?
 - ▶ How should it be organized/structured?
 - ▶ Who should it address?

10

Wrap-Up

- For our final focus group, what do we want to focus on? What themes were most exciting to us as a group to explore?