



To: Dawson Community
From: Safer Spaces Stakeholders Committee
Date: June 15th, 2018
Subject: Safer Spaces Phase 4: Evaluation & Action Plan

Appendices:

1. Phase 1: A Sample of Student Work
2. Phase 2: Research Assignment (Student Work, Sarah Dayazada)
3. Phase 3: Forum Theatre: 4 scenarios used
4. Phase 3: Forum Theatre: Participant Feedback
5. Social Service's Research Reports about Microaggressions at Dawson College
6. Dawson Student Union: Safer Spaces Policy
7. Social Equity and Diversity Education Office: McGill University
8. Concordia Student Union: Safer Spaces Policy
9. From Safe Space to Brave Space: Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens (The Art of Effective Facilitation, Stylus Publishing, 2013)



Introduction to Safer Spaces

The *'Safer Spaces: Cultivating the Conditions for Optimal Student Engagement, Learning and Well-Being Winter 2018 Project'* project was presented to and accepted by Dean Andrea Cole in Sept. 2017.

Some important ideas underlying the project are that it:

- be community/stakeholder driven,
- provides student and staff the opportunity to work together and learn from each other;
- has no predetermined goal or deliverable, other than the following Phases for this academic year (see below).

The Safer Spaces Initiative attempted to start a Dawson-wide conversation about the ways in which challenging topics such as micro-aggressions, and/or colonial or misogynistic attitudes, etc., play out in the College and how we could learn as a community to build on our strengths and manage them.

For the purposes of this initiative, microaggressions are defined as,

“brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative slights and insults that potentially have harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group.”

(Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000)

This project has four phases, each of which took place in the Winter 2018 term. Because there were many different levels of understanding of what microaggression means, the overarching goal for this term was conscientization and exploring/determining if there was a need for further support. Approximately 250 faculty, staff and students participated in the Safer Spaces Initiative.

Dawson College's strategic plan (2016-202) describes our vision of offering “innovative academic ... and transformational learning experiences through student-centered pedagogical practices...” (Dawson College, 2016). We advocate faculty use of ‘Liberal Education and America’s Promise’ (LEAP) identified ‘high impact educational practices’ (2008). These high impact practices provide a framework for engaging our students with meaningful work and competency development. The Safer Spaces project was designed by employing the high impact practices of collaborative assignments (Phase 1), research (Phase 2) and community-based learning (Phases 2, 3 & 4) and consists of four phases:

1. A vernissage of student, faculty, and staff work on the theme of ‘microaggressions’.
2. Focus group interviews with students, staff, and faculty about their experiences at Dawson.
3. A forum theatre experience, based on the data from Phase 2, to deconstruct and reconstruct these stories in view of questioning what can be done to foster a more inclusive and diverse community.
4. An evaluation of the Safer Spaces initiative and an action plan for future steps.

The Phases grew organically from a desire to provide opportunities for staff and students to understand each other's perspectives and to move together as a community to cultivate the conditions for optimal student engagement and well-being for all.

Safer Spaces as a Name and Concept

Although this project was approved by Andrea Cole, other Dawson administrators have communicated some concern about the Safer Spaces initiative. On several occasions it was stated that the name 'Safer Spaces' could imply that Dawson was not safe. In light of Dawson's history, it was important to communicate that Dawson is a safe environment. The name 'Safer Spaces' was chosen because Karina Leonard and Kim Simard saw that it is commonly used across Canadian higher education institutions to use their strengths to collectively manage microaggressions and discrimination (please see the appendices: Concordia's Student Union Safer Spaces Project, and McGill's Social Equity and Diversity Education Office host Safer Spaces workshops for staff, faculty and students). Furthermore, the Dawson Student Union had recently published their own 'Safer Spaces' policy (also included as an appendix). Drawing upon this body of work, the Safer Spaces project was styled to bring the Dawson community together, to hear each other and then draw on our collective strengths to manage microaggressions and discrimination. This has been viewed by all participants as a strength-based initiative.

Project Funding:

Promotional Concept Development: \$60.00 poster/banner. Creative and Applied Arts

Phase 1: Catering..... \$212.13..... Peace Centre
Printing.....\$350.....SSAP (\$77 was spent for Phase 1, a more detailed break-down is necessary)

Phase 2: Catering of focus groups\$88.86 Peace Centre

Phase 3: Facilitator\$1900
\$1000 Professional Development - Faculty Group
Training (application submitted in Jan 2018)
\$625 Creative and Applied Arts
\$275 Peace Centre
Catering\$400
\$350 Dawson Teacher's Union
\$49.83 Peace Centre

It is important to note that the Safer Spaces initiative was not funded by:

- The Association of Dawson Professionals (ADP): Although the ADP supported the initiative, and forwarded emailed information and invitations to each phase, their President explained that the Executive's position is not to give funding where they feel that the College should give funding.

- The Dawson Support Staff Union (DSSU): The DSSU was not approached for financial contributions. The DSSU President was asked to forward an emailed invitation to Phase 3 to DSSU members, but did not do so. That being said, members of the DSSU actively participated in all phases of the initiative.
- The Dawson Student Union (DSU): While approached on several occasions both in person and via email, the DSU did not reply to requests for support. It is important to note that both coordinators and associates at **The Hive: Centre for Gender Advocacy** were supportive of this project. One helped to hang posters during Phase 1, and they advertised Phase 3 on their Facebook page. Their associate kindly spoke to me about the DSU's own (2017-2018) Safer Spaces policy for members. This policy is included as an appendix to this report.

Project Development

Community stakeholders were consulted prior to Phase 1. Additionally, 'forum theatre' was piloted with the classes who attended the presentation at Social Science Week.

Stakeholder's Meeting, Oct.31st

Attended by Azra Khan, Julia Lijeron, Chris Adam, Diana Rice, Kim Simard, Sarah Beer, Karina Leonard

The group expressed enthusiasm about the possibilities of the Safer Spaces initiative. They expressed the importance of 'authenticity', and valued the opportunity to speak from experience without the fear of being judged. They agreed that the project was designed in such a way as to engage multiple members of the community and start the conversation about microaggressions at Dawson College. At this meeting, Diana Rice expressed the possibility of funding through the Peace Centre and suggested submitting a formal proposal. Karina Leonard did so immediately following the meeting, and the proposal was accepted that same day. Sarah Beer committed to asking the DTU for funds to support this project and subsequently communicated the approved request in January 2018.

Some of the suggested themes for exploration in this project included microaggressions related to:

- Race
- Gender/transgender
- Sexism
- Workplace harassment
- Physical disabilities

Women and Gender Studies Meeting, January 17th

Attended by Women/Gender Studies Students and Faculty, Karina Leonard

Although many other subjects were included on the agenda of this meeting, the Safer Spaces project was presented by Kim Simard and Karina Leonard. They discussed the origin of the project and called for volunteers and collaborators. Florencia Vallejo and Sabrina Dunn-Plouffe volunteered to become student ambassadors for this project.

Social Science Week Presentation, February 9th

Kim Simard, Karina Leonard, Jessica Bleuer and Student ambassador Forencia Vallejo presented as a panel at the social sciences week. Approximately two classes were in attendance. The smaller group worked well as a means of introducing and demonstrating forum theatre.

Session Abstract:

In this panel presentation, Karina Leonard (Pedagogical Counsellor, Academic Development) will overview the origin of this initiative and the four project phases. Kim Simard (Coordinator of Women's and Gender Studies and Cinema-Communications Faculty) and Florencia Vallejo (Dawson College student) will describe each project stage and highlight ways that students, faculty and staff can get involved. Jessica Bleuer, Cultural Equity Consultant, will describe how your experiences of microaggressions at Dawson College will be used to form the basis of a theatrical experience, where participants will deconstruct and reconstruct these scenarios in order to find entry points for resistance. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and questions.

Phase 1: Student Assignment & Display (February 12th – 16th, 2018)

Faculty Members were invited to tailor an assignment in their course to address the concept of 'Safer Spaces'. This ranged from the development of student documentaries, posters, to the creation of artwork related to the theme of microaggressions, etc. This work was then be organized into a vernissage event.

The purpose of this assignment was three-fold;

1. It afforded faculty the opportunity to purposefully infuse the concept of 'safer spaces' into their curriculum design, allowing for reflection on this issue by both faculty members and students.
2. It empowered students through the experience of using their voices and work to directly effect a change (at the College and beyond).
3. These assignments and displays generated a buzz about the topic of 'safer spaces', advertising the initiative and putting out the call for further collaboration in the next phases.

Phase 1 of Safer Spaces went well, and the 39 poster submissions that students (and one member of staff) created were presented in the library hallway and gained a lot of attention. Varied approaches to draw attention to micro-aggressions were explored visually. Many projects focused on the various ways different people may interpret race, class, and gender. A few examples are included as an appendix.

It is important to note that there were some faculty members who wanted to participate in this initiative but who could not do so because of their class competency/discipline. One math teacher generously spent over an hour deconstructing class materials in consultation with Karina Leonard, but was unable to find a way to integrate microaggressions into the development of these math competencies. There were other faculty members who also expressed the same type of concern about the practicality of using microaggressions as a filter to consider their class competencies. Nonetheless, these types of conversations can still be seen as fruitful, and are also an important step in raising consciousness about microaggressions. Overall, Phase 1 can be seen as a success, both pedagogically and as an awareness-building tool for the larger college community.

Due to sickness, both Kim Simard and Jessica Bleuer were unable to co-facilitate the finissage party on February 16th. As such, Karina Leonard was the sole facilitator. Approximately 20 students and staff attended the event and appeared very keen to enter into a conversation about microaggressions and the ways in which we might do something about it at Dawson. It is of note to mention that Karina was aggressed by a male student at the event. As no other students or staff were involved, she reported the experience to Dawson's security team and was impressed by the professionalism and supportive way that they investigated the case.

Phase 2: Focus Group Lunch (March 23rd & 27th, 2018)

The focus group lunch was student-led (as per Phase 1 and in collaboration with the OAD, Jessica Bleuer, and Nancy Rebelo [Research Methods teacher]). We provided the food and venue(s) to hear from 20 – 40 purposefully-selected and invited faculty, students and staff (in separate homogenous groups).

The rationale for this Focus Group Lunch:

- meet as a College Community of Practitioners and engage stakeholders in conversation,
- share stories and understand multiple perspectives / entry points/ experiences,
- gather data about key resource people in the College community and their methodologies for cultivating safe spaces,
- gather data about challenges to facilitating safe spaces;
- inform and contextualize Phase 3: Forum Theatre (April workshop)
- to support student learning (of students in Nancy Rebelo's research methods course)

For more information, please see the report submitted by Sarah Dayazada (Research Skills student) attached as an appendix.

Human Ethics Application

The focus group lunch required institutional approval (through the HREC). The HREC Application was developed by both Nancy Rebelo and Karina Leonard. Proposed participant role was fully informed and included the following description (in the permission form and through the emailed solicitation of people who had expressed an interest in the early meetings/phases).

Your Proposed Role: As a participant in the (faculty/student/staff) focus group, you would answer questions about your experiences with microaggressions at Dawson College. Your participation would be known by Karina Leonard, Nancy Rebelo (Research Method Skills faculty member), Jessica Bleuer (Cultural Equity Consultant), the other focus group participants, and the four students who coordinate the faculty focus group. Your feedback would be kept confidential, but themes from the data as a whole will be used to inform the scenarios for Phase 3 of the Safer Spaces Project. If a specific incident that you share is used in the development of the scenarios, your data will be anonymized in such a way so that it could not be traced back to you. Please note that part of the experience for the student coordinators of the focus group is to develop a consent form, which you would be asked to sign before the focus group meeting. Please also note that we have asked for a dedicated resource person to be on hand (during the focus group) for one-on-one chat and/or to connect you with further services, as needed.

Thematic Findings:

Faculty Focus Group

A variety of experiences regarding instances when teachers felt unsafe or uncomfortable at Dawson College were shared. These included situations that occurred with students, staff, and other faculty members both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. The most troubling and recurring theme during the faculty focus group related to interactions between students and faculty, whereby the students' behaviour made the teacher feel unsafe for themselves or for other students. In such cases, teachers felt that they had not received proper support from administration. The consensus was that the college was willing to hear what was happening but did not offer support for the teachers and little was done to help improve the situation. In some cases, teachers expressed being afraid to enter a class due to student's inappropriate behaviour. Faculty members also discussed how such situations impacted the class dynamic and made it difficult for them to teach and for students to learn.

Faculty members expressed a desire for training to help defuse difficult situations and to help deal with students who present inappropriate (at times dangerous/violent) behaviours. The need for support from administration was also expressed, as many stated that when they expressed concern about such students, their concerns were not taken seriously.

Student Focus Group

Students shared experiences regarding times when they felt unsafe or uncomfortable at Dawson. Many of the experiences took place in class and were brought on by teachers. The experiences shared revealed that teachers unintentionally made students feel uncomfortable due to comments that were considered by the students to be inappropriate or insensitive. Students explained that situations really impacted their ability to learn either during the specific class or with the teacher through the semester (if such situations occurred regularly). When discussing unsafe or uncomfortable experiences brought on by their peers, the focus group participants appeared better able to deal with these encounters, citing the use of strategies such as distancing themselves.

Overall, the experiences that appear most troubling for the student participants are those that are bought on by teachers, and this had to do with the power dynamic of such relationships.

An important note that was brought up during the focus group was that Dawson College's policy regarding name change and gender-neutral bathrooms is a step in the right direction and is appreciated by the students.

Staff Focus Group

Staff experiences with microaggressions at Dawson were varied. While some focus group members had not personally experienced microaggressions, they were aware of other staff members who had. The majority of reported microaggressions discussed in this focus group were related to gender bias, sexism, classism and workplace harassment. This ranged from experiences where staff were treated as second-class members of the Dawson community, to inappropriate and suggestive behaviours from colleagues. Again, respondents were mixed in their experiences with reporting these incidents and the support that they received. Some felt very supported by administration, while others expressed a concern about transparency and a possible values conflict within the institution.

All respondents expressed the importance of further training for faculty, staff, students and management in order to better understand microaggressions (in particular those related to gender bias), and bystander training.

Emotional Safeguarding:

Given the risk of adverse emotional reactions to the questions posed and experiences shared, each focus group had a dedicated resource person on hand for one-on-one chat and/or to connect you with further services, as needed. In the event of a triggered response, participants were invited for one-on-one chat and/or to use a dedicated office space to contact one of the above counselling resources. Dawson counsellors and psychologists were advised of the timing of each focus group, and agreed to meet with students on a needs basis.

Phase 3: Forum Theatre Workshop (April 12th, 2018, 2:00 – 4:00 pm)

Students, faculty and staff were invited to attend a forum theatre event, where we collectively examined how microaggressions are experienced at Dawson, and began developing a response to managing them. Four scenarios were developed, based on participant feedback at the focus group lunches.

The forum theatre event took place in the multipurpose room, which was set up in three groups, to accommodate a maximum of 135 people. The room was divided into four sections, where three sections was for food and coffee/tea (intended as an emotional break area). Easels with posters from Phase 1 set up in three areas. Although 135 participants confirmed their presence, a quick tally indicated that there were approximately 125 people in attendance.

Using the information gathered in March's Focus Group Lunch faculty, staff and students collaboratively explored how educational frameworks can influence safer and more inclusive spaces for all members of the Dawson Community.

The objectives of the forum theatre event included:

- To engage faculty, staff and students across multiple departments and programs
- To recognize and build on the strengths of inclusive classroom practice currently occurring at Dawson College.
- To start the conversation about how to address microaggressions when they occur in classroom or extracurricular settings.
- To inform a 'Dawson College Safer Spaces Action Plan' which represents the work and outcomes of the forum theatre process.

The following is a list of confirmed participants for Phase 3. Several faculty members came who had not confirmed their intention to participate, and several did not attend despite having confirmed.

Faculty:

Kim Simard (and class)
Pat Romano
Nancy Rebelo (and class)
Andie Buccitelli (and class)
Grace Fontes (and class)
Patricia Murphy (and class)
Rushdia Mehreen (and 5 students)
Kelly Phipps (and class)
Mark Beauchamp
Sarah Beer

Guests:

Jessica Bleuer -Cultural Equity Consultant and Concordia University faculty
Marie Longpre -Coordinator for Professional Services -Student Services, Vanier College
Unknown name, Pedagogical Counsellor - Vanier College
Alicia Cundall – Teaching & Learning Consultant, Concordia University

Professionals & Managers:

Karina Leonard
Azra Khan
Julia Lijeron
Chris Adam
Diana Rice
Uzma Jamil
Geoff Kloos – RSVPed but did not come

Support Staff:

Karina D'Ermo

Billi-Jo Poirier – RSVPed but did not come

Mary Di Liello

Stela Blasic

Two representatives from the Muslim Student Association - confirmed but did not come

Facilitation of Each Group

The facilitators met with Jessica Bleuer for training prior to the forum theatre workshop. The training introduced each of the proposed scenes, as well as detailing tips for effectively managing each group.

Scene/Group 1: Diana Rice

While Diana had facilitated sessions as a trainer or panel moderator in a variety of academic and non-academic scenarios she reported that this was the first time she had worked with this type of format. Scene 1 focussed on misgendering and bullying in the classroom by both the faculty members and students. The session went as well as it could have gone considering the size of the group according to Diana. While she thought that some of the students seemed to be engaged and “got something” out of it, she believes that working with a smaller group might have been more effective.

Diana observed that being in a larger group allowed for the larger group to rely on a few confident voices, allowing the rest to either be silent or simply not engage. Diana reported that she found it challenging to measure the level of engagement the students as so few choose to participate in the initial discussion, prior to running the “scene”. While taking into account that students are not always comfortable speaking about topics like this in a large group, Diana did not feel that the experience was as impactful as it could have been had the group size been smaller.

This seeming lack of engagement by many of the students in the group could potentially have been a result of feeling like they “did not need this”, that they “were already there, or bought-in” with respect to this subject. The large majority of students in her group were from Social Service, which is a department makes an effort in their curriculum to work on topics like this, as it is pertinent to the student’s future employment.

Scene/Group 2: Kim Simard

Kim’s group was given a scenario that dealt with student aggression toward a faculty member. The student in the scenario was asking for a better grade and threatening to go to grade review should there be no change. The participants in this group were interested by this topic, and were challenged by the notion of grade review, and the idea of a student becoming a threat to a teacher. Gender came into play, as the story was acted out in a way to indicate a power imbalance, the male student was asked to act out his aggression in a dominant way. The group understood that this could best be played out through body language and found it important to emphasize this to properly empathise with the main character (teacher).

When brainstorming alternative reactions or scenarios, many thought this student could have met with the teacher in her office as requested, or even made sure that she was aware of his situation before it got to the point of extreme aggression either by MIO or trying to

communicate in other ways. Overall, the group was surprised by the students threat and many students felt he could have helped himself if he were more aware of his actions, and the threatening way he was acting.

Scenes/Group 3&4: Karina Leonard

Karina reported enjoying the facilitation experiences. Contrary to the other two groups, this group was given the opportunity to choose between two scenes. Scene 3 dealt with racism, violence and sexism, whereas Scene 4 dealt with Islamophobia. Both scenes were introduced to the group, and the majority chose Scene #4. Although this group was made up of guests/staff/managers/individuals (rather than classes), they worked well together and appeared comfortable in expressing their thoughts and feelings fairly quickly in the process. There was no resistance to participation and the group was able to understand the situation and propose alternative actions for the characters to try out.

Karina was grateful for the training session and found the line, “Our job is to be on the side of the protagonist” (as proposed by Jessica) to be helpful in orienting the students to the scenario and task of brainstorming alternative actions/outcomes. She indicated that her only discomfort was in accurately representing and making space for women who wear hijabs (as per the scenario). Her approach to dealing with this discomfort was to state that she was not Muslim, but that she supported a women’s right to choose what she wears, as well as providing the example of a friend who wears the hijab as a means of identifying herself as a proud Muslim feminist.

Emotional Safeguarding:

Pat Romano (faculty) was the dedicated resource person during the forum theatre event. She was not approached by any participant for emotional support.

Participant Feedback:

A full transcript of participant feedback is included as an appendix.

Suggestions can be summarized into the following categories:

- Teacher Training
- Staff training
- Management training
- Security training
- Intervention Training for bystanders
- Mandatory workshops / classes about microaggressions for students
- Complementary / Elective classes (or Humanities classes) that are developed through the lens of microaggressions
- Affirmative action when hiring counsellors (representation)
- Affirmative action in the DSU (this comment specifically mentioned representation of more programs)
- Microaggression policy to be developed and included in ISEP
- Further study of the gender neutral washrooms. Possible gender neutral locker / changing areas.

- A reporting structure for when microaggressions take place.
- Review of Dawson-wide surveys: Include a male/female/other option.
- Club spaces for students dedicated to their experiences with microaggressions
- Make the Safer Spaces Initiative permanent.

Interconnected and Complementary Pedagogical and Development Initiatives at Dawson:

Resist Violence Class: Thursday March 29th

Kim Simard and Pat Romano

Guests: Several student focus group participants, Eric Craven (Atwater Library), Jessica Bleuer, Karina Leonard

2:30 - Introductions

2:40 – Safer Spaces Project Overview

3:15 - Forum Theatre Overview & Activities, Jessica Bleuer

4:45 - Students give a summary of their final 'artistic activism' project ideas for feedback.

Social Service Research Projects Winter 2018

Yaffa Elling and Andie Buccitelli

The Social Service research classes worked incredibly hard on their respective research projects on microaggressions and the stand-alone sexual violence policy to be developed by the College. The research is both quantitative and qualitative. They have some very interesting findings, which we hope will inform possible projects in the future. Yaffa's class presented their two research projects on microaggressions and students, and microaggressions and Faculty/Staff, on Wednesday May 2nd. Each team presented for about 30 -40 minutes in room 4H17. Safer Spaces collaborators were invited to come and hear the results.

It is important to note that response rates were high, with 3277 student respondents out of 8183 (Dawson's Annual Report, 2016-2017) and 157 teachers and staff out of a possible 1929. We are extremely proud of their dedication and efforts and very happy that we could have the students involved in producing research important to College life and Social Service Work.

Of particular relevance to this phase of the Safer Spaces initiative, is the research finding that 53.4% of student respondents report intervening when microaggressions occur, and the finding that microaggressions occur most frequently in the classroom or cafeteria. Those who experience microaggressions report using creative outlets (such as reading and 'the arts') as coping strategies. Faculty and staff survey respondents represent 8% of the total body at Dawson College. This group reports experiencing microaggressions in their office spaces and classrooms. While students report that the type of microaggressions they face are more likely race or ethnicity related, staff and faculty report sexism, racism, physical appearance, ageism and language as the basis for the microaggressions that they face. These factors will be considered when developing a formalized strategy for managing student-experienced microaggressions.

Please see the full reports included as appendices to this report.

New School Workshops:

"The 'Power' of emotions in the classroom"

Friday April 20th

Nadia Hausfather

Session Abstract: Inspired partly by my experience facilitating a Humanities course at New School, as well as other teaching experiences and my PhD research about emotions and Quebec's student strikes, I will pose some questions about the interaction of emotions and power in the classroom. Through kinesthetic activities and discussion, we will explore our views about our emotions in relation to reason. Then, through role playing and further discussion, we will gently pick at some emotions entangled in both comfortable and uncomfortable classroom situations (e.g. different kinds of laughter/fun; whispering; stress; heated debates; student democratic control and strikes) that can complicate and enliven the classroom experience for teachers and students.

This was a kinesthetic and discussion-based workshop inspired in part by an Outside the Box workshop last semester.

"Group Dynamics: Bracketing and Safe Space"

Monday April 23rd

Nicola Morry and Rushdia Mehreen

Session Abstract: Nicola Morry, a Humanities facilitator at Dawson College's New School, will moderate a discussion on strategies for creating safe space in the classroom without shutting down discussion of more controversial or sensitive material. One important skill for students to cultivate is bracketing: "temporarily setting aside one's own preconceptions or beliefs – is an essential step in the academic study of religion as it allows one to approach religions on their own terms even while retaining one's own faith commitment." (Smith, 1999, pp. 60) While the term 'bracketing' will be most familiar to scholars of Religious Studies, Nicola will suggest its applicability in all CEGEP classrooms.

This workshop may be most relevant to Humanities educators, but the importance of balancing the need for safe space in the classroom with critical inquiry into areas of potential sensitivity to students is universal. All are welcome! My former students will be invited to participate if they so wish.

"From Self to Collective: Finding Care in a Burnout Culture"

Safer Spaces: Politics & Care organization, Friday April 27th

Rushdia Mehreen

Session Abstract: The idea with this workshop is to provide a "safe space" for teachers to talk about their well-being, managing of the workload, personal lives and so on. This is also in view of frequent burnout stories we hear about teachers. In the workshop we'd collectively reflect on practices of care, both self and collective, and brainstorm ideas for support and action.

The ideal audience for this workshop is New School Faculty and Facilitators, as well as all College Teachers.

External Presentations:

Community Congress Conference, University of Regina

May 26th, 2018

Safer Spaces Are Not Places

Kim Simard

Session Abstract: In recent years, my pedagogical community has been asking questions about diversity in the classroom and how to tackle sensitive issues of oppression and social justice. Much of what is articulated by John Palfrey, Megan Boler and others has connections with intersectional feminism and focuses on the power of personal/emotional discourse as an important asset when learning. I do not dispute this, however, in addition to many scholarly points of view regarding the concept of safe space, I would like to propose a paper that emphasizes an approach to understanding safer spaces that puts connection and collaboration with student bodies at the forefront. This approach is one that promotes a cultural shift, not only in the classroom, but the institutional community as well.

Over the last 4 months I oversaw a project called Safer Spaces as the coordinator of Women's/Gender Studies at Dawson College (a multicultural CEGEP located in downtown Montreal). As of April 2018, research conducted by student – led focus groups regarding safer spaces have been conducted. This research is one part of a larger project that encourages our community to think about safer spaces from various disciplines. With no imposed outcome or set guidelines by the institution, our team is unsure where this will bring us. We have documented and collected all feedback throughout the process to share at the conference through this paper.

SALTISE 7th annual Conference, McGill University

May 31st

Safer Spaces Project: Cultivating the conditions for optimal student engagement

Karina Leonard

Panel Abstract: The Safer Spaces Initiative was born in consultation with faculty from the Women/Gender Studies program. They described a need for further refinement of professional practices in response to challenging topics such as microaggressions, and colonial or misogynistic attitudes. Therein, we planned a semester long initiative using high impact educational practices to start the conversation about cultivating the conditions for optimal student engagement, and how the Dawson community might mobilize to draw on our strengths.

Phase 4: Evaluation and Action Plan

Using the data gathered in each phase, a subcommittee of faculty and student representatives have developed a next course of action for the 2018-2019 academic year.

This report represents our recommendation for further consideration and development. Many participants felt privileged to be included in this work, and expressed gratitude to work in the context of a strategic plan that includes elements like 'well-being for all' and 'sustainability'. Implicit in this vision is the belief that the Dawson Community can work together to make real change. In keeping with this belief and as proposed by participant feedback, the stakeholder community recommends the continuation of this project by considering the following possible next steps:

Coordination and Call to Action 2018-2019

This report has detailed the success of the Safer Spaces Initiative. In addition to raising the conversation about microaggressions at Dawson College, outside educational institutions also participated and hope to collaborate on future possibilities. The potential to grow the initiative exists, but it would need to be managed both in terms of scope and by the appropriate resource person/service. To that end, we propose that the Safer Spaces initiative fall under the jurisdiction of the Peace Centre for future coordination. Actions would include:

Rebranding:

Since there was Administrative concern about the use of the term 'Safer Spaces'. It might be of interest to consider rebranding the project to 'Safer Spaces/Braver Spaces'. There has been research about how the term 'safer spaces' is misleading, and rather that it takes student and faculty bravery to address discrimination and microaggressions (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Please see the abstract of this study included in the appendix.

Networking:

Given the interest articulated by the Dawson Community, Vanier College and Concordia University, as well as the work already being done by McGill University, we might consider meeting to look for common strategies/resources. Information regarding specific contact people and work being done are included as appendages.

Development of a Statement about Microaggressions:

It was suggested that a statement/vision be developed about microaggressions, and that this statement be included on course outlines at Dawson College.

Annual Training sessions:

In the genesis of the Safer Spaces: Winter 2018 Initiative, we found that there was a gap in providing specific training about microaggressions to faculty and staff who were clearly interested. We also found that students were willing to intervene in defense of others who experiences microaggressions. Although there is funding available for faculty group training, the kind of training needed to bring faculty to the same place of shared language, understanding and practice requires more than a one day workshop. We have proposed a series of such workshops (to be presented across the academic year) informed by community stakeholders.

We have also proposed training opportunities for students, both through peer-to-peer training and more formally

Although there are a few specialists in the Montreal area who deal with cultural/gender/race/class equity issues, the College context requires a unique approach to workshop development that needs further elaboration. In the Winter 2018 Safer Spaces Initiative, we were fortunate in obtaining the services of Jessica Bleuer (Cultural Equity Consultant), who was open to following the 4-tiered plan that we had formulated for the Dawson context. We strongly recommend a continued working relationship with Ms. Bleuer, and suggest that she be one of the resource people used for faculty training at key moments in the academic year (please see below).

****In collaboration with existing initiatives/training opportunities.****

Student-Peer-to-Peer Training (Bystander Intervention Training):

- Mental Health Awareness Week (Sept 30 – Oct.6th): Dawson Counselling Services, tbd
- Health & Nutrition Day (Oct. 2018): Julie Drolet and Student Health Promotion Team, information kiosk style

***The 2nd year Social Services students take a class about group dynamics are looking for opportunities to work with other students.

Formalized Training Opportunities for Faculty and Staff

- Ped Day: Consider engaging Jessica Bleuer, Cultural Equity Consultant for a specialized workshop on managing microaggressions (i.e. developing a toolkit for faculty and staff)
- Support Staff Day (as above)

Student, Staff and Faculty Training:

- As a part of Peace Week (Sept 13th – 21st): This would be a great opportunity to hear from keynotes on the theme of managing ‘Brave Spaces’. Again, it provides the opportunity for Staff and Students to work together and learn from each other’s experiences.

Further Work:

Gender neutral bathrooms – As a student research project?

It was suggested that research on the uses of the gender neutral bathrooms be undertaken. This research could be compared with the original intention of the bathroom and/or recommendations could be made (including expanding the gender neutral spaces to include a locker room).

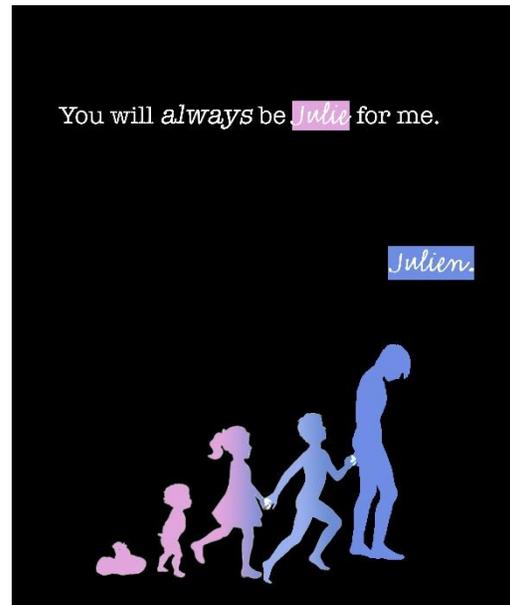
Conclusion

We have seen that students need our support in order to feel represented in the classrooms and at Dawson at large, and have heard that faculty are unsure how to do so. We have also heard that faculty and staff experience microaggressions in their offices and across the College. This project proposes to provide specialized training through student-led initiatives, and by teaming up with our local and educational partners in order to meet these needs.

In this time of the ‘Metoo Movement’, ‘TimesUp Movement’, the resources invested by the Québec government’s campaign to counter violence against women through the development of policies to ‘Stem Sexual Harassment’, Dawson’s own ‘Policy to Stem Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Abuse of Power’, it is time to expand the training offered to students, faculty and staff about managing the microaggressions that permeate our Colleges.

Appendix:

Phase 1: A sample of posters from the art exhibit and vernissage.



Phase 2:

Sarah Dayazada

Professor Nancy Rebelo

Research Methods 38

April 2018

Questionnaire

To begin, the purpose of the study is to be able to improve how to socially interact with each other to help students and teachers be more academically engaged and be able to achieve academic success. Also, the purpose is to find a way to reduce microaggressions in a school environment by implementing safer spaces.

Focus groups will be conducted to uncover the impact of microaggressions and how strategies for community-building and/or the concept of safer space can help improve social interaction and subsequent academic success. . It will help expand our source base and not rely on other researches. We want to collect our own data and give the interviewees a voice to tell their stories and observations on how Dawson College deals with microaggressions or other problems that students or any other faculty member could face. In fact, for the interview, we will talk to three groups of people that represent the school environment: the teachers, the students, and the staff.

Because telling stories about previous microaggressions could be often upsetting and uncomfortable, participation is completely free and voluntary. If the person feels uneasy and doesn't want to answer questions anymore, the interviewee is free to stop and leave the interview. During the procedure, the identity of the person will be completely anonymized. The hard copy

data will be kept to a person of trust and high authority and all other hard copies will be destroyed because the information will only be used for the research paper and Safer Space initiative.

The interview should last about 30 minutes to one hour depending on what the interviewees are saying and how long it takes for them to tell everything.

During the interview, we will explain generally the purpose of the project and the Safer Space Project in Dawson College. After that, we will start with the questions we prepared and, if necessary, we will ask follow-up questions to get more precisions on their answers.

To conclude, we would like to thank all participants because it will greatly help us make a difference and answer the questions related to the problem of microaggressions and the solutions to them.

Focus Group #1: Teachers

1. Tell me about a time in which due to racism, sexism, homophobia, or another form of oppression you did not feel comfortable or safe at Dawson. This could have happened in a classroom, a student group or somewhere else on campus.
2. Base on your experiences, what has been done at Dawson to make you feel comfortable and/or to handle incidents of faculty discomfort?
3. From your own perspective, how would you describe the environment at Dawson in

terms of Social Interactions?

4. Is there a way Dawson could improve in terms of creating a better working environment for teachers?
5. In your opinion, do you think that instances of microaggression on the part of students happen more at a certain time of the semester?
6. Would you consider Dawson College to be a safe and welcoming environment? If so, how and why?
7. Can you explain your reaction or how you dealt with the instance(s) of microaggressions?
8. From your own experience with your students, have you observed some struggles that students face?

Focus Group #2: Students

1. Tell me about a time in which due to racism, sexism, homophobia, or another form of oppression you did not feel comfortable or safe at Dawson. This could have happened in a classroom, a student group or somewhere else on campus.-How did Dawson deal with those events? Were they dealt properly?"
2. Can you explain your reaction or how you dealt with the instance(s) of microaggressions?
3. How do such experiences impact your ability to succeed in class or school?
4. What do you define as "microaggressions"?
5. What would be your reaction when you would see microaggression comments towards teachers in class or on campus?
6. In your opinion, is Dawson a safe space for students for all? If not, why?
7. How do Dawson clubs such as The Legacy Club (that supports the people of color

community) help fight against oppression?

8. From your own perspective, how would you describe the environment at Dawson in terms of Social Interactions?
9. What improvements should be made to teacher-students relationships in class or on campus?
10. Base on your experiences, what has been done at Dawson to make you feel comfortable and/or to handle incidents of discomfort?
11. In your opinion, do you think that instances of microaggression on the part of students happen more at a certain time of the semester?

Reflection on focus group #1

Thinking over my first focus group on my topic in Research Methods, I personally think it went very well because the teachers were able to maintain the conversation and share their stories without doubt and it made us at ease because we were really nervous and didn't think it would go so smoothly and fast because we didn't see the time pass.

A strength that we both had is how prepared we were and were able to find follow-up questions quite easily to understand clearly the statements made by the teachers and I was able to carefully listen to what the teachers had to say and grasp all the information needed. I think I did also a pretty good job at explaining what the project was about so the interviewees had a clear idea of what to expect and when they asked me a question related to the "brave spaces", I was able to clearly explain the concept mostly because I had read the article and knew my material.

However, it was a bit awkward at some point because we were waiting for the teacher to finish his/her thoughts but we also were wondering if another teacher would step in to talk about his/her story. Maybe, instead of jumping to the next question on the interview sheet, I should've

asked if anyone else had something to say so we would have a clear idea and not step into anyone's thoughts and smoothly go to the next question. Overall, I think we did a good job and earned all of the information we needed.

Reflection on focus group #2

Following yesterday's second focus group, I think it went better than the first time because, I guess, since I had already done one, I knew what to expect and how the ambiance in the room would be. In fact, I think students were participating even more than the teachers because I guess those microaggressions affect them more than they do on teachers or any other faculty member. Maybe their ease at speaking their mind helped me and my teammate be more comfortable and engage more in the conversation so instead of it to be a simple interview, it became more of a conversation between students who went through rough times.

I, personally, think that my performance was better than last time because I took note of the comments made by the teacher to improve myself and I was able to take off the awkwardness before asking the next question and making sure that everybody gave their opinion on the subject. I also think that I conducted the interview well and was able to think fast about some follow-up questions to understand better the situation. I was also able to cover for my teammate when he was in doubt on what to say or went blank during a certain time.

However, what I would have wanted to change, is one small thing. I remarked that I was the interviewer who was talking the whole time and my teammate didn't really talk. Perhaps he didn't seem to find the words so I tried to help him but maybe I stepped on his toes so I feel bad for that. On my defense, he seemed to not want to talk or didn't know how to grasp the situation while I knew what was going on and knew the material to present. Overall though, I think we did a very good job and we were able to gain all the information we needed to conduct a very good and professional study.

Phase 3: Forum Theatre scripts

SCENE 1: First Year Classroom, Dawson College

Actors

1. **Teacher:**
2. **Student 1 (Sam)** – Transitioning student, at the beginning of their gender transition journey, just recently starting to identify as male at school. Excellent student, kind, shy, worried about not being understood, being teased and bullied.
3. **Student 2 (John)** – Male Cisgender student Good student, popular, never thought much about gender.
4. **3-5 Cisgender Female Students** (these students play the role of extras)
5. **3-5 Cisgender Male Students** (these students play the role of extras)

Scenario Takes Place in During Class:

Teacher: Reminder everyone that your assignments are due on Friday. We will have a little bit of time at the end of class to answer any questions you still may have. Today we are going to start the class with some group work. Let's start by splitting the class in two how will we do this(pause) – okay let's keep it simple. Ladies on this side, Gentlemen on this side.

Students get up and start grouping.

Student 1 (Sam): hesitates, and decides to move towards the “guy side”.

Other students start teasing this student.

Student 2(John) (on guys side): Laughing Wrong side girlie!

All students laugh.

Teacher: Okay, okay, stop joking around. And Sam, get back back over there (points to female side).

Sam turns bright red, hesitates, and runs out of the class.

Definition Cisgender:

a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and assigned male at birth). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to “cis.”

<http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-lgbtq-term-definitions/>

SCENE 2: Third Year Classroom, After Class, Dawson College

Actors

1. **Cisgender Male Student** : Third year student, tall, has missed 40% of the classes, when he is in class he does not pay attention and goofos around with his friends disrupting many people in the class. Really funny.
2. **Cisgender Female Teacher**: Humanities teacher, has been teaching at Dawson for ten years, really loves teaching and works hard to help students understand the class material.

Scenario takes place after class:

Class is over, all students have left, the teacher is putting away her class materials. The male student approaches the teacher looking angry, he is carrying his last assignment and is unhappy with his grade. The teacher is sitting down and the male student leans into her.

Student: *Raises his voice.* Miss, this grade is really unfair. I feel like you don't like me. I want a re-grade!

Teacher: *(Clearly feeling uncomfortable, looking around to see if there is anyone else in the classroom, moves back a little bit)* What is it about your grade that you don't agree with? Have you had the chance to read the comments, I tried to give you some hints about the theories you need to understand better. I can go over these theories with you during my office hours.

Student: Your office hours! Listen *(leans into the teacher again)* if you don't give me an 80 on this assignment, I'm going to take you to grade review! *Storms out of the classroom.*

Scene 3 (2 Parts): Part 1: On the bus, Part 2: In a hallway at Dawson College

Actors

1. **Black Cisgender Female Dawson Student**, First Year, Science Student
2. **Black Cisgender Female Dawson Student**, First Year, Science Student
3. **White Male-Presenting 20 something** year old, not a Dawson student
4. **White Presenting Male Cis-Gendered** Dawson Student 1
5. **White Presenting Male Cis-Gendered** Dawson Student 2
6. **Latino Male Cisgender** Dawson Student 3

Part 1: On the bus (THIS SCENE SHOULD NOT BE ACTED OUT – IT IS THERE FOR BACKGROUND, SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE DAWSON SCENE, AND IT IS VERY VIOLENT SO IT SHOULD **ONLY** BE READ OUT).

The first Black Cis-Gendered Female Dawson student is on the bus on Saturday evening, going home after work. An older male 20 something year old starts smiling and winking at her. She ignores him and takes out a book from her bag.

White Male: Ah common, don't do that, I thought we could get to know each other.

Black Cis-Gendered Female pretends she does not hear him.

White Male: You could at least give me a smile, pretty girl like you.

Black Cis-Gendered Female: No (*visibly uncomfortable and angry*).

White Male: You don't have to be such a bitch! What a little "N word" bitch!

Part 2: In the Hallway at Dawson

Two Black female students walking to class. They pass by three male students who are joking around, friendly. They seem to playfully trying to get something from each other.

White student # 1: Ah common "N word", you promised me you would lend it to me.

White student # 2 and Latino student laughing.

This scenario is not unusual, it happens all the time.

Scene 4: In the Cafeteria at Dawson

Actors:

1. **Student 1:** Third year Dawson student. Popular, has lots of friends. Confident.
2. **Student 2:** Second year Dawson student. Has lots of good friends. Muslim.
3. **Student 3:** Second year Dawson student. Good group of friends.

3-5 Additional Students:

A group of friends are sitting together. The group is culturally diverse. One woman is visibly Muslim because of her hijab. She is sitting with her friends, but completing a homework assignment. Because she is not interacting with her friends it may look like she is sitting alone.

Student 1: (walking by the cafeteria table) I have two questions for you. Do you ever get hot wearing that head thing? And do you shower with your head thing?

Student 2: It's called a hijab. And no I don't shower with it. Do you shower with your clothing on?

Student 3 (Friend): Leave her alone.

Student 1: What I'm just asking a question. It's my freedom of speech to ask a question.

Student 3: No, it's a microaggression!

Student 1: Whatever, we learned about microaggressions in class. I think it's totally made up, and impinges on my freedom of speech. Muslims aren't oppressed anyway, there are tons of Muslims happily employed where I work.

Why do Muslim Women Wear the Hijab in Montreal? Here are a few reasons...

- Muslim women choose to wear the hijab or other coverings for a variety of reasons.
- There are many misconceptions about women who wear the hijab. And unfortunately there have been many cases of verbal and physical assault of women wearing the hijab in Montreal.
- Some women wear the hijab for religious reasons, fulfilling G-d's commandment for modesty. For these women, wearing hijab is a personal choice that is made after puberty and is intended to reflect one's personal devotion to God.
- Other Muslim women do not perceive the hijab to be obligatory to their faith and they wear it as a means of visibly expressing their Muslim identity (Haddad, et al, 2006). Since 9/11, the hijab is perceived to be synonymous with Islam. Some Muslim women choose to appropriate this stereotype and wear the hijab to declare their Islamic identity and provide witness of their faith.
- Many women who wear the hijab also consider themselves feminists. **Retrieved from <http://arabsinamerica.unc.edu/identity/veiling/hijab/>**

Definition of Microaggressions:

- Microaggressions are defined as:

“Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group” (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

Forum Theatre Participants' Feedback:

Safer Spaces Suggestions

1. Hire people who can act as social workers to hear complaints from anyone who is targeted by microaggressions who are not only white, cis-gendered males: hire people who look like those who are targeted.
2. Establish restorative justice practices so that the solutions to these problems result in personal individual change; we now only have punitive justice which excludes/ends conversations and opportunities for learning.
3. Implement microaggressions into the anti-bullying policy.
4. I think that workshops such as this one educate people about the power of microaggressions. Everyone should take part of one to understand the impact they had.
5. Put it into the curriculum for college students to be more understanding.
6. Mediation Services
7. Educational posters
8. Inclusion of statement in ISEP about what is a microaggression or what you can do if you experience this at Dawson
9. More counseling at Dawson College
10. Teacher training
11. How can they happen less
12. Have the teachers take an intervention class on how to deal with microaggressions and educate them on what they are
13. Creating a safe space (class norms) and a safe room with interventionist/counsellors
14. People need to speak up when they see microaggressions and make a point in, especially in classrooms. There should be a system in place where people who have several violations for this sort of problematic behaviours will get a written warning and eventually get kicked out of school
15. The college needs to follow through with the gender neutral washrooms and renovate the locker rooms to create the same opportunities. More gender neutral washrooms would also be beneficial
16. The development of an anonymous reporting system
17. To avoid gender/sexuality microaggressions: divide the classes by alphabetical order (ex: a to m, n to z) instead of boys and girls
Include an female/male/other option on surveys/forms
18. Train the teachers around microaggressions and safer spaces by Rushdia Mehreen, Facilitator, New School rules, policies, programs
19. Compulsory workshops for all students around anti-oppressions by Rushdia Mehreen, Facilitator, New School rules, policies, programs
20. Anti-oppression guidelines in all classrooms and public spaces by Rushdia Mehreen, Facilitator, New School rules, policies, programs
21. Adding "identified gender" in student profiles
22. Faculty being more accepting and open to student suggestions and concerns
23. Faculty avoiding the gender binary
24. Have people mind their own business
25. Teacher should do their best to ensure the comfortability of the students

26. Teachers and kids should be more understanding of their peers
27. People need to be more aware of social programs that can help them and the people running these programs should go in each classroom and talk to everyone to make sure everyone is aware
28. I would put emphasis on educating people about microaggressions and making them intolerated in classrooms so a teacher can throw out a student of a classroom
29. It should be mandatory for a student to know what examples of microaggression and that they aren't tolerated
30. Training of staff and administration
31. Policy against microaggression
32. Physical safer spaces to share experiences
33. Teachers need support when they encounter unsafe situations with students
34. I think doing workshops or explain about other peoples' cultures and teach students how to be respectful
35. Generalization is not a good thing to do in race, culture, country, and ethnicity
36. A group of information sessions for all new people, staff and students, to inform them about the variety of students as well as microaggressions that can take place, and how to avoid them/who can help/etc.
37. They could include more ethnicities aspect in their teaching or something
38. Teachers do not address students by him or her
39. Ban the n-word from being said
40. No longer have student pictures on student ID
41. Actual trained security
42. To prevent and minimize the occurrence of microaggressions, the most important element that should be improved is communication between cultural groups, people with different sexual orientations, etc. This would make us understand the values and thoughts of people that surround us which would lead to acceptance of the others.
43. Awareness of microaggressions
44. A safe space for counselling
45. Interactive activities
46. Change the existing DSU to represent people from all the programs
47. Workshops and speakers
48. Education: use incidents as teaching opportunities
49. Raising awareness
50. Accessible resources: counselling is too hard to access
51. N-word: social service has a portion of the grade goes towards professional comportment, this is how people carry themselves
52. A program or board that could evaluate these real-life situations and help create advertisements and ways to teach and prevent potential future microaggressions
53. Student union banding with social service program and/or CTRL to have microaggression workshops around the school once a semester
54. Having a few "what would you do?" type situations around the school
55. Microaggressions office
56. Report issues and microaggressions that affected them personally to the school that the Dean can deal with, regardless of tenure
57. Anti-discriminatory policies for teachers and students

58. Anonymous reports of things like “I was misgendered in this class” and interventions made by administration regarding racism, sexism, transphobia, etc. Plus training for teachers and administration
59. Make safer spaces a permanent initiative and to this theatre exercise every year with different students and even faculty (ped day?). Well done!
60. Rules to forbid the use of slurs or there will be punishments (suspension, expulsion)
61. Programs that educate on minorities and those who need a voice for their thoughts/experiences
62. Make it mandatory for everyone to have at least one class on microaggressions
63. Teachers should be obligated to be more aware of microaggressions towards minorities in order to serve as dependable allies
64. If you don’t have anything nice to say, keep it to yourself. Curiosity is fine, but don’t ask about something you want to mock
65. Make everyone choose a number from x-x and split the class with odd and even numbers
66. Dawson could have a more obtainable counsellor, as I have no idea who to reach. We could also post an article somewhere explaining what microaggressions are
67. Have teachers only use gender fluid terms/don’t refer to students generally by male/female
68. Classes on microaggressions, more awareness on microaggressions
69. They should make more meetings/activities/programs like the one we just did because it makes us realize that there are other people out there who are very different from us and we should respect that and acknowledge that
70. There should be more events like the one we had today
71. More gender neutral washrooms
72. General courses like humanities for discussions on systemic racism, homophobia, etc.
73. Human rights for people who are minorities against microaggressions
74. Gender free bathrooms
75. New textbooks without the gender binary
76. Having a bathroom not gender generalized
77. Having teachers have a meet up every week to establish new rules about microaggressions
78. Make people aware every week that clubs are available for them and not generalize the club for who. The club is for a club of microaggressions and an event 1x a week for it
79. More bathrooms that are not gender specified because there are not many of them in the school, at least 1 on each floor
80. Microaggression course (mandatory course)
81. Create group of support for “minorities” (in this case people that are not cisgendered) so they can have support and share their experiences with people that feel the same way
82. Teach people about the strength and history of the n-word
83. Make teachers ask students what they identify as
84. People can be more accepting: we should have more classes about different cultures and religions so people will have more knowledge. With knowledge comes power and this will be the power needed to cause a change
85. Make it a rule to forbid the n-word in Dawson building
86. When microaggressions occur at Dawson, the victim should be able to go to a center where they can talk about it. It should be confidential. The person that is doing the harm

to the victim should be spoken to and educated as to why what they said was not ok and should face consequences. Victims should maybe also share their experiences in group sessions so that they know they're not alone

87. For girls/boys separation: mandatory formation for professors, in evaluation (students of professors) add a section about things like this

Exploring How Microaggressions Affect Student's College Experiences

Alexandra Noseworthy Couture, Aisha Chaudhry, Cristin Bleau, Cynthia Florestal, Hakeem

Samu, Jadeylin Guerra-Aizpurua, Megan Huff, Portela Morales, Samantha Costello, Tony

Martelli, Valentina Cano-Lopez

Dawson College

Author Note

First paragraph: Complete departmental and institutional affiliation

Second paragraph: Changes in affiliation (if any)

Third paragraph: Acknowledgments, funding sources, special circumstances

Fourth paragraph: Contact information (mailing address and e-mail)

Table of Contents

I.	Abstract.....	3
II.	Introduction.....	3
	A. Literature Review.....	4
III.	Methods.....	6
	A. Type of Research.....	6
	B. Participants.....	6
	C. Measures.....	7
	D. Procedures.....	7
	E. Validity and Reliability.....	8
IV.	Results.....	10
V.	Discussion.....	13
	A. Limitations.....	14
	B. Implications for Future Research.....	16
VI.	References.....	18
VII.	Appendix.....	20

Abstract

This research study aimed to explore students' experiences of microaggressions at Dawson College. That looked into who experiences microaggressions, what the emotional effects of them are, where they take place, whether individuals intervene, when they take place and how individuals cope. Students were surveyed at Dawson College by a convenience sample (n=4111) using a nineteen-question survey distributed on Omnivox. This data was used to discover which factors made people more likely to experience microaggressions. Of the Dawson students who completed the survey, 39.4% reported that they experience microaggressions. The study found that microaggressions based on culture were the most common microaggressions perpetuated at Dawson College, followed by microaggressions based on race. It was found that approximately one third of those who report that they do not experience microaggressions also reported that they intervene when they witness microaggressions. This research should be followed by more longitudinal studies and by studies which provide further education on microaggressions.

Keywords: Microaggressions, microinsults, College students, college experience

Introduction

Microaggressions are defined as “comments or actions that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudice attitude towards a member of a marginalized group” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). This study aims to better understand the issue of microaggressions taking place at Dawson College. Studies have shown that microaggressions are a problem affecting thousands of people across many marginalized groups. Many of the previous studies on this topic have been small qualitative studies and have focused on very specific populations. Many of them have also been American. This study aimed to fill in some of these gaps by addressing Canadian experiences and gathering data about a variety of microaggressions against different populations. In one study 70% of youth agreed that weight-based bullying (which could consist of microaggressions) was very common. Another study involving students with physical disabilities found that 9% of participants felt unsafe in schools due to bullying.

Qualitative research shows that multiple themes are identified across the marginalized groups. Some common themes included some form of invalidation, the faulty perception of being dangerous or helpless, being excluded from social circles and being seen as less intelligent or specifically intelligent in stereotypical domains. Some of the studies looked at how people intervened in certain situations. One study showed that women were more likely to intervene when they know someone in the situation and men were more likely to intervene when they do not know anyone in the situation.

Our research study was a mixed methods and exploratory one. It involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and at the same time trying to discover if there are any new types of microaggressions in this school. We started with one research question: How do Dawson College student experience microaggressions? From there we hypothesized that if we can identify

who is being targeted by microaggressions the most, then we can implement policies to prevent them from happening again. The importance of this research is it allows us to understand how Dawson students deal with microaggressions on a daily basis, so the policies that we implement in the future are accurate enough to aid the marginalized groups within the school.

Literature Review

Microaggressions are a form of discrimination that have targeted people in marginalized groups. They affect multiple groups every day and many of the people that perpetrate microaggressions are not aware they are doing it. One study performed on 2866 people stated that being overweight was one of the common reason why they were being bullied and intimidated (Puhl, Latner, O'Brien, Luedicke, Forhan and Danielsdottir, 2015). With microaggressions overlapping with bullying, it is important to note that 70% of that population felt bullying was a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Even though people suffering with mental illnesses have accommodations in society they are still a marginalized group. A New York study shows that people with mental illnesses face microaggressions as well as other minorities (Gonzales, Davidoff, Nadal, Yanos, P. T. 2015).

This raises an important question before conducting the research. What is a microaggressions and its other forms such as microinsults and racial microaggressions? In the research already done on the topic what major themes do they all have in common? A lot of the previous research into microaggression share the same definition which is a brief and commonplace verbal, behavioural or environmental indignity that communicates a negative insult to people of colour (Spanierman, Tafarodi 2014; Klein, Clark, Spanierman, Poolokasingham, Isaac 2014; Blume, Lovato, Denny, Thyken 2012; Bailey 2016; Henfield 2011; Puhl et al. 2015; Gonzales et al. 2015; Dessel, Goodman, Woodford 2016). The themes present in the previous research would be different depending on the racial or marginalized group being studied. For example, the themes on the study pertaining to black people were the “assumption of deviance” and “assumed universality of black American experience” (Henfield 2011) In the study pertaining to the south Asian community the themes were “assumption of ties to terrorism” and “notion that being brown is a liability” (Spanierman, Kleinman, Houshmand, Poolokasingham 2014) Themes on this topic within the LGBT community discussed harassment and LGBT discrimination (Dessel, Goodman, Woodford 2016)

There are many limitations within the current research on microaggressions. Within most of the exploratory studies, researchers found the sample sizes were very small, rarely surpassing one hundred participants. Most of the studies involving a small population were exploring the idea of whether or not microaggressions affected a certain group, with little to no mention on coping mechanisms or where they happen most. Of the research involving larger sample sizes, the main focus was typically on perpetrator intervention and being a bystander instead of whether microaggressions affect them. Research into microaggressions within marginalized groups was mostly based in the United States with only some research done in Canada. The gaps in the previous research helped us decide the focus of our study.

Methods

Type of Research

The type of research that was used for the microaggression research survey is both mixed methods and exploratory. The researchers chose the exploratory method in order to understand the

point of view of the participants that experience microaggressions and uncover when, where, and why they occur at Dawson College. The exploratory method allows the researchers to evaluate the accuracy of the policies that are implemented at Dawson College. This method also allow the participants to anonymously share the microaggression(s) that they have experienced.

Participants

This consultation was conducted via Omnivox from March 16, 2018 at 14:00 until April 6, 2018 at 17:00. Four thousand one hundred and eleven (n= 4111) respondents participated. The survey was open to all Dawson College which consists of 10,986 students, enrolled in both day and continuing education programs. The survey was completed anonymously to protect the identity of participants. Half of the respondents were self identifying females between the ages of 18 and 21. Most of these students were not part of the TSLGBTQIA+ community. The sample size was not representative of the entire population because more than half of the students did not answer.

Measures

For this research, the type of sampling that was used was convenience. A survey was accessible to all Dawson College students through Omnivox. The hypothesis for this research is that if we can identify who is being targeted by microaggressions the most then, we can implement policies to prevent them from happening again. In this research, the independent variable was microaggressions and the dependent variables were policy implementation and prevention of microaggressions. The variables in this survey were controlled by making the survey accessible to only Dawson College students, through Omnivox and for a limited period of time (from March 16th to April 6th, 2018).

Procedures

In order to collect as much data as possible from all of the students at Dawson College, the researchers created an anonymous online survey. The survey was accessible through the Omnivox Dawson Portal accessible to all students in the college including, Day Division students and Continuing Education students from March 16, 2018, to April 6, 2018. Before answering the survey, the students were provided with a consent form. They were informed that they were able to withdraw from the study and had the right to ask any questions they may have about the survey. The survey was anonymous and there was no way for the researchers to identify the participant. The survey also included resources in case participants felt distressed. On April 4, 2018, posters were placed around the college to promote the survey and the number of participants increased by 381.

Validity and Reliability

The methodology and data team brainstormed potential questions making sure to apply the five W's (who, what, when, where and why) to how microaggressions happen. The methodology team then verified that the questions were specific and understandable to all students. It was also important to the methodology team to build trust with the participants by asking questions about their demographics and then proceeding to the critical questions.

The questions in the survey were based on previous studies. The first couple questions of the research were based on the participants' demographics to identify their age, gender, sexual orientation and other. The researchers tried to cover as many demographic options as possible to help identify who is being targeted at Dawson College. Students were asked simple and logical questions. Next to the answers available, the researchers elaborated on the term by giving examples to help the students answer. The researchers took into consideration that the questions must be understandable and clear, especially as Quebec is the only province that has a CEGEP education in which most of the students that attend the college recently graduated from high school at the age of 16. Researchers also took into consideration that Dawson College is one of the largest anglophone CEGEPs in the province and is located in downtown area of the second largest city in Canada (Statistic Canada, 2018).

Certain questions contained measurement scales that gave a general idea of what the researchers expected (e.g. "Never (0 times), Rarely (once per month), Sometimes (2-3 per month), Often (2 or + per week) and Always"). The types of measurement that were used are: nominal, as participants had the option to answer if they experience and/or witness microaggression or not, ordinal, as participants were asked how often they experience or witness microaggression and ratio such as the age range of participants or the timeframe within microaggressions happen the most. Also, the term "microaggression" was fully explained by a standardized definition which made it understandable to participants. The types of microaggression were clearly laid out and were easy to choose from.

The criterion validity of this research tried to measure the outcome. It is to be taken into consideration that because this is an exploratory research, it does not predict how microaggression manifests itself at Dawson College. The research survey explores the types of microaggression that students experience and how they manifest. It also explores who intervenes and when. It is to be noted that the survey may not accurately measure microaggressions as it does not define and explain in depth the different types of microaggressions.

The research survey that was done at Dawson College on microaggressions could be done in other CEGEPs. The survey questions could be modified if they are used in other schools because there is no standardized form. The survey has concurrent validity because questions that were asked are similar to those in other studies within the same topic.

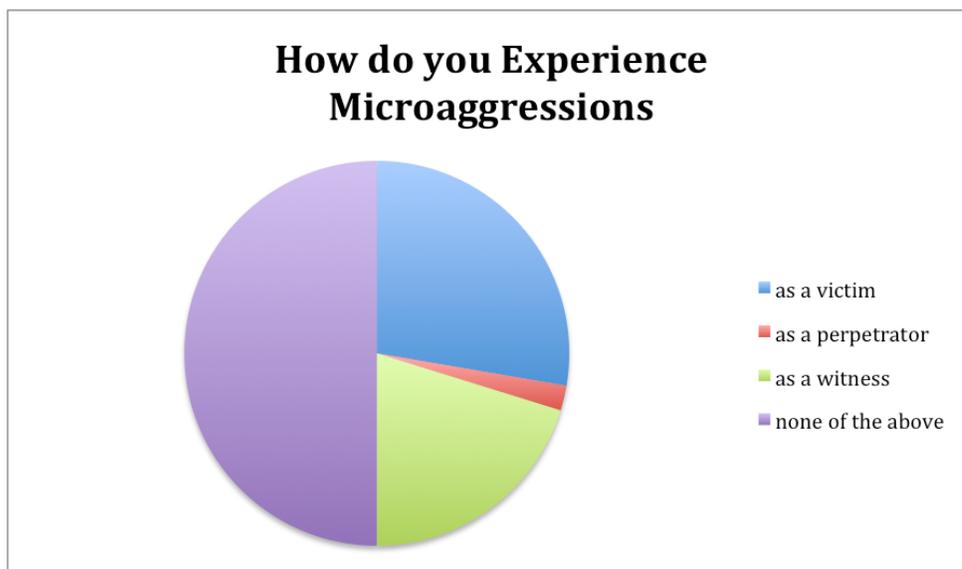
In terms of construct validity, the survey explored many aspects that surround microaggressions. The researchers explored how microaggressions affect the Dawson students and who is most affected. They also looked at how they cope when they are victims of microaggressions and if they witness them if they intervene or not and if they do how often. The research was based on previous research on microaggressions.

The research survey is replicable in different colleges or university throughout Canada to explore how other students experience microaggressions in a post-secondary education. Although, the answers may vary depending on the location of the school and the level of education of the students. Considering that Dawson College is an anglophone CEGEP in Quebec, if this survey were to be reproduced in francophone CEGEPs or universities, there is a possibility of a language barrier as the terms used in this research are fairly new to the English dictionary.

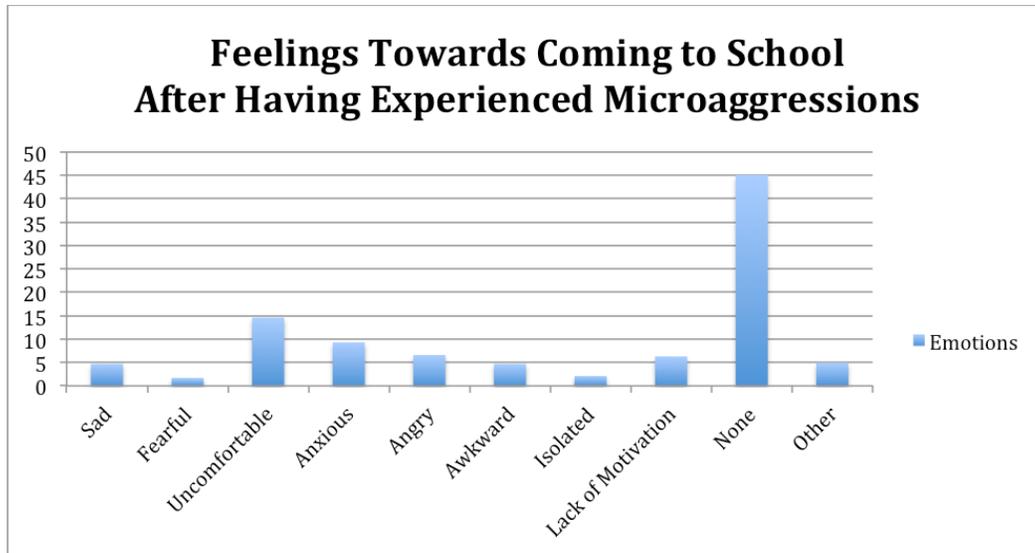
Results

The results show links between student's identity and types of microaggressions they experience in a school setting. The study had a total of 4,111 participants, 3,081 of which completed the survey. Only those who completed the study were used in the findings. The majority

(64.9%), of the individuals who completed the survey were between the ages of 18-21 years old. Another significant population that participated in the study were people who identified as females (64.4% of respondents). Of the students who participated in the study 18.7% identified as being part of the TSLGBTQIA+ community. A significant result showed that 30% of the students who participated in the study consider themselves to be visible minorities and 28.2% considered themselves to be invisible minorities. Of the participants that consider themselves a visible minority, 50.6% answered that it was based on their skin colour. Of those who consider themselves a invisible minority, 51.4% reported having a mental illness, such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders. Microaggressions appear to be a common occurrence for students, as 39.4% of the student in the study reported having experienced microaggressions. Of the students who experience microaggressions 884 (27.7%) experience them as a victim and 68 (2.1%) reported being perpetrators.



When participants were asked, “Do you intervene when you witness microaggressions?”, 53.4% reported that they do intervene. The participants reported having multiple negative feelings towards coming to school if they experience microaggressions. This qualitative data showed the highest reported feelings being: uncomfortable (14.6%), anxious (9.3%), and angry (6.6%) about coming to school. In addition, 45.1% stated that they experience none of the emotions listed towards coming to school. When asked what types of microaggressions they face the majority (68%) reported experiencing microinsults. In addition, 23.9% of the participants reported experiencing both microinsults and microinvalidations.



When analyzing the qualitative data collected the most popular coping skills for dealing with microaggressions were family and friend support and creative outlets. The majority (54.3%) of participants reported relying on family and friend support to deal with their microaggressions at one point in time. Creative outlets such as reading and arts were used at least once per month (52.5%) by victims of microaggressions. Less than one fifth (19.8%) seek counselling or professional help when they experience microaggressions. The cafeteria and the classrooms in the school were reported to be the areas that individual's experience microaggressions the most.

The quantitative results presented two major themes of microaggressions experienced by students. The first theme is racial microaggressions and the second is cultural microaggressions. We cross referenced data from the results in order to find significant links to show a better understanding of who is experiencing the most microaggressions. The participants that reported having experienced racial microaggressions were 40.9% of respondents. This is the most prominent type of microaggressions experienced based on the results from the students. Our study results showed that 6.3% of males experienced microaggressions based on their skin colour. Comparing the results to females, 25% were females that experienced microaggressions based on their skin colour. Of individuals that experience microaggressions based on their culture, 64.5% are from the ages of 18-21. The percentage of respondents who experienced microaggressions based on their culture is 40.1%. The data shows strong significant links to individuals having experienced microaggressions based primarily on their race and cultural identity.

Discussion

The current study extends microaggression research by analyzing the answers from Dawson College students in relation to who experiences microaggressions and how they play a part in student life. These findings suggest that Dawson College needs policies that will both recognize and increase awareness of microaggressions. This means trainings and workshops for both staff and students that will be available to everyone at Dawson College to identify and intervene when microaggressions do occur. When looking at the number of people who said they did not experience microaggressions in this survey, 645 students out of 1598 (40.36%) said that they intervene when one occurs. From this it can be considered that many of the students who

witness microaggressions do not know what one looks like or how to intervene when one happens, either for themselves or their fellow students. Furthermore it was found in research, around the correlation between intervening and bystanding, that passive bystanding is related to the sense of responsibility to intervene (Doramajian & Bukowski 2015). This indicates that if students learn what a microaggression looks like, how it affects people, and how to intervene when one happens they may develop the responsibility to intervene due to moral implications of being aware of the impacts of certain behaviours. Previously, it was stated in the results that students at Dawson College reported negative feelings towards coming to school due to microaggressions. If students who do experience microaggressions are expected to intervene every time a microaggression happens to them, their student life may be negatively impacted. Interesting enough there were 68 students who self-reported that they perpetrate microaggressions, when cross-referencing data it was found that 54 of these students have also experienced microaggressions (68.42%). From this it can be inferred that experiences of microaggressions or bullying may cause individuals to copy the behaviour done to them.

Montreal has a large TSLGBTQIA+ community. Despite this, the survey showed that many individuals felt the need to make a joke out of the question asking for their gender. Out of the 38 students who responded with “other” as their gender identity, meaning they did not identify with any of the genders provided, 26 were invalid, meaning their answer was not serious or insulted the idea of gender and sexuality. Yet out of all of the microaggressions that students said they experience and are the most prominent, racial and cultural were among the highest with gender identity and sexuality coming after. This was expected as Montreal is a very multicultural city. Dawson College is located downtown Montreal, with both French and English speakers studying at the college, due to this the college is a likely place for microaggressions to occur. Although the city is known for its diversity, it is still in North America and has been ingrained with the dominant white Western values and norms.

Limitations

Even though the research conducted gave a wide variety of significant results there were certain limitations to this research. For instance, it seemed like in several questions more than 50% of students would answer never, no, other, etc. which decreases the accuracy and narrows down the results obtained. For the category “other” in certain questions of the survey many students did not take it seriously and would put insignificant/irrelevant responses which invalidates certain results. The invalid findings procured may result from students who responded to the survey just to get over with it or who were not being fully honest when answering the questions. Another problematic element was how long students were given to answer the survey before it was not accessible anymore on Omnivox. The survey was first available on Omnivox during the week of spring break, meaning that not all students had the chance to access it right away compared to if it had been released during a regular school week.

Dawson College students were only given three weeks to complete this survey which is not enough time given that during the day itself there are approximately 10,000 students in the building. Another factor that necessitated giving more time for students to respond the survey is that for the majority the concept of microaggressions is probably unfamiliar or new to them. When individuals are not fully aware about a topic in general, this may interest them less or cause them to not take the matters as seriously. Another issue arose when students responded “no” and they were still given the option to answer the following question which was only supposed to correspond to the ones who had checked the “yes” box. For example, 46.6% of students responded

they do not intervene whenever they witness microaggressions, yet for the second part of this question, 30% of students responded that they never intervene. Respondents were not allowed to check multiple answers which gave less space to get accurate and specific answers. The way the survey was created it had a major default since the student did not have to respond to all the questions in order to submit the survey. This is problematic because the results are less accurate due to the number of students who did not complete the survey.

A component that would make it difficult to replicate this specific study would be the translation for non-English-speaking CEGEPs. There is no guarantee that some essential key words of the research such as microinsults can be translated in another language without differing its meaning. This becomes challenging because the meaning of the words can change from a language to another which can end up transforming the original survey to something quite different.

Finally, the posters and flyers that were made to post around the school promoting students to go respond to the survey did not get approved right away since they had the initial ending date of the questionnaire on them which was April 4th 2018. The date got moved afterwards to April 6, 2018, instead since the posters and flyers could have not been hung around the college until they were approved. This created a delay in being able to hang the posters and flyers around the building and increasing the chances of having fewer students responding to the survey.

Implications for Future Research

Generally speaking, microaggressions is a newer concept that is starting to be established at Dawson College, but still remains unfamiliar to many students. The study demonstrates that there is a smaller percentage of students who experience microaggressions than what was predicted. Students who are members of ethnic, cultural or racial groups can benefit from this research study since they were shown to be the most affected by microaggressions. This research may benefit professional workers such as therapists, counsellors, psychologists and social workers because this gives them a broader idea of how microaggressions has an impact on certain groups of people and what makes it that way. This gives them a clearer understanding on strategies that they can offer to clients that are most vulnerable to experiencing a microaggression and be specific case-by-case. Coping mechanisms was an essential component in the study which can help another individual find their own way of coping if they are struggling with microaggressions and do not know how to deal with it.

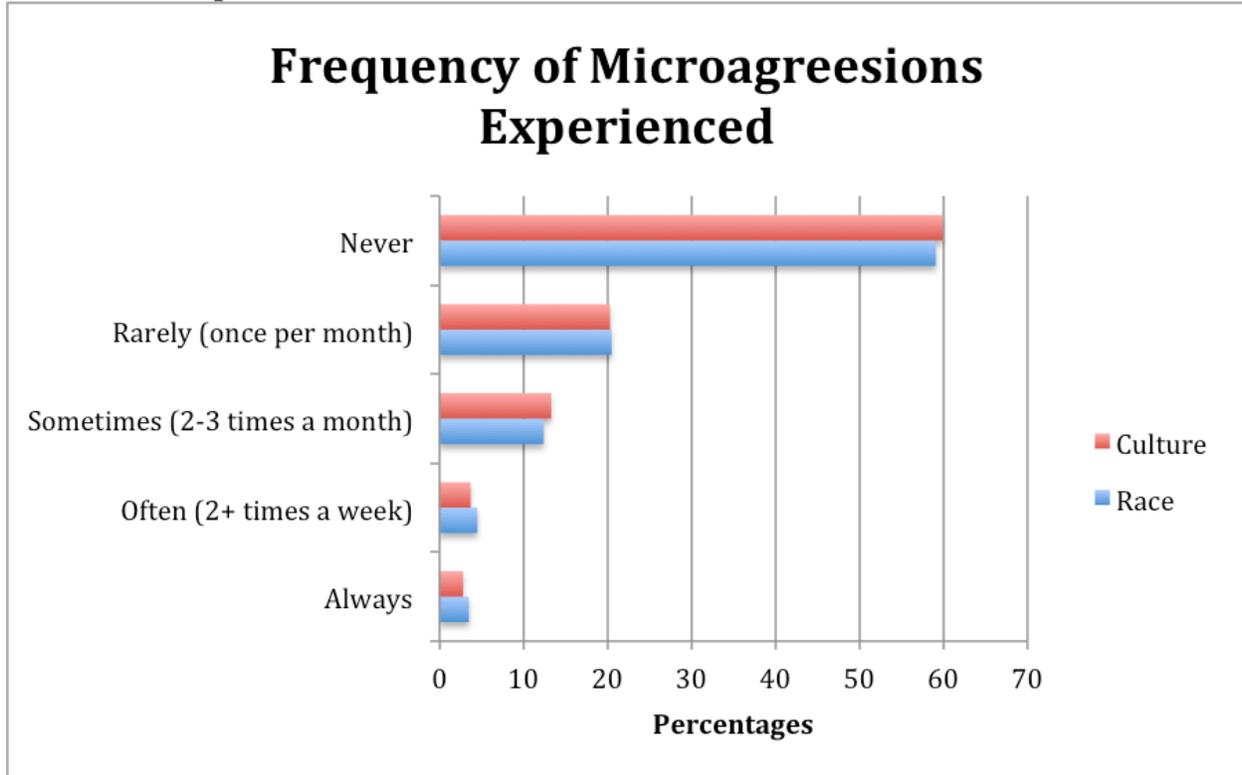
Before conducting a research study, it would be best for the respondents/students to have more knowledge on the topics related to the survey, in this case microaggressions. This ends up creating some meaning or understanding related to the survey they are responding. Then, instead of giving students a time period of 3 weeks to fill out the survey, the time lapse should be extended for instance to 2 months instead. This gives more time for students to respond to it truthfully, learn more about the topic which increases the chances of getting more accurate results and also there would be an increasing number of respondents. The choice of words in this survey would need to change in order to make it more adaptable to colleges the dominant language is not English. Lastly, it would be important to review that all the questions matches with the answers displayed. For example, if there is a yes or no question and the following question relates to the yes then there should not be “never” as an option choice. This creates more accurate and concise results plus it makes it less confusing for the researchers of the study when compiling the data and findings.

References

- Clark, D. A., Kleiman, S., Spanierman, L. B., Isaac, P., & Poolokasingham, G. (2014). 'Do you live in a teepee?' Aboriginal students' experiences with racial microaggressions in Canada. *Journal Of Diversity In Higher Education*, 7(2), 112-125. doi:10.1037/a0036573
- Dawson College. (2017). 2016-2017 Annual Report. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/dawsoncollegeqcca/docs/2016_2017_annual_report_e/4
- Dessel, A. B., Goodman, K. D., & Woodford, M.R. (2016). LGBT Discrimination on Campus and Heterosexual Bystanders: Understanding Intentions to Intervene. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 10(2), 101-116.
- Doramajian, Caroline & Bukowski, William. (2015). A Longitudinal Study of the Associations Between Moral Disengagement and Active Defending Versus Passive Bystanding During Bullying Situations. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*. 61. 144-172. 10.13110/merrpalmquar1982.61.1.0144.
- Gonzales, L., Davidoff, K. C., Nadal, K. L., & Yanos, P. T. (2015). Microaggressions experienced by persons with mental illnesses: An exploratory study. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 38(3), 234-241. doi:10.1037/prj0000096
- Henfield, M. S. (2011). Black Male Adolescents Navigating Microaggressions in a Traditionally White Middle School: A Qualitative study. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 141-155.
- Małgorzata Gil, J. d. (2010). Students with Disabilities in Mainstream Schools: District Level Perspectives on Anti-Bullying Policy and Practice within Schools in Alberta. *International Journal of Special Education*, 148-161.
- Microaggression. (2018, April, 3). In *Merriam-Webster Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microaggression>
- Poolokasingham, G., Spanierman, L. B., Kleiman, S., & Houshmand, S. (2014). 'Fresh off the boat?' racial microaggressions that target South Asian Canadian students. *Journal Of Diversity In Higher Education*, 7(3), 194-210. doi:10.1037/a0037285
- R. M. Puhl, J. D. (2015). Cross-national perspectives about weight-based bullying in youth: nature, extent and remedies. *World Obesity. Pediatric Obesity*, 241-250.
- Ryan M. Balagna, E. L. (2013, November 2). School Experiences of Early Adolescent Latinos/as at Risk for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. *School Psychology Quarterly*, pp. 101-121
- Shahzad, F. (2014). The Discourse of Fear: Effects of the War on Terror on Canadian University Students. *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 44(4), 467-482. doi:10.1080/02722011.2014.976232
- Statistics Canada. (2018). Population of census metropolitan areas. Retrieved from: Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/demo05a-eng.htm>

Appendix

Additional Graphs



Copy of the Survey

Demographics

What is your age?

17 and younger

18-21

22-25

26-29

29 and older

Which gender identity do you most identify with?

Female

Male

Transgender female

Transgender male

Non-conforming

Gender fluid

Prefer not to answer

Other

Do you consider yourself to be a part of the *TSLGBTQIA+ community? *Two-spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, other.

Yes

No

Do you consider yourself a visible minority?

Yes

No

If yes, check the boxes that apply to you.

Physical disability (blind, epilepsy, sleeping disorder, lack of mobility, etc..)

Physical appearance (height, weight, age, body art, clothing, hair, acne, etc..)

Based on your skin color

Other

Do you consider yourself an invisible minority (people whose differences from societal "norm" are not visible)?

Yes

No

If yes, check the box that applies to you.

Mental illness (examples: anxiety, depression, eating disorder, etc)

Learning disability (Readings, Writing, Concentration, memory, visual)

Your given name

Addictions (examples: Gaming, Gambling, internet, alcohol, drugs, etc.)

Other

Different experiences of microaggressions.

Have you personally experienced microaggressions?

(Defined as as "a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2018).

Yes

No

How do you experience microaggressions?

As a victim

As a perpetrator (either intentionally or unintentionally)

As a witness

None of the above, I do not experience micro aggression

What kind of microaggressions have you experienced and how often?

Never (0 times)

Rarely (once per month)

Sometimes (2-3 per month)

Often (2 or + per week)

Always

1 Race

2 Culture

3 Disabilities

4 Ethnicity

5 Gender Identity

6 Religion

7 Sexual orientation

Based on your perceived appearance, do you experience microaggressions?

Yes

No

Do you intervene when you witness microaggression?

Yes

No

If yes, how often?

Always

Usually
About half of the time
Seldom
Never

If you experience microaggressions at school, how do you feel about coming to school?

Sad
Fearful
Anxious
Uncomfortable
Angry
Awkward
Isolation
Lack of motivation
None
Other

What types of microaggressions have you experienced?

Microinsults (Verbal, nonverbal, communications that are insensitive to a person`s identity or heritage)

Microinvalidation (the negative exclusion of a person of color)

Both

If you use a coping mechanism which one do you use and how often?

Never (0 times) Rarely (once per month) Sometimes (2-3 per month)
Often (2 or + per week) Always

- 1 Use of alcohol/drugs
- 2 Physical activities (sports, walking, hiking, etc)
- 3 Creatives (writing, music, reading, art, other)
- 4 Counselling
- 5 Family/friends support
- 6 Use of violence (physical or mental)
- 7 Faith base support
- 8 Isolation
- 9 Dropping classes/ changing programs
- 10 Other

Where and when microaggressions occur

Where do they happen and how often?

Never Rarely (once per month) Sometimes (2-3 per month) Often (2 or +
per week) Always

- 1 Classroom
- 2 Library
- 3 Cafeteria (Conrod's, Oliver's, Upper Atrium Cafeteria & 3rd floor Cafeteria)
- 4 Elevators/ Escalators/ Stairs
- 5 Washrooms
- 6 Hallways
- 7 Social clubs
- 8 Computer labs
- 9 Rooms dedicated to specific programs

10 Lockers

11 P.A.R.C. (The Gym)

When do they happen in class?

Oral presentations

Class discussions

Group work

Online class forums

When do macroaggressions happen the most often during the semester?

Beginning of the semester (Week 1 to 4)

Middle of the semester (Week 5 to 10)

End of the semester (Week 11 to 15)

All semester

A Study of Microaggressions Experienced by Dawson Staff and Faculty

Written By: Maya Allan, Devorah-Leah Amar, Marine Forget, Russell Hartt, Stephen Huet ,
Chassidy Jobba, Yobini Krishnar, Caitlin Marchand, Claudio José Matamoros Morale,
Kristel Pascual & Caterina Saletnig

Dawson College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Abstract.....#	3
II.	Introduction#4
	A. Type of research, hypothesis, research questions.....#4	
	B. Literature Review.....#5	
III.	Methodology.....	#7
	A. Type of research.....#7	
	B. Participants.....	#7
	C. Measures and variables.....#8	
	D. Procedures, Reliability & Validity.....#10	
	E. Recruitment.....#	11
	F. Data entry.....#12	

IV.	Results.....#	
		13
V.	Discussion.....#15	
	A. Summary	of
	findings.....#16	
	B. Weaknesses and limitations of the research	
	study.....#18	
VI.	References.....#	
		23
VII.	Appendices.....#	
		25
	A. Data Graphs.....#25	
	B. REB Application and Survey.....#28	
	C. Consent email.....#39	

Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory study is to gain a better understanding of the presence and effects of microaggressions among faculty and staff members at Dawson College and how they address them. Qualitative and Quantitative (mixed) methods were used to create an anonymous online survey in order to measure the following variables: personal experiences of microaggressions; the ability to recognize microaggressions; how they react to them; and what action do they take. The total number of participants that responded fully and partially to the survey is (n=192). Surprisingly 84.5% identified as a non-visible minority, 39.7% ignored the microaggressions, 37.2% confronted the individuals and 32.1% addressed it in the classroom and used it as a learning opportunity. The results showed 78 people reported feeling nervous, frustrated, scared, worried and anxious going to work after witnessing or experiencing microaggressions. With these findings we hope that this research project will further knowledge of microaggressions in general and help to combat them here at Dawson College.

Keywords: Microaggressions, Faculty, Staff, College, Microinsults, Racial microaggressions, Microinvalidations, Minority

Introduction

The purpose of this study has been to investigate microaggressions here at Dawson College among staff and faculty members. It has been our aim to find out who is subject to microaggressions, who responds to them and how they respond, if so. It is our hope that this research can be used to help create a better climate for social interactions at the College. Microaggressions are taxing social transactions and they wear down the morale of the people subject to them. The problem of microaggressions is one of people knowingly or unknowingly furthering derogatory stereotypes that circulate in our social milieu. They can be subtle comments that degrade, jokes, or body language that insults. It is our hope to diminish their existence here at Dawson and create a better climate for the staff and faculty at the College.

The type of research, hypothesis and research question

This explorative study is a mixed methods study around microaggressions. It is exploratory in nature. It is not our aim to generate anything with predictive value, but to describe what is happening here at Dawson College. The information will be given to the Safer Space project in hopes that it will be useful in creating a better climate at the college.

The aim of this study is to better understand the presence and effects of microaggressions among teachers and staff members at Dawson College and how they address them. There have been two guiding questions for the study, namely, 1) Who is experiencing microaggressions among the staff and faculty members, and 2) who is doing something about it.

The research hypothesis has been: if you are a person of visible minority working at Dawson College, then you are more likely to recognize and address microaggressions in school settings with students and staff.

Literature Review

In our review of the literature it was found that microaggressions were common in learning environments amongst faculty and staff (Clark, Kleiman, Spinierman and Issac and Poolokasinghaml, 2014, Suarez-Orozco, Casanova, Martin, Katsiaficas, Cuellar, Smith, and Dias, 2015, Alabi. 2014, Chavella Pittman. 2012, A. Boysen 2012, Dinks, and Thomas 2016, Meeks. 2010, Estacio. Saily-Khan. 2012,). The Dawson College community is the single largest English speaking college, in the second largest city in Canada. Thus, it represents a very diverse population, encompassing a multicultural faculty. The present study could be something of a jumping off point for an understanding of the spirit of the times at academic institutions in Canada. Dawson College is a multicultural environment. We wanted to see whether this was as much of an issue here as elsewhere. Microaggressions can be conscious or unconscious, verbal or nonverbal or visual. They consist of insults, indignities, and demeaning messages voluntarily or involuntarily delivered. Typically the initiator of a microaggression serves up a comment without any forethought and if they are questioned about the comment they then state that their comment was not ill-intended and that the victim is being overly sensitive without recognition of the cumulative ongoing burden of “battle fatigue” for legitimacy endured by the victim (Smith, Allan, & Danley, 2007 ;Sue,2010a). The exhausting nature of these exchanges could lead to other difficulties in the work environment. This study is put together in the hope of helping to prevent these unwanted consequences of microaggressions. It is hoped that this study will fill in information about the nature of microaggressions for ethnic minorities and minorities in general.

The literature review shows that microaggressions are subtly degrading social interactions that demean. They sometimes take the form of jokes or even compliments. They are not always done consciously but the comment or interaction will put the person in the category of the “other” or of lesser value. They take the form of insults, personal invalidations or non-verbal slighting. A microaggression is “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)” (Merriam-Webster online dictionary). Most of the studies looked into for this research project focused on racial microaggressions (Clark, Kleiman, Spinierman, Issac and Poolokasinghaml, 2014, Suarez-Orozco, Casanova, Martin, Katsiaficas, Cuellar, Smith, and Dias, 2015, Alabi. 2014, Chavella Pittman. 2012, A. Boysen 2012, Dinks, and Thomas 2016, Meeks. 2010, Estacio. Saily-Khan. 2012,). One study found that Aboriginals were characterized as “primitive” (Clark, et al., 2014). Another study found that teachers frequently insulted their racial ethnic minority students in class (Suarez-Orozco. et al, 2015). It was also found that microaggressions tend not to be noticed by non-minorities (Alabi, 2014). Microaggressions are often experienced by staff and faculty as well (Chavella Pittman, 2012). Previous studies focused on the experience of microaggressions for visible minorities. The present study hopes to fill in some information on minorities in general and the reactions to microaggressions by non-minority staff and faculty. Universal to the findings on racial microaggressions were their discouraging nature to the person subject to them (Clark, et al., 2014, Suarez-Orozco, et al., 2015, Alabi. 2014, Chavella Pittman. 2012, A. Boysen 2012, Dinks, and Thomas 2016, Meeks. 2010, Estacio,Saily-Khan 2012,). Most of the studies were qualitative and had small sample populations. We have opted for a quantitative study and sought out a larger sample population.

Methodology

Type of Research

When interviewing the teachers and staff from Dawson College, a mixed methods research was used to analyze and learn about the experiences of microaggressions at the College. Quantitative research was used to ask about teachers and staffs cultural backgrounds, age's, gender identification, religious backgrounds and sexual orientation. Qualitative research was used to explore teachers and staff experiences with microaggressions on campus and how they responded. Open ended questions were used so that they could share their personal experiences with microaggressions or thoughts on the severity of the issue at Dawson College. The purpose of this research was to explore the severity of microaggression experienced or witnessed by the 1929 teachers and staff at the college. This research was done by second year social service students at the college in order for them to explore people's thoughts and experiences with this issue, and if Dawson College properly addressed and was informed about microaggressions.

Participants

When choosing the participants for this survey, consideration of whether to include only teachers (with the exception of associate, retired and exchange teachers) or both teachers and staff was analyzed. It was decided to chose both staff and teachers both have daily experiences with students and other teachers and staff. There are 947 staff members and 981 teachers at Dawson College between 2016 and 2017, which is a total of 1929 participants that received this survey. Out of the participants who received the survey, only 244 people opened the survey, but 169 completed the entire survey, this only represents 8% of the population The participants were chosen by convenience. Participants of this study included official teachers and staff at the college, but may have excluded maintenance, cafeteria and security staff. This has relevance to the study because there is a noticeable amount of visible minorities among the staff that were excluded from the study. The cafeteria, maintenance and security staff represent a large group of minorities at Dawson college and may have giving further insight into the issue of microaggressions at the college. Also these staff members may be inactive and not have asses to their omnivox portal at the time of the survey. The amount of participants is not fully representative of all teachers and staff at Dawson college.

Measures and variable

The population were chosen by convenience. The research team sent the survey to staff and teachers of Dawson College and they were able to decide whether they wanted to answer the survey or not. We do not know how many staff compared to how many teachers answered the survey nor who the individuals are.

Some controllable variables are that we choose to only include staff and teachers from Dawson College, we developed the questions, directed the participants to answer other questions if they answered a certain way. We also created all the possible responses they could choose from for the majority of the questions and we controlled how long the survey lasted. Independent variables included how many people notice microaggressions around them and how people feel about microaggressions. Some dependent variables of this research were how do teachers and staff

address microaggressions they witness and experience. Some confounding elements of the study were that the survey was only available for two weeks before it was closed. The survey was also sent out on spring break where many teachers and staff may not be looking at their omnivox or able to receive our survey. To gather participants for the survey, the survey was sent to the omnivox of every staff and teacher. Two emails were sent to the teachers and staff asking them to take the time to complete the survey. Another form of advertisement was done by handing out flyers promoting the survey to the staff and teachers. The flyers were mostly handed out to the staff on the second floor, library and the secretary of continuing education, which limits how many teachers and staff received the flyer. There was an error with the survey because if the person responding to the essay did not fill in one of the fill in the blank questions then the rest of the information they filled in would be deleted when they tried to submit the survey. This means that we are missing the results from some people that did the survey but were unable to submit it.

Some issues we had with the questions and options for answers were: Transgender male and female were not included in the options pertaining to gender. When people answer “other” we don’t know what that means. Some answers may have been misinterpreted such as “always” and “sometimes”. We only ask about the participants being a visible minority and not if they are a minority. Knowing that language is a deeply routed sensitive topic in Quebec we should have asked about microaggressions pertaining to language, especially since there is an increasing number of french students enrolling at Dawson College.

Procedures, Reliability & Validity

Before creating the survey we had to figure out what we wanted to learn from the survey. We developed a research question and hypothesis to be the basis of all our questions for the participants. We divided ourselves into groups to start developing questions for the survey along with the possible responses for the participants to choose from. Each member of the research group also did research on what studies have already been done on microaggressions to further our knowledge and understanding. The survey then had to be approved by the research ethic board. The anonymous survey was sent out to every teacher and staff members through portal college communication system called “Omnivox” on March 16th. The survey was closed on April 6th and the results were collected and analyzed.

The majority of the results from the survey would be similar if the survey was given to different colleges and universities in Quebec. Depending on the size, location and diversity of the school that is surveyed, the findings may change. The results may differ due to the sample size of the populations surveyed and/or having a more diverse population than Dawson College. For example, Montreal is a multicultural city but if this survey was given to a school in an area where their population is less diverse and has few visible minorities, then they may answer that most of the participants did not experiences or witness microaggression in a scholarly institutions. Overall microaggressions can occur at any learning institution and this research can be easily duplicated by other schools, even if the findings may differ, the survey can be done anywhere because the issue of microaggressions can occur anywhere and to anyone.

The whole survey is about microaggressions, the questions on the survey were based on common sense, and easy to read. However, some terms, such as “cis-gender,” or “microaggressions” had to be explained for the reader to have a better understanding of what the survey is about. The questions asked in the survey were “forced generalities” such as “yes” and “no” questions. Also, “Inapplicable” questions that did not apply to everyone, such as “are you a visible minority? “If yes, which one do you identify as?”

Most of the questions measured all variables and had multiple options to choose from. Though some of the survey questions were missing categories. For example, when we asked about the gender the participants identified with, we did not include transgender female or transgender male. This could have let to some individuals not to answer or use the option, “other.” Also, when answering “other” we did not ask for specifications, meaning how would they identify themselves. By not asking the specification, it could have repercussions for the final results. As well, we addressed questions that regards emotions, opinions, situations and environments. The questions on the survey were close-ended questions, it helped us to have a specific answer for the results of the research study. However, some of the questions had misprints which could have been problematic to understand.

Since the survey is exploratory, we wanted to explore how people perceive microaggressions around them, also, one of the aims was to explore how people respond when they are victims of a microaggression. Based on the literature review, we wanted to explore what kind of emotions people experienced, such as “anger,” “sadness” or “isolation.”

We named the best-known concepts, and concepts that participants are familiar with. Since there are numerous concepts, we could not name them all, so we went with the term “Other.” However, we did not specify what “other” means, making the concept hard to measure.

Recruitment

The survey was available from March 16th 2018 to April 6th 2018 and the data was collected by an online anonymous survey. Every participation’s ballot is numbered and may be printed (PDF format or paper) but the participation ballots do not include the identity of the participants. To have better representation of the participants (the faculty and staff member’s at Dawson) and their experiences with microaggressions, participants were recruited by word of mouth, an online survey, which was directly sent through the school’s omnivox system, flyers and posters and 2 emails sent by at the beginning of the survey and one week before it ended. On March 29th 2018, 15 large posters and 60 small flyers were created by the methodology team to encourage more participants to respond to the survey. However, only 15 flyers were distributed to the library and at the computer lab on the second floor. On March 30th, we extended the date of the survey to allow more time for the participants. An email regarding the extension was sent by the Social Service Research teachers to inform all faculty and staff. On April 4th 2018, students modified their poster due to a misprint and changed the deadline of the survey. Students then gave out these posters to the Continuing Education Secretary to pass the message to their staff and faculty. Other posters were stamped by the “Campus Life and Leadership” department and pinned around the school cork boards located near teacher’s offices such as 5D, 3E and 4A.

Data

Entry

This is primary data because all the information was coming directly from the participants. Information was gathered on the participants age, gender, ethnicity and sexuality. The possible responses were controlled by limiting the number of different responses they could choose from, only providing about 5 different answers to choose from and then the “other” category. The options made available were the ones we thought would be most common amongst the Dawson population. After gathering the demographics of who is answering the survey, the participants were asked about their personal experiences witnessing or experiencing microaggressions. The results of the survey are only available to the students and their teacher conducting the research.

Results

As mentioned in introduction, the purpose of this research study is to better understand the presence and effects of microaggressions among the teachers and staff members at Dawson College and how they address the. The survey consisted of sixteen questions in which there were two open-ended ones. This survey was made available to all teachers and faculty member from Dawson College for three weeks. There were 244 participants that responded to the survey, which is not a lot considering that there are 981 teachers and 947 staff members that work at Dawson College in total. In those 244 respondents, 192 respondents started the survey and only 169 of them completed the whole survey. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 35 and 45 years old. They represent 32.6% of all the respondents who completed the survey. The second majority of respondents were between the ages of 45 and 55 years old. This group represents 27.6% of all the respondents who completed the survey once again. The survey showed that 84.5% of respondents did not identify as a visible minority, which is more than three quarters of the respondents. Majority of the teachers and staff members that responded to the survey were caucasian according to the findings. Out of the remaining 15,5% of people who identify as visible minorities, findings showed that there are ten categories of visible minorities groups that have come up. These categories include 0.16% "Middle eastern", 2.3% "Black", 0.03% "African", 0.06% "Indigenous", 0.03% "South American", 0.26% "Asian", 0.03% "English speaking", 0,06% "overweight" and 0.03% "Gay". The people who identify in those categories mention that they experience microaggressions more or less often. Indeed, 26,6% of them never experience microaggressions, 56,6% say they rarely experience microaggressions, 3,3% experience it monthly, 6,6% experience it weekly and none experience microaggressions daily.

On the other hand, out of the 140 people who don't identify as visible minorities and who completed the survey, 55 never experienced microaggressions (39,2%), 48 experience it rarely (34,2%), and 30 people experience microaggressions monthly, weekly or daily (21,4%): 17 experience it monthly (10%) 9 people experience it weekly, (6.4%) and 4 out of 140 experience it daily, (2.8%).

When asked what the microaggressions were about, the respondents who identify as visible minorities answered in different ways. Out of the 28 people who identify as a visible minority, 15 said the microaggression was based on their ethnicity, 10 said the microaggression was based on skin color, 8 on their accent, 7 on physical appearance, 6 about sexism, 3 about their religious symbol, lastly, 9 mentioned "other".

Out of all those who completed the survey--169-- 64 individuals reported that they ignore the issue of microaggressions. 38 % of those who completed the survey, identify as being part of a visual minority report ignoring microaggressions. Of these 64 individuals, 23 are Christian, 13 are Agnostic, 8 are Atheist, 4 are Jewish, 2 are Muslim, 2 are Buddhist, 1 is spiritual however is not religious, 1 is a universalist, and 1 is Pagan and 9 preferred not to identify themselves. There were 17 individuals from the 169 repondants who identify themselves as being part of a visual minority, who do address, confront and/or report this issue. Ten percent of individuals who completed the survey and who identify themselves as being part of a visual minority do address, report or confront microaggressions. There were 5 individuals who reported experiencing microaggressions. Out of the 6 options of genders, it was reported that 4 of the 5 individuals identified themselves as straight and 1 identified themselves as queer.

A major finding in the feelings section regarding microaggressions was that the non-visible minorities seemed to be more frustrated about the microaggressions than visible minorities. Out of the 119 non-visible respondents 45 of them answered that they felt frustrated and 59 answered

feeling as other. Out of the 28 visible minorities that answered this question in the survey 11 of them answered being frustrated and 8 answered as feeling other. These numbers may be higher by the non-visible minority group that answered the survey because of the fact that there were more non-visible minorities who participated in the survey than there were visible minorities. The chart below shows the difference between the two. (See table 1)

The major findings for who is concerned about microaggressions shows again that non-visible minorities are more concerned about microaggressions than visible minorities. One of the respondents did not identify as a visible minority or a non-visible minority but answered that they were somewhat concerned about microaggressions. Forty-nine out of 140 respondents in the non-visible minority group answered that they were slightly concerned about microaggressions and 7 people out of 29 answered slightly in the visible minority group. (See table 2)

Discussion Part I

Answering the Hypothesis

The research hypothesis of this study consist of; if you are a person of visible minority working at Dawson College, then you are more likely to recognize and address microaggressions in school settings with students and staff. Based on the results, the hypothesis was not clearly proven but, this may be influenced by the fact that the teachers and faculty members of Dawson College who do not identify as a visible minority represent 84,5%. It can be assumed that if the staff and teachers were equally represented, both visible minorities and non-visible minorities, that visible minorities would more likely recognize and address microaggressions. In connection to the hypothesis, we can see from our results that a population of diverse ethnicities who are teachers ignored the microaggression. We would assume that teachers and staff, being role models and wiser individuals with more experience, would address a microaggression issue. This fact does not support our hypothesis. In our results we see that individuals of visible minority do recognize and address the problem. This fact does support our hypothesis. It is interesting to see that there were 5 individual teachers who reported experiencing microaggressions. Even though it is small number, its interesting to see that 5 individuals, 4 identifying as straight and 1 as queer reported experiencing microaggressions. We could assume that those who identify as binary may experience microaggressions more often. We can understand from this that microaggressions does affect also those who are viewed as more normalized than others.

Summary of Findings

Based on the findings, the teachers and staff claim that the main forms of microaggressions that they face at Dawson College include sexism, racism, physical appearance, ageism and language. It appears that the sexist jokes are mostly targeted towards the woman staff, rather than the men. Discrimination based on the teacher and staff's ethnicity is a main form of microaggression as they receive negative remarks, assumptions and jokes about their ethnic identity. In addition, physical appearance is another main form of microaggression that is faced. Often, teachers receive denigrating comments and judgements based on their weight and how they are dressed. Ageism is also a recurring theme that the teachers face in their classroom and between the colleagues. Although, this type of microaggression was not considered to be an answer option in the survey, many of the teachers share that specifically for those teachers that are considered as old, they face many microaggressions through stereotypes, remarks and assumptions. Teachers and staff also face microaggressions relating to language. Many share that they are made fun of due to their accent, they are judged due to language barriers and some use offensive language to make sexist, ageist and racist remarks. The other major theme that was mentioned in the survey when asked to disclose about the experienced microaggressions was about professional status

microaggressions. Several participants shared that they experienced microaggressions regarding their jobs and/or level of education. Our survey, which was mostly interested in characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, and age dismissed the professional characteristics that were mentioned by the participants when asked to share their experiences.

Furthermore, our last survey question asked what should be done in the college in order to address the issue around microaggressions. The findings show that half of the respondents are not concerned about microaggressions issues and refer to Dawson College as a pleasant environment to work and be in. They mostly say that microaggressions are hard to define and that people tend to become obsessive around them. The other half of people claim that there are measures that can be modified and changed in order to address the microaggressions happening around the college. The main themes regarding what the teachers and staff think should be done to diminish microaggressions include education, communication, and training and workshops and integrating a no tolerance policy. Education was the most prominent theme based on the findings. Many believe that by educating the teachers and staff about the topic of microaggressions this will result in having better understanding of the topic and a better way of coping with the issue between colleagues and the students as well. Many also share that it will be important to integrate training and workshops around microaggressions. This will be a tool that will teach the staff members how to address microaggressions around the school environment, inform them about the impacts and consequence and to create sensitivity and empathy around the topic. Increasing communication between the students and staff members around microaggressions will also be key in order to spread awareness and to educate one another. There is hope that with a no tolerance policy, there will be a greater understanding around the subject and less microaggressions will be present among the teachers and staff of Dawson College.

Discussion Part II

Problems in Recruitment

In order to encourage teachers and faculty members to participate in the research study, an email was sent out and flyers were put on boards next to teacher offices. Due to a lack of time and preparation, these flyers were only put up two days before the deadline of the survey. This shows the limited promotion that could have improved and this could explain the lack of respondents to the study as proven with only 244 participants out of the 981 teachers and 947 staff members.

Technical Issues

There was a lack of time regarding the preparation of the survey questions. If there was more time allocated to the maneuver of the questions, there could have been less limitations and other potential question and answer could have been thought of. Due to technical issues relating to answering the questions of the survey, all the questions were optional. This meaning that the participants had the choice to answer or not. For some of the questions in the survey, there was the option of “other”. In addition, when one chose the “other” option as an answer, this limits the findings of the study because their answer is not justified and their reason of choosing “other” as an option remains unknown. There were also two open ended questions in the survey such as “If you have experienced or witnessed microaggressions in any of these in environments, would you like to share or describe it?” and “What do you think can be done in the college in order to diminish microaggressions?”. These questions gave the opportunity to the participants to voice out their concerns and thoughts however, this causes a limitation because when the participant did not complete the open ended question, the survey cancelled out their answer.

Problems in Understanding the Data

There were several limitations in the research survey that impacted the findings of the research. Firstly, although our hypothesis targeted to the experiences of the staff that identify as a visible minority, the findings were highly limited because there is a dominant number of teachers and staff members who do not identify as being part of a visible minority. For question eight, “in what forms do you experience microaggressions at the college?”, ageism as a form of microaggression was not one of the options. This should would have been a relevant answer option because based on the findings, many teachers related to ageism as a form of microaggressions through their experience at Dawson College due to faculty members making assumptions on professional behavior, preferences and opinions for those ranging in the 65 and plus age. Regarding the gender identity question, transgender male and female was not included in the options. Also, the definition of “witnessing” and “addressing” microaggressions could have been defined in the survey. Many people have different interpretations of what “addressing” and “witnessing” means which influences their answers. Finally, it could have been useful to make a separate survey for the staff and the teachers of Dawson College. This way the questions could have focused on their area of expertise. There is a possibility that the demographics and their experiences of microaggressions cold have varied.

Confounding variables

For question eleven “in what environment in the college have you witnessed or experienced microaggressions and how often?” the answer options given included very often, often, sometimes, rarely and never. It was observed that this may be a confounding variable because there is a potential confusion between often and sometimes. This may have caused a hesitation to the participants because both answers are similar. Another confounding variable that was observed is that less and less participants answered the questions as the survey questions progressed. Out of the 244 respondents, there were 169 participants that completed the whole survey. The reasons towards why the 75 other participants decided to not answer the questions is unknown, but it would have been significant to find out their motivations or their thinking to why this occurred.

The survey consisted of 16 questions, with 14 multiple choice questions and 2 open ended questions. To be completed, the survey would take up about 15 minutes.

Can this study be replicated?

This study can be replicated in any learning institution that has a variety of visible minority groups. However, if the research study were to be replicated the results and findings may vary from the initial survey because based on the findings, the staff at Dawson College predominantly does not identify to being of a visible minority. For future studies, the research could take place in a learning institution where there is a high number of visible minority groups since the study focuses on their experience of microaggressions. A factor that was not examined in the study that could have been advantageous to the findings is the effects of the teachers’ job status and field of expertise relating to microaggressions.

Discussion Part III

How can this research be implicated to practice

With the help of the data collected, this will be useful to reevaluate policies and intervention strategies regarding microaggressions between teachers and faculty members and between teachers and students at Dawson College. Based on the findings, the college will be able to reevaluate the lack of diversity in the faculty members. Workshops and training can be implemented to all new and old teachers to train and inform them about how to address microaggressions between faculty members and between the teachers and the students. Posters

can also be put around the college to promote and encourage the teachers and staff to address microaggressions in a professional and respectful way in their classrooms, offices and staff meetings.

Suggestions for future research

Some suggestions for future research would include publicizing the survey before it is released as well as while it is release. This way, the survey has a chance of being responded to more with more publicity. Another suggestion could be giving the survey responders more gender options to choose from. I think another suggestion that can be made is eliminating the answer, “other”. In doing so, we can also add more specific answers to choose from. In this way the survey is not canceled out. Another suggestion that could be made to improve this study is to separate the surveys for teachers and professors from the surveys for staff members. This would give the researchers a different perspective from both views. A final suggestion that could be made for this study, is having an incentive that would encourage the survey to be answered by the teachers and staff, perhaps even having a draw for the participants once the survey has been closed for a chance to win a reward.

References

- Alabi, J. (2015). Racial Microaggressions in Academic Libraries: Results of a Survey of Minority and Non-minority Librarians. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 41(1), 47-53.
doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2014.10.008
- Boysen, G.A. (2012). Teacher and student perceptions of microaggressions in college classrooms. *College Teaching*, 60(3), 122-129
- Chavella T. Pittman. (2012). Racial Microaggressions: The Narratives of African American Faculty at a Predominantly White University. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 81(1), 82-92.
doi:10.7709/jnegroeducation.81.1.0082
- Clark, D. A., Kleiman, S., Spanierman, L. B., Isaac, P., & Poolokasingham, G. (2014). “Do you live in a teepee?” Aboriginal students’ experiences with racial microaggressions in Canada. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 7(2), 112-125.
doi:10.1037/a0036573
- Dinkins, E., Ph.D., & Thomas, K., Ph.D. (2016). Black Teachers Matter: Qualitative Study of Factors Influencing African American Candidates Success in a Teacher Preparation Program. *Bellarmino University*, (13), 23-40.
- Estacio, E. V., & Saidy-Khan, S. (2014). Experiences of Racial Microaggression Among Migrant Nurses in the United Kingdom. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 1, 1-7.
doi:10.1177/2333393614532618
- Minikel-Lacocque, J. (2013). Racism, College, and the Power of Words: Racial Microaggressions Reconsidered. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(3), 432-465.
- Popovich, N. G., Okorie-Awé, C., Crawford, S. Y., Balcazar, F. E., Vellurattil, R. P., Moore, T. W., & Schriever, A. E. (2018). Assessing Students’ Impressions of the Cultural Awareness of Pharmacy Faculty and Students. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 82(1), 28-41.
doi:10.5688/ajpe6161
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Casanova, S., Martin, M., Katsiaficas, D., Cuellar, V., Smith, N. A., & Dias, S. I. (2015). Toxic Rain in Class. *Educational Researcher*, 44(3), 151-160.
doi:10.3102/0013189x15580314
- Sue, D. W., Rivera, D. P., Watkins, N. L., Kim, R. H., Kim, S., & Williams, C. D. (2011). Racial dialogues: Challenges faculty of color face in the classroom. *Cultural Diversity And Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 17(3), 331-340. doi:10.1037/a0024190
- Young, K., Anderson, M., & Stewart, S. (2015). Hierarchical microaggressions in higher education. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 8(1), 61-71. doi:10.1037/a0038464

Appendix

Table 1

	Visible minority	Non visible
Nervous	0	1
Frustrated	11	45
Scared	1	1
Worried	6	5
Anxious	2	8
Other	8	59

Table 2

	Visible minority	Non visible	No identification
Not at all	10	40	
Slightly	7	49	
Somewhat	5	25	1
Moderately	6	18	
Extremely	1	8	

Chart 1.a

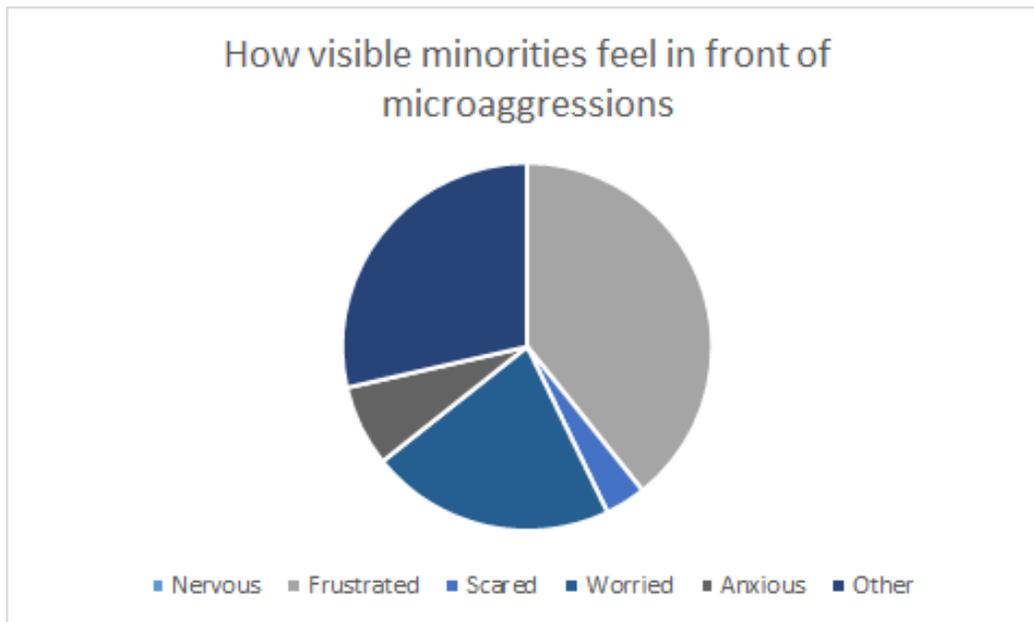


Chart 1.b

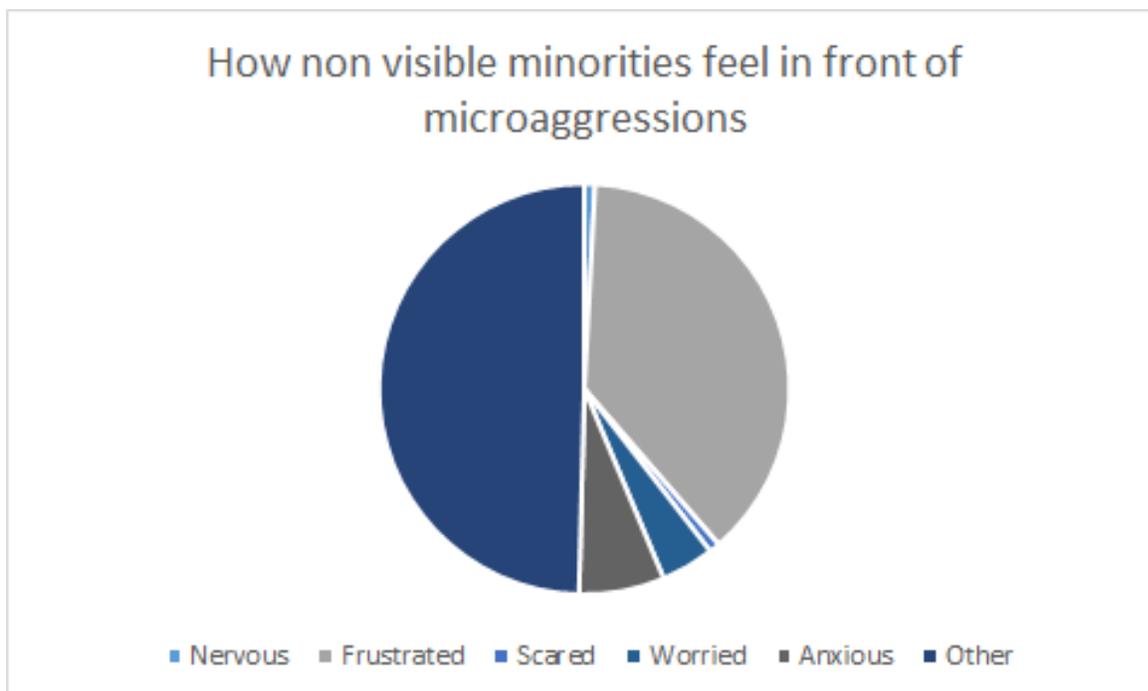


Chart 2

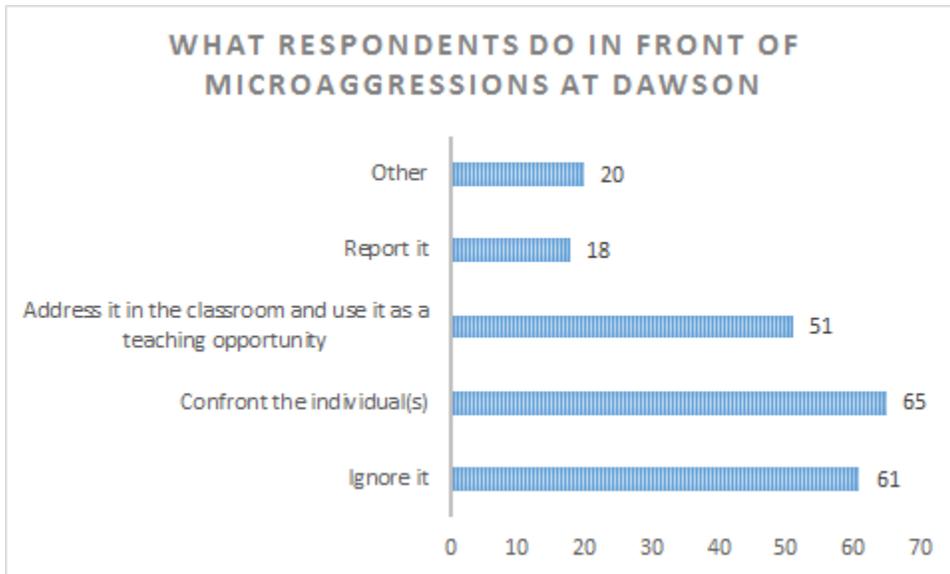
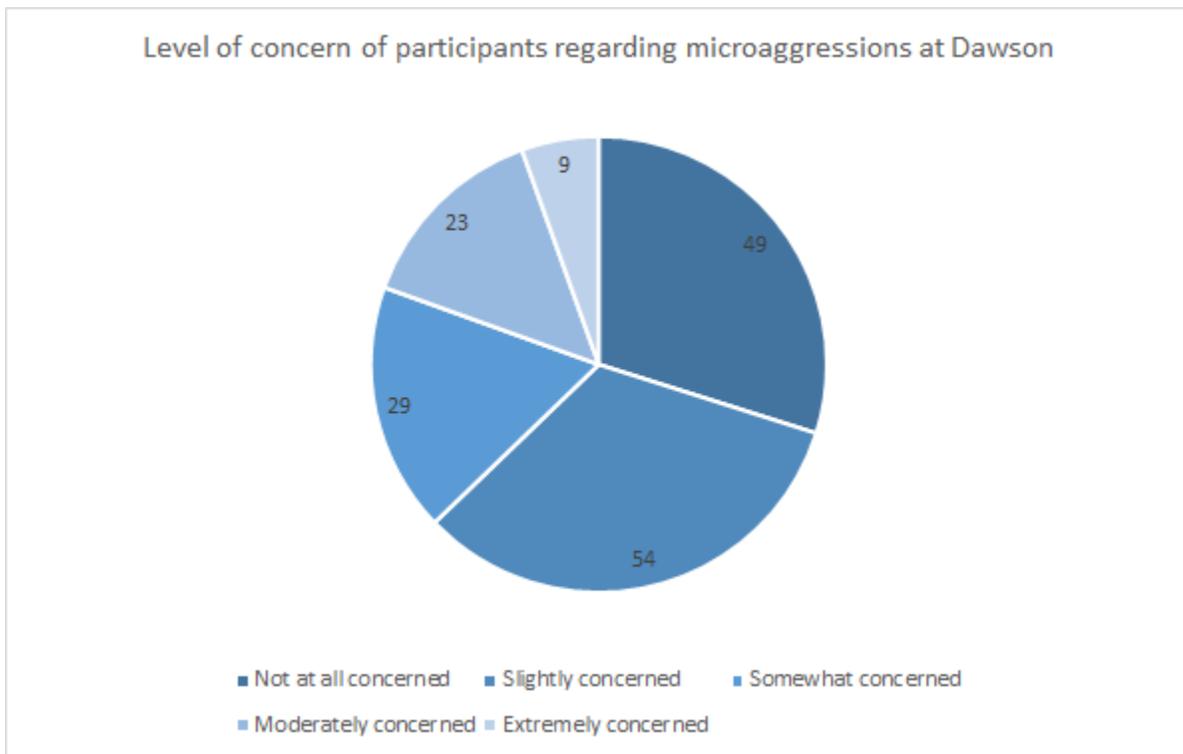


Chart 3



Information & Consent Form Checklist

The following checklist identifies elements that should be addressed when drafting any Information & Consent Form intended for use with prospective participants in research projects conducted at Dawson College.

For more detailed discussion on the consent process, refer to [“The Consent Process” in the TCPS2 \(2014\)](#).

This document takes into consideration that sometimes research requires a degree of non-disclosure, or element of deception, if they are to produce valid results. The design of such projects limits the level of information that may be given to a prospective participant, for the purposes of acquiring their informed consent. In such instances, the researcher(s) must describe the nature/extent of the non-disclosure or deception, and explain how and why it is essential to the success of the project and validity of its findings. This explanation must be supplied in the initial research proposal/application for ethics review.

The Informed Consent Form should be roughly 2 pages and not exceedingly long, and should provide clear information pertaining to each of the elements listed below. If two pages are not sufficient to provide all of the information needed to ensure informed consent, certain elements (e.g., purpose, procedure/method) may be included in a separate information sheet, provided to the prospective participant along with the form.

Required Form Elements

- Identity of the researcher(s), as well as the project’s funder(s) or sponsor(s).
- Project Title
- Description of the research project and its purposes (may be supplied in a separate information sheet).
- A clear statement of invitation to the reader to participate in a research project.
- Description of research method and procedures (may be supplied in a separate information sheet).
- Explanation of the nature, and expected duration, of participation in the project.
- Description of any known or reasonably foreseeable harms and/or benefits of participation.
- Information on any costs, rewards (e.g., money, prizes), reimbursements, or compensation for injury that may result from participation in the project.
- Assurance that participation is voluntary, and that a participant may withdraw at any time without fear of reprisal or loss of pre-existing entitlements.
- Description of withdrawal procedures, and/or assurance that any information that may influence a participant’s decision to proceed with the project, will be provided in a timely manner.
- Description of circumstances under which the researcher(s) may terminate the participant’s participation in the research project.
- Notice requiring the signed consent of a legal parent or guardian of prospective participants under the age of 18, or otherwise considered ineligible or incompetent to provide informed consent. (See below for a sample)
- Information regarding the intended or potential uses of data collected during the project, including any possibilities for publication or commercialization of research findings by the researcher, the funding/sponsoring agency, or the College.
- Information about confidentiality, including whether/how participants may be identified; and who will have access to information provided by or about the participant.
- Information about the length of data retention (if longer than 10 years, explain the purpose/benefit of longer retention).
- Information about whether or not data will be used for any other purpose. The REB suggests wording such as, “Future research on this topic may be conducted as part of a larger program of research. As such, data from this study may be used in the future with other data sets.”
- The name, title, and contact information of any qualified, impartial professional(s) to whom participants may turn for psychological support or to report any other problems, issues or concerns that may arise from their participation in the research project.
- The name, title, and contact information of a professional ombudsperson to whom participants may turn in the event that they wish to file a complaint that may arise as a result of their participation in the research project.

Information & Consent Form Template

Microaggressions at Dawson College

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research project concerning microaggressions towards teachers and staff at Dawson College. The purpose of this consent form is to assure you that participation is voluntary and not mandatory. We the social service research class 388-411-DW and Yaffa Elling would greatly appreciate your participation in gathering information for this survey. It is an anonymous survey and we will not ask you to reveal your identity.

Research Purpose

The primary purpose of this research project is to gain information concerning microaggressions and the affects it leaves on people in the college. We hope to obtain a better understanding of how these small acts of discrimination relate to a persons position in society. We are attempting to gather information that will enlighten us as to the nature of microaggressions here at Dawson College for teachers and staff.

Research Method/Procedure

This study will be conducted by online confidential questionnaire and the data accumulated will be collected and evaluated by the the social service research class 388-411-DW and Yaffa Elling. We are studying the affects of microaggressions among teachers and staff members at Dawson College. A microaggression is “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)” (Merriam-Webster online dictionary). We ask only that you answer the questions as honestly as possible.

Risks/Benefits of Participation

The potential risk that may occur during this research survey is the possibility of adverse emotional reactions to the questions posed. The questions asked may trigger past experiences. We hope that answering this survey will allow us to create a safer space at Dawson College. If any emotional issues arise feel free to contact the Dawson Help line at or the Employee Assistance Program, at or Yaffa Elling at yelling@dawsoncollege.qc.ca

Confidentiality

The information that we are looking to obtain involves ones personal experience with microaggressions, specifically towards oneself and others. We will also be asking what demographic group or groups the participant fits into. The information gathered will be processed by the social service research class 388-411-DW and Yaffa Elling and will be held in confidence by them for their exclusive viewing.

Use of Data and Findings

With the data that will be collected from the surveys we hope to explore the nature of microaggressions in the college. The information that will be collected will be used up until the end of the winter semester 2018, prior to aggregation all documents will be destroyed. The raw data will be destroyed and the aggregated data will be sent to safe space initiative and the peace studies department

Participant Rights

For any questions about this research project please contact Yaffa Elling at yelling@dawsoncollege.qc.ca

Support Professional(s) External to project

Participants may contact the following qualified and impartial **counseling services** if they wish to access such support as a result of their participation in the research project.

Name: **Tel-Aide**

Title: **Tel-Aide**

Contact information: **514-935-1101**

Participants may contact the following qualified **Ombudsperson** in the event that they wish to file a complaint arising from their participation in the research project.

Name: **Employee Assistance Program**

Title: **Group pro-sante inc.**

Contact information: **1-888-687-9197**

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION
Name: Yaffa Elling & social services research Class 388-411 (Section 2) 2018 Department: Social services Institution: Dawson College
Email: yelling @dawsoncollege.qc.ca

STUDY DETAILS
THE DAWSON MICROAGGRESSION RESEACH SURVEY : TOWARDS A BETTER LEARNING AND WOKING EXPERIENCE Click here to enter the title of your research project.
Abstract THIS ANONYMOUS ONLINE SURVEY ASKS Dawson College Teachers and Staff ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES OF Micro aggressions at Dawson College. THE AIM OF THIS STUDY IS TO Better understand the Presence and effects of microaggressions among teachers and staff members at Dawson College and how they address them?. A microaggression is “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)” (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, 2018).
Category of Research Study <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Behavioral <input type="checkbox"/> Biomedical <input type="checkbox"/> Other Click here to enter text.
Type of Study <i>(check all that apply)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Phase study <input type="checkbox"/> Observational Study <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews/Focus Groups <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey (internet, paper, telephone) <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary use of identifiable data <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary use of non-identifiable data <input type="checkbox"/> Other Click here to enter text. include any comments here.
Level of Study <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty Research <input type="checkbox"/> Master’s (Major Research Paper or Thesis) <input type="checkbox"/> PhD Research Program Name (Institution). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other students in social service program- Social services research: 388-411-02 DW
Please select and/or list the sites where recruitment will be taking place <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dawson College <input type="checkbox"/> Vanier College <input type="checkbox"/> John Abbott College <input type="checkbox"/> Other Sites Click here to enter text.
Has another Research Ethics Board granted ethics approval for this study? <i>(include a copy of the research ethics certificate(s) from other rebs including your institution’s reb. Dawson ethics approval is dependent on your home REB’s approval.)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes include any comments here.
What is the estimated recruitment start and end date? <i>(If your study is longer than one year, it will require an annual renewal)</i> Estimated Start Date March 10, 2018 Estimated Completion Date April 18, 2018 include any comments here.

Recruitment, Participants & consent

Sample of persons to be studied

Students (18+) Students (<18 yrs.)

Faculty Staff – Support Staff – Professional Staff – Managers

Other include any other category of participants.

include any comments here.

Will any of the following vulnerable populations be recruited?

No vulnerable populations will be recruited

Persons with cognitive impairments Persons with mental and/or health illness

Other include any other vulnerable populations that are not listed.

include any comments here.

Method for recruiting participants

Printed materials (posters, flyers, etc.)

In-Class (by the principle investigator, co-investigator, or research assistant/associate)

Face to Face

Social Media

Institutional Email (such as @dawsoncollege.qc.ca, etc.)

Other **Omnivox**

Click here to enter comments.

Method for acquiring informed consent (for persons of the age of majority and minors).

This will be done via an **EMAIL STATEMENT AND PREAMBLE TO SURVEY**. Participants can choose not to participate or opt out at any time. The results are anonymous and will **ONLY SUBMITTED AT THE VERY END OF THE SURVEY- THUS PEOPLE CAN WITHDRAW AT ANY TIME.**

Will this study require intended deception? (If yes, fill out a & b)

No Yes

A) Conditions of participation: **Dawson College Teachers and Staff**

B) Disclosure of intended deception: **no**

Describe any ethical concerns which you believe might arise from this research

FEELING DISTRESSED or Triggered BY THE SURVEY

Click here to enter text.

Assessment of possible risk to participants

LOW

Provide a description of support mechanisms, if there is a possible risk to participants.

Dawson college's Employee Assistance Program and TEL-AIDE numbers will be provided on the recruitment email. Participants can opt not to take the survey or opt out at any time. the INSTRUCTOR, Yaffa Elling can also be contacted with any questions or concerns.

Deception & Departures from general principles of consent

If your research protocol involves an alteration to the consent requirements in Article 3.7A and/or requires deception, you must complete this section

Are you seeking an alteration to the consent requirements as per TCPS2 (2014) Article 3.7A? If no, proceed to the next section. For more information relating to Article 3.7A [click here](#).

No Yes

Will there be a post-research participant debriefing? Include a rationale in the textbox below

No Yes

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Conflict of interest

None the research will be done anonymously through Omnivox. There will be no way to link the data to any of the participants. The research team is not participating in the study. Recruitment will be voluntary, sent online through Omnivox

Are you a Dawson faculty member and/or professional who will seek to recruit their own students and/or clients?

No Yes

Are you or any of the research team in a perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest?

No Yes

If you answered yes to any of the previous two questions, elaborate on how the COI will be managed, eliminated or mitigated

THE SURVEY IS ANONYMOUS AND STUDENTS WILL PERFORM DATA ANALYSIS

Data collection, storage & management

What type of information will be collected in this study? *(Hover your mouse cursor over each term to see the definition)*

[Directly Identifiable data](#) [Indirectly Identifiable data](#) [De-Identified \(Coded\)](#)

[Anonymized](#) [Anonymous](#)

include any comments here.

How will data (hard & digital data) be securely stored and managed?

we will be using Omnivox. ONLY THE TEACHER AND STUDENTS WHO CREATE AND ANALYZE THE DATA HAVE ACCESS TO THE ACCOUNT.

For how many years will data be stored before it is destroyed? *(if storing data is greater than 10 years, explain rationale)*

RESULTS WILL BE STORED ON A DAWSON SERVER PASSWORD PROTECTED FOR 6 months.

funding

Funding Agency(s):

CIHR NSERC SSHRC

FRQ – Nature et technologies FRQ – Santé FRQ – Société et culture

Unfunded Self-Financed Privately/Industry Funded (*elaborate in the comments*)

Other (*elaborate in the comments*)

Did not apply for funding

include any comments here.

Have you received a confirmation that the funds have been secured?

Yes, funds have been secured Awaiting response from funding agency

No, did not receive funding

Will the study still be initiated even if funding is not received?

No Yes

Research team information

If you would like to add more rows, click the + arrow to the right of the last column. [If you prefer, you can include an appendix.](#) Appendix included

Name of Researcher	Institutional Affiliation	Role
--------------------	---------------------------	------

document list

If you would like to add more rows, click the + arrow to the right of the last column. [If you prefer, you can include an appendix.](#) Appendix included

Document Title

Version and/or Date (YY-MM-DD)

Notes

Click here to include any notes or comments about your research project.

Application Checklist

Please read carefully.

Below is a checklist to help you make sure that you answered all the necessary questions and included the necessary appendices.

	All Principal Investigator info & Research Team information: Yaffa Elling and the 388-411DW class	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
REB Application Form	Title & description of your research project: see above	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Sample of persons to be studied (i.e., participants): students in the social service program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	Methods of recruiting participants: a MIO with a link to the survey and the below statement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Methodology for acquiring informed consent: the statement in the email and on the survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Conditions of participation and/or disclosure of intended deception (if applicable) N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Assessment of possible risk to participants: Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Description of support mechanisms, if possible risk to participants is involved: Tel-aide and Dawson College counselling services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Description of participant debriefing (post-research): they can contact peers via Facebook, MIO or faculty through the department emails	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Method of secure data storage (hard copies and digital data)? Dawson Servers, Omnivox	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Data retention schedule and lifecycle: only the aggregated numeric data will be kept nothing identifying	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Ethical concerns which may arise from this research: none	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	A copy of the research proposal associated with this request: N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A copy of the ethics approval from home institution (if you are not a Dawson researcher) N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appendix	A copy of participant consent form (French, English) for the different categories of participants: Managers, Professionals, Support Staff, Student, Faculty, etc. N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
s	Invitations to participants: see below	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Recruitment and publicity materials: : see below	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A copy of the research instrument(s), including any question(s) and/or questionnaire(s) to be administered to participants: : see below	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Outreach email:

THE DAWSON MICROAGGRESSION RESEARCH SURVEY : TOWARDS A BETTER LEARNING AND WORKING EXPERIENCE

THE AIM OF THIS STUDY IS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE PRESENCE AND EFFECTS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS AMONG TEACHERS AND STAFF MEMBERS AT DAWSON COLLEGE AND HOW THEY ADDRESS THEM.

Dear Current Faculty and Staff,

You are invited to participate in a research project concerning microaggressions experienced and witnessed by teachers and staff at Dawson College. The primary purpose of this research project is to gain information concerning microaggressions and the effects it leaves on the teachers and staff as individuals in the college. A microaggression is “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2018). We ask only that you answer the questions as honestly as possible. We hope to obtain a better understanding of how these small acts of discrimination relate to the learning and working environment at Dawson.

The survey is voluntary. This study is an anonymous and confidential survey, and no identifying information will be collected (no names, emails, etc.). The information that we are looking to obtain involves one's personal experience with microaggressions, especially towards oneself and others. We will also be asking what demographic group or groups the participant fits into. The data accumulated will be collected and evaluated exclusively by the social service research class and teacher, Yaffa Elling. The information that will be collected will be kept until the end of the winter semester 2018. The raw data will be destroyed and the aggregated data will be sent to Safer Space Initiative and the Peace Centre.

The potential risks that may occur during this research survey is the possibility of adverse emotional reactions to the questions posed. We hope that the results of this survey will help us to create a safer space at Dawson College. Participants may contact the following qualified Ombudsperson in the event that they wish to file a complaint arising from their participation in the research project. If any emotional issues arise you may contact the Dawson Help line or the Employee Assistance Program. Participants may contact the following qualified and impartial counseling services if they wish to access such support as a result of their participation in the research project.

- Tel-Aide: Contact information: 514-935-1101
- Employee Assistance Program called Group pro-sante Inc.: Contact information: 1-888-687-9197

We the social service research class would greatly appreciate your participation. For any questions about this research project please contact Yaffa Elling at yelling@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
Sincerely The Social Service Research Class,

Yaffa Elling
Social Services Research
yelling@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
514-931-8731 ext. 4237

Daniel Tesolin
Research Ethics Board
dtesolin@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
office 4B.1-9
514-931-8731 ext.1416

The survey:



Please fill out the following survey created by the second year research class:

THIS ANONYMOUS ONLINE SURVEY ASKS ABOUT THE PRESENCE AND AFFECTS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS AMONG TEACHERS AND STAFF MEMBERS AT DAWSON COLLEGE AND HOW THEY ADDRESS THEM.

You can stop participating at any time by just closing your browser- nothing is recorded until you hit submit. All responses are confidential and nothing identifying will be used or shared. If thinking about microaggressions causes you to feel distress, please call Tel-Aide (514) 935-1101 or The Dawson College Employee Assistance Program called Group pro-sante Inc.: Contact information: 1-888-687-9197.

The Dawson microaggressions reasearch survey: Towards a better learning and working experience

This anonymous online survey asks Dawson College teachers and staff about their experiences of microaggressions at Dawson College.

The aim of this study is to better understand the presence and effects of microaggressions among teachers and staff members at Dawson College and how they address them.

A microaggression is "a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)."

1. How old are you?

18-25

25-35

35-45

45-55

55-65

65+

2. Are you a visible minority? If yes, which one do you identify as?

Yes

No

Cis-gender: Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex

3. Which Gender do you identify with (if any) ?

Cisgender Male

Cisgender Female

Queer

Non Binary

Prefer not to answer

Other

4. Do you have a religious or spiritual affiliation?

Muslim

Agnostic

Christian

Jewish

Indigenous

Atheist

Hindu

Buddhist

Other

5. What sexual orientation do you identify with?

Straight/Heterosexual

Homosexual

Bi-sexual

Queer

Pansexual

Asexual

Prefer not to answer

Other

6. How often do you experience microaggressions?

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Rarely

Never

7. How often do you witness microaggressions?

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Rarely

Never

8. In what forms do you experience microaggressions at the college?

Jokes

Remarks

Embarrassing questions

Assumptions

Non-verbal communication

other

9. In what forms have you witness microaggressions at the college?

Jokes

Remarks

Embarrassing questions

Assumptions

Non-verbal communication

Other

10. What were those microaggressions about?

Skin colour

Physical Appearance

Accent

Ethnicity

Sexism

Religious symbols

Other

11. In what environment in the school have you witnessed or experienced microaggressions and how often?

		Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
11.1	Classrooms					
11.2	Office					
11.3	Department Meetings					
11.4	Hallway					
11.5	Washroom					
11.6	other					

12. If you have experienced or witnessed microaggressions in any of these in environments, would you like to share or describe it?

13. How do you address microaggressions?

Ignore it

Confront the individual(s)

Address it in the classroom and use it as a teaching opportunity

Report it

Other

Not applicable

14. How concerned are you about the frequency and severity of microaggressions at Dawson College?

Not at all concerned

Slightly concerned

Somewhat concerned

Moderately concerned

Extremely concerned

15. How does it feel going to work having witnessed or experienced microaggressions?

Nervous

Frustrated

Scared

Worried

Anxious

Other

16. What do you think can be done in the school in order to diminish microaggressions?

Thank you for your participation!

We hope that the results of this survey will allow us to improve the working and learning environment at Dawson College.

The Perception of Sexual Violence According to Dawson College Students: A Mixed Methods Study

Isabelle Raphaelle Benjamin, Alexia Carpetti, Tania Di Genova, Maika Edmond-Apollon,
Vicky Harvison, Terricia John, Annabelle LaFleche, Leila Annie Lindor, Felicia McMahon,
Lorraine Smith, Monique Sandrine Youane Wouansi

Table Of Contents:

Abstract.....

.... p.2

Introduction.....

... p.3

Literature

Review.....p.5

Methodology.....

.....p.7

Results.....

..p.10

Interpretation of

Results:.....p.14

Limitations.....

..p.16

Implications and Suggestions for future

research.....p.17

References.....

..p.19

Abstract:

Sexual violence is an ongoing issue on college campuses that is often left unaddressed. The present descriptive study seeks to explore students' awareness of campus sexual violence at Dawson College, and to assess what needs to be done on campus to effectively address this issue.

Our main research question is, what is the knowledge and awareness of sexual violence amongst Dawson College students and what needs to be done to address campus sexual violence? We hypothesized that if there is more awareness of campus sexual violence and resources available to address it (i.e., independent variables), then students would feel safer from experiencing sexual violence (i.e., dependent variable) at Dawson College. We also expect that participant demographics (i.e., independent variables) will influence student perceptions of sexual violence (i.e., dependent variable). The entire student population was invited to complete a survey online. Out of 8,183 students, 3277 (40.04%) responded to our survey. Our results show that 91.8% of student participants agreed with the Quebec government's definition of sexual violence as stated in Bill 151, *An Act to prevent and fight sexual violence in higher education institutions*. Most participants (67.8%) said that they were unaware that a sexual violence policy was being made on campus. Future research should consider exploring students' varying understandings of what sexual violence is.

Introduction:

In December of 2017, the Quebec government implemented Bill 151 which made it mandatory for all CEGEPS and universities to have a policy to address sexual violence on campus (Quebec National Assembly, 2017). Dawson College is in the process of now creating a policy

and we wanted to further understand how aware the students were of the topic. In addition, the bill was also made to ensure the safety of the students on college and university campuses and to also make sure that victims of sexual violence are treated for the trauma that they have gone through. The purpose of our study is connected with Bill 151, since it is now mandatory that higher education schools have a sexual violence policy in place. Currently, Dawson College does not have an official policy in place to address this issue. In order to have an understanding of what student perceptions are in terms of sexual violence, the Social Service Research class conducted an anonymous survey underlining the concerns of not having a policy. The survey served as a tool to better understand students' awareness of campus sexual violence and if they are aware of the policy being made to address this issue. Since the policy has yet to be implemented, we hope the survey will give us information about what needs to be done to address sexual violence in order for students to feel safer.

The students in the Social Service Research class decided, as a group, that the research question would be as follows: What are students' knowledge and awareness of campus sexual violence at Dawson College and what needs to be done to address it? The reason for this research question is to get a clearer idea of what Dawson College students know about sexual violence on campus and what is lacking in terms of resources to the population affected. The hypothesis of our study is as follows: If there is more awareness of campus sexual violence, and resources available to address it, then students would feel safer at Dawson College. Our reasoning for this hypothesis is to get a clearer understanding of how the student body perceives sexual violence. Looking at their comfort level on campus allows us to examine what needs to be done to assure that sexual violence is eliminated on campus. What Dawson's new policy could bring to the table,

when dealing with sexual violence, is a guideline highlighting important steps that could not only help eliminate sexual violence on campus, but also to support those affected by sexual violence, especially persons who have been traumatized. The policy could include strategies about how to ensure the safety of Dawson College students, how to reports instances of sexual assault, and the resources available on campus for students. In our hypothesis, the independent variables are age, education, gender, years at the college, religious views, economic status, ethnicity, (dis)ability, among other demographic characteristics. Another important independent variable is students' awareness of on-campus resources for those affected by sexual violence. The dependent variable of this study consists of the students' perception of sexual violence and their sense of safety on campus. The variables chosen will help us evaluate where students are at in terms of their understanding and awareness of campus sexual violence. We expect that participant demographic characteristics will influence their perceptions of sexual violence. For example, a young student coming straight from high school may not know what sexual violence is, in all its complexity, but someone who has been in the college for about a year may have a better understanding of the complexities of sexual violence. Our study also seeks to explore students' beliefs about what should be done. Knowing what students want in the new policy will be useful in clearly defining what sexual violence is and how to address the issue.

Literature Review:

A common theme throughout the various articles that we looked at was how sexual assault affects the individual mentally and physically (Lévesque et al., 2016; Armstrong, Hamilton., & Sweeney, 2006; Marsil, & McNamara, 2016; Payne & Respass, 2006; The PLOS ONE Staff, 2018;

Streng & Kamimura, 2015). Most studies focused on women and their experiences of sexual assault, the legislation in place to protect the victims and the prevalence of sexual assault on college and university campuses. The terminology used in these studies were sexual assault on campus, victims, perpetrators, rape, party rape, alcohol and drugs. A variety of instruments were used across these studies: half used surveys, a couple used individual and/or group interviews, and others used or incorporated information that was readily available to the research teams either through the college and/or university they studied. Armstrong, Hamilton & Sweeney (2006) looked at the effects of intimate partner violence and sexual assault on university women, the researchers focused mainly on the reproductive health of the women. According to Lévesque et al., (as cited by World Health Organization 2006, p.9): “Reproductive and sexual health is an important component [for women’s] overall health and well-being”. In this article they used an online survey that was launched throughout the entire university to gather their data. Streng & Kamimura (2015) analysed relevant legislation and college and university policies: “The data included relevant legislation, and the university sexual assault and/or misconduct policies from ten selected public universities within the US” (p. 65).

Overall, the articles used quantitative and qualitative methods in order to gather data from their participants. Historically, we have seen a pattern where women are mostly observed and considered when analysing issues concerning sexual violence on campus. Some of the studies reviewed excluded men and other genders (Payne & Respass, 2006; Armstrong, Hamilton & Sweeney, 2006; Lévesque, S., Rodrigue, et al., 2016). This is problematic because sexual violence is not just a concern for women, but for men, and other genders. Other studies seem to portray men as the only perpetrators (Payne & Respass, 2006; Armstrong, Hamilton & Sweeney, 2006). Payne & Respass (2006) examined an intervention method which involved separating men from women

and speaking to men as if they are going to commit the act. This university wants men to ‘accept when she says no’. However, Mellins et al. (2017) made it a point to highlight the fact that fraternity members are also vulnerable to sexual assault. When it comes to studying sexual assault, it is not a binary experience, but one that is much broader. By considering other genders (e.g., transmen, transwomen, as well as agender, non-binary, and genderfluid persons, etc.) you are creating a more inclusive study that will provide a more complete picture.

In one of the articles, the researchers only used quantitative methods (Lévesque, Rodrigue, et al., 2016). The issue with only using one method is that the researchers were unable to get quality information about the individual, which makes it difficult to have a proper understanding of what the participant may be going through. However, all other articles examined did use mixed methods to gather their data. Streng & Akiki’s (2015) study used a method whereby relevant legislation was analysed and suggestions for change and improvement were provided. Many articles explored the topics of substance abuse, and school policies that do not fit proper guidelines as to how sexual violence should be addressed (Armstrong, Hamilton & Sweeney, 2006). In conclusion, the studies we looked at did not include all genders. This causes an issue when looking at sexual violence data, since all populations are affected by it yet many studies seem to focus predominantly on (cisgender) women, specifically as victims.

Methodology:

There was a large sample size of 3,277 respondents which is approximately 40% of the student population. However, the sample size does not represent the student population because there are eight thousand one hundred and eighty-three (8,183) according to Dawson College’s 2016-2017 annual report (Dawson College, 2017). However, there were no records of the

demographics of the student population at Dawson College (e.g., demographic information on race, gender, etc.) making it impossible to compare the demographic composition of our sample with that of the wider student population.

Our study used a voluntary sampling technique, which is a non-probability sampling technique, where only students who wished to participate in the survey would be part of the sample. The survey was developed by the four (4) members of the methodology subgroup with the help of our teacher, Andie Buccitelli, and an analyst. Two examples of the ten (10) questions that were included on the survey regarding sexual violence are “Have you ever heard of a student experiencing sexual violence while attending Dawson College?” and “Are you aware of College services for students who have experienced sexual violence?”. The survey was then uploaded onto OmnivoX and made available for a period of 3 weeks, where every student had the opportunity to complete it. OmnivoX, is an online application created by Skytech which allows students and teachers to exchange information. It allows students to access their grades, assignments, send messages and allows Dawson to send out important documentations, and publish surveys for students and teachers to complete.

We chose to do a survey targeting the student population at Dawson College because we wanted to explore sexual violence and what has been done to address the issue of sexual violence. Then, the methodology team created questions that were relevant to the policy and the topic of sexual violence. Having a survey allowed us to have a larger sample size and it protected the participants’ identity since it could be completed anonymously. We placed the survey on OmnivoX because all the student have access to OmnivoX and it gives the students a sense of privacy and time to answer at their own pace. Also, we ensured that the survey parameters were set in a way where students were not obligated to answer every question if they did not wish to.

We used a mixed method, qualitative (collecting words and statements) and quantitative (collecting numbers), study design. We studied a single group because the survey was only focused on students attending Dawson College. This survey was a cross-sectional study. It was cross-sectional because we are not studying this population for multiple years or an extended period of time as it would be for a longitudinal study; we made our survey available for a specific amount of time.

The survey was sent to all the students that attend Dawson College. Our relationship with the participants was a student-to-student relationship as we are all students attending this campus. The data was collected electronically and was sent to Andie Buccitelli who transmitted the data to Moodle so that the research groups would have access to the information to analyze the data. The survey was voluntary and anonymous which protected the students' identity. Also, students were required to read through a consent form, and accept the associated conditions, before completing the survey. The study collected primary data because the information was directly from the participants and there were no other studies involved. The survey included nominal and ordinal variables because there were Likert scales and demographic information, including questions about age, ethnicity, gender and sexual identity. Members of the methodology team promoted the survey by asking and prompting students in other classes to answer the survey. We also used the Omnivox system to send messages promoting the survey. The teacher also sent out promotional messages to all students on March 16th, 2018, after the survey was posted on the Omnivox system, and the same process was repeated on April 3rd 2018, 2 days before the survey was about to end and become unavailable.

The research instrument that we chose was an anonymous survey. The students were asked ten (10) questions regarding demographics and ten (10) questions regarding sexual violence at

Dawson College as well as what has been done to address this issue and what needs to be done. The questions were solely based on our group members' perceptions. We did not get any ideas from other surveys. We chose to include these questions because they were relevant and gave the information that was necessary to answer the research question.

The independent variables (IV) in our study are participant demographics, such as age, class, race, gender and sexual identity, etc. We believe that these variables may influence students' awareness of sexual violence and their opinions of the policy to be developed at the College, these being the dependent variables. The survey questions capture and measure the variables because the questions capture the experiences of the students, how they view the policy and what is currently being done at Dawson College.

The survey is valid because all the questions were relevant to the research question about sexual violence at Dawson College. This would be content validity because it conceptualizes what we are researching. The survey is reliable. If we were to repeat the study in future years, we expect that responses would be, more or less similar, to the ones we collected this year. We presume that students' ideologies and perceptions in relation to sexual violence would not significantly change over the course of a few years. One way the survey would not be reliable is if the College adopts and implements a stand-alone sexual violence policy within the next year; this may change student perceptions, rendering the survey no longer reliable. Therefore, we have concluded that this cross-sectional study is not reliable however if one should want to replicate this study it would be easy to replicate it.

Data Results:

The final sample showed that 2156 (66.3%) of participants were (cisgender) women and 931 (28.4%) were (cisgender) men. The majority identified as Caucasian (51.2%) while the other

48.8% were from racialized groups. See table 1 (page 11) for more details on the demographic composition of the sample.

Based on the initial results of the survey, without controlling for any participant demographics, our hypothesis is not confirmed. However, when controlling for certain demographics variables, such as gender, then the hypothesis would be accepted. The hypothesis states “if there is more awareness and resources available on campus concerning sexual violence, then students would feel more comfortable”. The results show 67.8% of all students admitted they were unaware of the resources available on campus concerning sexual violence. If gender is controlled for, 68.32% of all women are unaware of services, 64.34% of all men are unaware, and 61.25% of all trans, queer, non-binary, genderqueer and genderfluid¹ participants are unaware of campus services.

Furthermore, 2141 of all students (68%) stated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, *I feel safe from sexual violence at Dawson College*. If controlling for gender, 1336 (61.9%) of cisgender women either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, 722 (77.5%) of cisgender men either “agreed” or “strongly agreed”, and 33 (41.25%) of gender minority participants either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement. These statistics show that those who do not identify as cisgender men or women do not feel a strong sense of security from sexual violence on campus.

The research question asks, “What is the knowledge and awareness of sexual violence amongst students at Dawson College and what is needed to be done on campus?” It appears that only 16.1% of participants are aware of the policy to be developed on campus. This result may

¹ “Gender minority students” will be used throughout this report when referring to transgender, genderqueer gender non-conforming, non-binary, genderfluid, and queer persons as a group.

imply that the College has not done enough to raise awareness about the policy that is being developed. Importantly, 2219 participants (71.3%) of students either “agree” or “strongly agree” that the policy development process should be made transparent to the Dawson community.

Table 1. Populations demographics

<i>Years at Dawson college</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Socioeconomic class</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
1 year	1320	41,5%	Lower class	348	11,0%
2 years	1132	35,6%	Middle class	2317	73,0%
3 years +	563	17,7%	Upper class	176	5,5%
Prefer not to disclose	163	5,1%	Prefer not to disclose	331	10,4%
Gender (n = 3254)					
<i>Gender (n = 3254)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Sexual orientation</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Woman	2156	66,3%	Heterosexual or straight	2469	78,0%
Man	931	28,6%	Gay or lesbian	113	3,6%
Non-binary, gender queer, non-conforming	53	1,6%	Bisexual	298	9,4%
Queer	13	0,4%	Asexual	39	1,2%
Transman	12	0,4%	Queer	45	1,4%
Transwoman	2	0,1%	Please specify if these do not apply	58	1,8%
Please specify if these do not apply	24	0,7%	Prefer not to disclose	58	4,5%
Prefer not to disclose	63	1,9%			
Do you live with a disability?					
<i>Do you live with a disability?</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Age group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	194	6,1%	17-19	2042	64,4%
No	2779	88,0%	20-27	875	27,6%
Prefer not to disclose	184	5,8%	28-35	128	4,0%
			36+	74	2,3%
			Prefer not to disclose	52	1,6%
Ethnic group					
<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Religion or spiritual affiliation</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Indigenous	37	1,2%	Indigenous	24	0,8%
East or southeast Asian	352	11,1%	Christian	1142	36,0%
South Asian	175	5,5%	Muslim	214	6,8%
Black	256	8,1%	Jewish	173	5,5%
Middle Eastern or North African	216	6,8%	Please specify if these do not apply	216	6,8%
Latin American/Canadian	199	6,3%	None	1172	37,0%
Caucasian	1626	51,4%	I prefer not to disclose	229	7,2%
Please specify if these do not apply	128	4,0%			
I prefer not to disclose	176	5,6%			

Table 2: Participant response rates to key questions.

Qualitative Analyses

<i>11. Have you ever heard of a student experiencing sexual violence while attending Dawson College?</i>	N	%
Yes	1150	35,7%
No	2071	64,3%
<hr/>		
<i>12. Are you aware of College services for students who have experienced sexual violence?</i>	N	%
Yes	1009	32,2%
No	2124	67,8%
<hr/>		
<i>16. Rate your level of agreement with the following statement: “I feel safe from sexual violence at Dawson College”</i>	N	%
Strongly Disagree	62	2,0%
Disagree	120	3,9%
Neither agree or disagree	797	26,0%
Agree	1265	41,2%
Strongly agree	824	26,9%

After analyzing the quantitative results for question 10, which was whether or not people agreed with the Quebec government’s definition of sexual violence, we decided to further explore participants’ written comments (i.e., qualitative data) for this question along the lines of gender, age and ethnicity. We specifically focused on those respondents that identified as Caucasian men, who were between the ages of 17 and 19, who knew of someone on campus who had been sexually assaulted, and who “strongly agreed” with feeling safe from sexual violence on campus. After reviewing these participants’ comments for this question, we were able to identify 3 overarching themes: belief that “catcalling” is not sexual violence, differing views on what constitutes as “sexual violence” and beliefs surrounding the notion of “freedom of speech”. We identified some of the most relevant comments to illustrate these themes.

Theme 1: Differing views on “catcalling”

Our research team felt that these participants did not understand how catcalling could be considered a sexually violent act. Some participants from this subgroup said:

“[...] stop pretending that students who have been catcalled are in the same boat as one who has been raped.”

“Catcalling/commenting on a person’s body is not violence, that’s called talking to someone.”

Theme 2: Differing views on the meaning of sexual violence

We felt that many of these participants did not understand the scope of sexual violence. The following participant quotes reflect this major theme:

“Way too vague. Anything can be considered sexual violence if you spin it the right way.”

“I do not believe that catcalling, groping, comment, as well as other forms of misconduct are violent”

Theme 3: Beliefs surrounding the notion of “freedom of speech”

The last major theme identified, based on this subgroup’s comments, was “freedom of speech”.

Comments like this were made:

“[...] I think that people should be able to say what they want without facing punishment from the law. For example, if someone wants to say “kill all Jews” on Facebook, then they should have the right to do that. [...] Repercussions should exist, but they should not be law.”

After analysing Caucasian men participant responses to this question, we decided to further investigate the responses of other genders who fit the same profile. Caucasian women in the same age group as these males (i.e., 17 to 19 years old), also reported feeling really safe on campus, even though they know someone who has been sexually assaulted. Some comments explored some of the same topics as the male subgroup as described above, such as the definition of violence and freedom of speech. Some of these young women stated:

“Violence is related to physical action [...]”

“People can say whatever they want, freedom of speech”

These observations made us come to the conclusion that even if an individual has contact with someone who has been sexually assaulted at Dawson, they do not necessarily feel unsafe, even when they identify as a woman. As you can read above, we simply think that, in certain cases, participants did not fully understand the definition of sexual violence that we provided to them. We concluded that the three themes discussed above should have been better explained in our survey. However, even if the themes were explained better and in more detail, it is likely that some participants' views would have stayed the same, due to their personal beliefs.

Interpretation of the results

Table 2 focuses on three initial questions and results that stood out from the rest of our survey questions. Question 11 asks “Have you ever heard of a student experiencing sexual violence while attending Dawson College?” The results show that 35.8% of participants know someone who has experienced sexual violence. However, it also shows that 67.8% of participants are unaware of services addressing sexual violence on campus and that 68% of participants feel safe from sexual violence on campus. How can students truly feel safe without the knowledge of services available on campus? These results raise questions about the awareness of sexual violence and its prevalence. It may be that students are not fully aware of the negative impacts that sexual violence has on victims, so they do not believe their safety is at risk.

Upon further analysis, the results showed that mostly male students felt safe on campus. If we continue the focus on subgroups of gender, 531 men (57.03%) who *do not know* of someone who has experienced campus sexual violence “agreed” or “strongly agreed” to feeling safe from sexual violence on campus. Alternatively, 191 men (20.5%) who *do know* of someone who has

experienced sexual violence on campus “agreed” or “strongly agreed” to feeling safe from sexual violence on campus. These results may suggest that men who do not know of anyone who has experienced sexual violence on campus may feel safer because they have little to no exposure to this reality.

At first glance, students on campus appear to agree with the government’s definition of sexual violence. However, upon analysing the qualitative data related to this question, participants’ understanding of sexual violence appear inconsistent. This may show that their knowledge on sexual violence is very limited and they are not fully informed on what it is and how to prevent it from occurring. For example, the survey asked participants if they agreed with the definition provided on sexual violence. A participant stated “I do not believe that catcalling, groping, comments, as well as other forms of misconduct are violent”. It can be assumed that this student, along with many others, has not been fully informed about the reality of the term “sexual violence”.

The demographics showed that the majority of participants were (cisgender) women, yet based on the comments shared under Question 10, it appeared that they held a strong opinion on the topic of sexual violence and did not agree with the definition given. For example, one participant stated “violence is related to physical actions. Being physically sexually assaulted and being catcalled are two bad things, but they do not compare. One is physical and there is no choice in feeling the pain while catcalling you can choose to ignore it and go on with your day. This definition is too broad and lumps extremely horrible offenses with minor offenses”. Women are amongst the most at risk of experiencing acts of sexual violence. This comment is implying that catcalling, being a verbal aggression, is not the same as a physical sexual act of violence. It appears that she is trying to emphasize that sexual assault and sexual violent acts like catcalling do not fall in the same division and both have different levels of severity.

Limitations

Our study had several limitations. Using our online portal, we reached over 8,183 in the Dawson Community. 40.04% of students participated in the survey. There is a big chance of response bias because students may have answered quickly and untruthfully in order to get rid of the survey. In addition, another response bias would be that the participants interpreted the question in a different way than we intended them to and their responses did not reflect the intent of the question. Since the survey was conducted online, the quality of the information is less thoughtful than if the data were conducted through in-person interviews. Interviews may have generated findings that showed a deeper opinion on the issue, while allowing more space for feeling and expression.

Furthermore, 90% of students agreed that the *stand-alone policy to address campus sexual violence* is necessary and should be implemented at Dawson; however, it would have been beneficial to allow the students to expand their answer, since it would have permitted the researchers to evaluate their opinion on the overall topic of sexual violence. Finally, the 11th question in the survey can be interpreted in different ways. “Have you ever heard of a student experiencing sexual violence while attending Dawson College?” This is another form of response bias. Students may have interpreted this question as knowing a Dawson Student who experienced sexual violence off campus. It may be that the student they know do not attend Dawson, but have an experience of sexual violence. This question is targeting the students on the Dawson campus specifically.

The Dawson community is made up of 8,183 students and 40.04% of students participated in the survey. Although the data received was very insightful and significant, the results cannot be

generalized for the entire student population. Since the survey was not answered by all 8,183 students, the results would not be as accurate.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the limitations previously mentioned, the results indicate that the Dawson community lacks information on sexual violence and are unaware of the services provided. This implies that Dawson is not raising enough awareness on this pressing issue, which explains why 83.9% of students did not know that a policy was being implemented. These results show that the policy is not publicized enough. This policy is being created to protect students from sexual violence on campus; however, how are students supposed to feel safe on campus if they aren't aware of the services? The committee creating this policy would benefit greatly from this research because they are now aware of the lack of knowledge and student involvement in this policy implementation. Secondly, the administration would benefit from this information because they can better understand how students think and feel about this issue. By knowing the thought process of a student, they will see that the Dawson students are currently unaware of the actual definition of sexual violence. This will aid them in coming up with ways to inform their students on what sexual violence entails and how it can impact a lot of students' sense of security on campus. After identifying the limitations, if this survey were to be conducted again, it would be beneficial to conduct it in the form of an interview. This would allow researchers to see the reactions and emotions of the student who had a very strong opinion on this topic. The students would really think about the questions and elaborate on their thought processes or ask questions to clarify the intent of the question being asked.

Furthermore, it would be important for researchers to investigate where students feel the safest on college campuses and where they feel their safety is at risk. It is important that the

researchers acknowledge the 3.9% of students who disagree with feeling safe. Also, for further research on this topic, researchers could investigate areas of the college that are in need of a more supervision by security guards. They could ask the participants where they feel the more surveillance is needed. In a school of 10,000 people, it is difficult to witness every act of violence that occurs on campus, so more supervision in needed areas would help the students feel more at ease. Finally, the definition of sexual violence and what it entails should be investigated because it rose questions and strong opinions that should be further analyzed and acknowledged. Participants believe that “catcalling” is not a form of violence, so raising awareness and allowing room to explain why it is a form of violence would be important and necessary for future research.

References

- Armstrong, E., Hamilton, L., Sweeney, B. (2006) Sexual Assault on Campus: A Multilevel, Integrative Approach to Party Rape. *Social Problems*, 53(4), 483-499.
doi : 10. 1525/sp. 2006. 53.4.483
- Dawson College (2017). *Annual Reports*. Retrieved from :
<https://www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/governance/annual-reports/>
- Lévesque, S., Rodrigue, C., Beaulieu-Prévost, D., Balis, M., Boislard, M., & Lévy, J.J. (2016) Intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and reproductive health among university women. *Canadian Journal Of Human Sexuality*, 25(1), 9-20. Doi:10.3138/cjhs.251-A5
- Marsil, D.F., & McNamara, C.L. (2016). An examination of the disparity between self-identified versus legally identified rape victimization: A pilot study. *Journal of American College Health*, 64 5, 416-20.
- National Assembly. (2017). Bill n°151 : An Act to prevent and fight sexual violence in higher education institutions. *Assemblée nationale du Québec* Retrieved from:
<http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=5&file=2017C32A.PDF>
- Payne, B. K., & Respass, G. (2006). Sexual assault on campuses: trends and prevention. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 10(3), 260+. Retrieved from
<http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A155568022/AONE?u=west74079&sid=AONE&xid=2c374c0f>
- Tara, K., Streng Akiki, K. (2015.) Sexual Assault Prevention and Reporting on College Campuses in the US: A Review of Policies and Recommendations Vol.6. *Journal of Education and Practice*: Retrieved by: <http://www.iiste.org/>

The PLOS ONE Staff. (2018) Correction: Sexual assault incidents among college undergraduates: Prevalence and factors associated with risk. *PLOS ONE* 13(1): e0192129.

Faculty and Staff Perceptions of Sexual Violence and Effective Policy Responses: A Study of Campus Sexual Violence at Dawson College

Afeefa Ayub, Shanyah Campbell-Steer, Charlotte Di Berardo, Audrey Fontaine, Felicia Garnett-Higgins, Kendra Horne, Morgan Kane, Violet Lapointe, Isabelle Menarik, Leanna Molina, Pamela Rochefort, Michaela Teolis

Table of contents

Abstract-----	3
Introduction-----	4
Literature review-----	4
Methodology-----	6-8
Sample size, selection size and justification-----	6
Study Design-----	6
Data Collection Procedures-----	7
Instruments of Study-----	8
Results.....	10-12
Discussion-----	13-15
Interpretation of results-----	13-15
Implications and Suggestions for Future Research-----	15
References-----	17

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the future implementation of Dawson College's stand-alone sexual violence policy through the perception of Dawson staff and faculty, across demographics. The results are measured based on participants' preconceived beliefs of sexual violence on campus, and their opinions on the future policy's effectiveness.

We expect that participant perceptions of sexual violence and beliefs on how best to address it will vary depending on demographic characteristics. The study utilizes a mixed method design, with an online survey administered through the Dawson College Omnivox server to explore the staff and faculty knowledge and opinions on sexual violence on campus. The survey includes questions to gather information on the participants' demographics, such as age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ethnicity. The survey was transmitted to all 1,929 Dawson staff and faculty members. In all, 211 responded to the survey, with 157 fully completing it. Participation was consensual, voluntary and anonymous. Participants could leave the study at any point.

The results show that the majority of participants who do not believe that sexual violence is an issue on campus were cisgender white men.

Future research should explore and evaluate effective methods of implementing a sexual violence policy and support on campus, as well as integration of sexual violence prevention for college campus staff and faculty.

Introduction

Sexual violence is a significant health and social problem that has been gaining awareness across North America. The recent viral #MeToo and 'Time's up' movements, anti-sexual violence campaigns, empowered survivors of sexual violence to share their experiences. These anti-sexual violence movements received much attention, proceeding allegations of sexual violence against high profile individuals, such as Harvey Weinstein, Quebec's own Gilbert Rozon, and professors at both Montreal universities, Concordia and McGill (Paling, 2018; The Canadian Press, 2018). Campus sexual violence affects one in five women attending a post-secondary institution (Canadian Federation of Students, 2015). Research has indicated the issue is notably underreported, with 4-8% of female college survivors of sexual violence reporting to campus authorities (Amar, Strout, Simpson, Cardiello, & Beckford, 2014), and 53% of all survivors stated they did not report to the authorities due to lack of confidence in the process (The Canadian Press, 2014). Out of all Canadian colleges and universities, only 9 of 78 have an existing policy addressing sexual violence on campus (CFS, 2015). Protests, including student-run protests began appearing all over Canada and the United States, with demands for a more active approach at ending campus sexual violence prevention. As various schools, including Dawson College, begin to enforce sexual violence prevention, through creation and adjustment of existing policy, further

research is required to study effective methods to educate everyone on campus about policy and resources (Potter, Edwards, Banyard, Stapleton, Demers, & Moynihan, 2016).

Based on the literature reviewed on campus sexual violence, it is evident that research is lacking on people who are particularly at-risk of sexual violence, including Indigenous people and those with disabilities (CFS, 2015). There is limited research on the “institutional level factors” affecting the underreporting of campus sexual violence (Amar et al, 2014). The literature review also reveals a lack of studies that explore staff and faculty perspectives of campus sexual violence. In particular, studies that explore the relationship between demographic characteristics and staff and faculty opinions on campus sexual violence are lacking. The literature highlights that populations who are at higher risk of sexual violence are more likely than those who are not to be subjected to information on sexual violence prevention (e.g. sexual violence prevention programs for young women) (Potter, et al, 2016; Senn, 2012). Research indicates that due to the modern reliance and wide use of the Internet, a recommended method of communicating information about campus sexual violence is through the school’s website (Schwartz, McMahon, & Broadnax, 2015).

The purpose of this descriptive study is to explore the Dawson College staff and faculty perception of the severity of campus sexual violence, as well as their opinion on current initiatives seeking to address this reality. Our survey assesses the degree to which participants agree with the Quebec government’s definition of sexual violence, as well as their confidence in Dawson College’s administration to develop and enact a stand-alone sexual violence policy appropriately. The objective is to focus on Dawson faculty and staff opinions regarding sexual violence, and on current and future initiatives seeking to address this reality, including policy development and implementation. The method used for this study is both qualitative and quantitative. A survey was sent to all Dawson staff through the Omnivox system with voluntary participation. We wished to

explore relationships between participant demographics and participant responses to various questions. We also explored Dawson faculty and staff opinions on students' involvement in the future creation of the sexual violence policy. We hypothesize that participant perspectives on sexual violence, and how best to address it at Dawson, are correlated with participant demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, and class, as well as the intersections of different demographic characteristics.

Methodology

Sample size, selection size and justification

The participants of this study are the faculty and staff working at Dawson College. This sample was selected to get a sense of their views and opinions on sexual violence at the college. As previously mentioned, past research has mainly focused on student perspectives on and experiences of campus sexual violence. Thus, we felt it important to address the identified gaps in the literature by considering faculty and staff perspectives on this issue. Out of the total 1929 faculty and staff members, 211 participated in the study. Of these, 157 completed the survey entirely. The sampling technique used is convenience and voluntary. The timeframe of the survey is from March 16, 2018 to April 6, 2018. Out of 157 participants, 55 of those are (cisgender) men (35%) and 89 women (57%). These demographic figures, based on gender identity, are similar to those found in the overall population of employees at Dawson: 58% are women, and 42% are men (Dawson College, 2017). The sample size compared to the total population of Dawson staff and faculty members is small, with a response rate of 8%. Thus, the sample size is not representative of the total population of staff and faculty at Dawson College. In addition, it is challenging to make comparisons on other demographics (e.g. ethnicity/race), as Dawson College does not report on demographics, other than gender, in their annual report (Dawson College, 2017).

Study design

A mixed methods study design is used, where both open- and closed-ended questions are asked. This method is utilized to explore the perceptions of Dawson College's staff on students' involvement in the making of the school policy on campus sexual violence as well as to explore their feelings on sexual violence policy to be developed by the College. The survey included the Quebec government's definition of sexual violence as stated in Bill 151, *An Act to prevent and fight sexual violence in higher education institutions*: "... any form of violence committed through sexual practices or by targeting sexuality, including sexual assault. Also [referring] to any other misconduct, including that relating to sexual and gender diversity, in such forms as unwanted direct or indirect gestures, comments, behaviors or attitudes with sexual connotations, including by a technological means" (Assemblée Nationale Quebec, 2017). Because of the limited time to collect data, a cross-sectional research design is utilized, where the participants were tested only at one given point in time.

Data collection procedure

The data collection procedure for this study was fairly straightforward once we established our study design. The data is collected directly from the study participants (i.e., primary data). To reach Dawson faculty and staff, it was imperative to find a medium that would facilitate the data collection process, specifically one that would be easily accessible to the target population. The survey was sent out through the Omnivox survey system, which can be accessed by all faculty and staff. Given the nature of the study and its sensitive subject matter, we ensured that participants could participate anonymously. Anonymity offers participants the safety and freedom to answer openly and honestly. Resources to access psychosocial support were also included in our consent form in the event that participants experienced emotional distress while completing the survey.

Having an online survey gave us the ability to reach almost the entire population, relative to other data collection methods, such as in-person interviews. The course instructor sent out a promotional message via email to all faculty and staff to encourage participation. This message was sent on Friday, March 16th, 2018, and the survey was published later that day. Participants were allotted 3-weeks to complete the survey. This study could be easily replicated for other faculty and staff members in other learning institutions because the questions in our survey are geared specifically to our target demographic. Moreover, most academic institutions have an online communication portal, like Omnivox, which they could use to make a similar survey available to all members of their respective communities. The degree of risk in participating in a survey-based study, such as ours, is also low, making it easier to replicate.

Instruments of study

To collect data, the survey was administered through the college's Omnivox server. The survey was formulated by a group of social service students, with varying demographics and backgrounds who could bring their own unique ideas and experiences to the process. The survey was developed in the Social Service Research class over the course of a month. Previous, related research studies were examined to review how surveys were administered in the past, and to consider the best options on how to phrase questions on this sensitive subject. The survey was first sent to the Social Service Research instructor for feedback, which was then incorporated into the survey. The survey is organized into 4 different sections: demographics, the current awareness and understanding of sexual violence on campus, the policy-making process, and lastly the sample's view of different intervention strategies in addressing sexual violence. The demographics section consisted of both qualitative and quantitative questions, in an attempt to give participants more freedom to express their identities and demographic characteristics. Collecting demographic data

was imperative for this research, as our hypothesis involved exploring possible correlations between someone's demographics and their opinions on sexual violence. For example, a heterosexual man could possibly have different preferred intervention strategies than a trans woman because both experience the world very differently. The demographics section was nominal data since participants could only select from a list of mutually exclusive categories. The second section of our survey consisted of two questions, one was open-ended and qualitative whereas the other was close-ended and quantitative. The third and fourth sections were entirely quantitative and ordinal, consisting of Likert scales, ensuring the collection of more precise data that we could then compare to the data we collected on participant demographics.

The independent variables are the teachers' life experiences and demographic characteristics, and the dependent variables are their beliefs and faith in the administration in developing a future policy on sexual violence. As previously mentioned, we hypothesize that participants' views and opinions are correlated with their demographic characteristics.

The instrument used is reliable and valid. There is face and content validity since the the questions included in the survey ask about respondents' perspectives on campus sexual violence and potential strategies to address it. Internal consistency reliability is shown using Likert scales with similar, yet differently formulated, statements that seek to measure participants' faith in the policy development process. Surveys can be a useful instrument when it comes to descriptive studies, due to their ability to reach many participants. In the past, most studies around this subject were conducted through surveys. The time constraints of our Social Service Research course is a limitation of this research since more time could have enabled the use of interviews, which could have gathered more qualitative data. Another limitation stemming from this constraint is that we were only able to collect data from participants at one point in time during the semester. With the

policy on sexual violence about to be developed, participants' knowledge and opinions could evolve, meaning that the survey could be less reliable in the future. A longitudinal study would have allowed us to assess changes in participants' views and experience before, during and after the development and implementation of the policy.

Results

Table 1. Sample Demographics (n =185)					
Age	n	%	Gender	n	%
25-35	45	24.3	Woman	103	55.7
36-45	65	35.1	Man	70	37.8
46-55	47	25.4	Non-Binary, Genderqueer, non-conforming	5	2.7
56-65	22	11.9	Queer	1	0.5
65+	2	1.1	Transman	0	0
Non-disclosed	4	2.2	Transwoman	0	0
			Other	0	0
			Non-disclosed	6	3.2
Years employed at Dawson	n	%	Sexual Orientation	n	%
>1	18	9.7	Heterosexual/straight	154	83.2
1-5	52	28.1	Gay or Lesbian	11	5.9
6-10	53	28.6	Bisexual	4	2.2
11-15	24	13	Asexual	1	0.5
16-20	20	10.8	Queer	6	3.2
21-30	13	7	Other	0	0
Other	2	1.1	Non-Disclosed	9	4.9
Non-disclosed	3	1.6			
Ethnicity	n	%	Disability	n	%
Indigenous	2	1.1	Intellectual or development disability	0	0
East/Southeast Asian	7	3.8	Cognitive or learning disability	5	2.7
South Asian	2	1.1	Physical disability	5	2.7
Middle Eastern or North African	14	7.6	Mental health	31	16.8
White, Caucasian, European Canadian	135	73.4	Other	3	1.6
Black, Afro-Caribbean, African-Canadian	6	3.3	None	128	69.6
Latin-American, Latinx	4	2.2	Non-disclosed	16	8.7
Other:	6	3.3	Non-disclosed	16	8.7

Table 2: Participant responses to select questions (n), %

10.1: I believe that sexual violence is an issue at Dawson College.

- “strongly disagree” or “disagree”: (40/157) 25.48%
- “strongly agree” or “agree”: (46/157) 29.29%
- “agree nor disagree”: (72/157) 45.86%

11.1: Only teachers and staff should be involved in developing this policy.

- “strongly disagree” or “disagree”: (133/157) 84.71%
- “strongly agree” or “agree”: (10/157) 6.37%
- “agree nor disagree”: (14/157) 8.92%

11.2: Students should have an active role in policy making

- “strongly disagree” or “disagree”: (7/157) 4.46%
- “strongly agree” or “agree”: (143/157) 91.08%
- “agree nor disagree”: (7/157) 4.46%

11.3: Students should have an equal role in policy making:

- “strongly disagree” or “disagree”: (31/157) 19.75%
- “strongly agree” or “agree”: (92/157) 58.60%
- “agree nor disagree”: (32/157) 20.38%

11.4: The process of policy making should be made transparent and public:

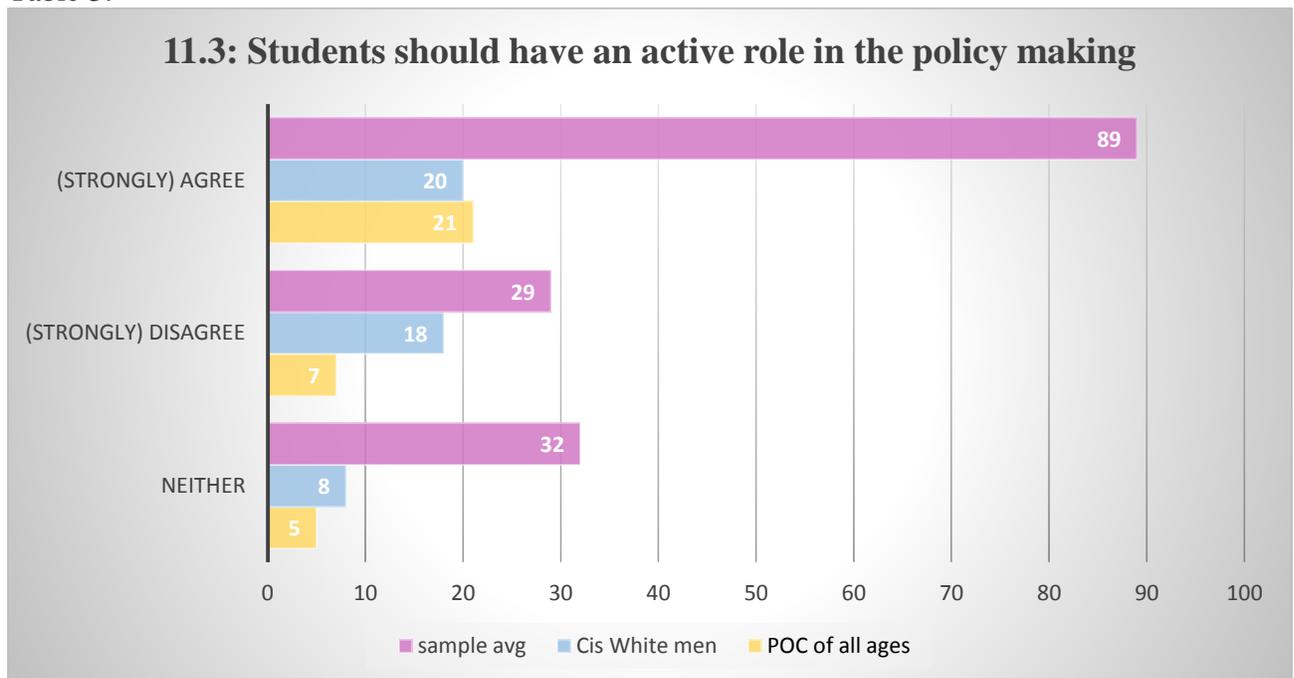
- “strongly disagree” or “disagree”: (4/157) 2.55%
- “strongly agree” or “agree”: (144/157) 91.72%
- “agree nor disagree”: (9/157) 5.73%

11.5: I am confident in the administration’s ability to develop and implement an appropriate and effective policy on sexual violence:

- “strongly disagree” or “disagree”: (29/157) 18.47%
- “strongly agree” or “agree”: (72/157) 45.86%
- “agree nor disagree”: (56/157) 35.67%

Non-disclosed			Socioeconomic class		
Religious/ Spiritual affiliation	n	%		n	%
Non-disclosed	8	4.3	Lower Class	5	2.7
Indigenous	1	0.5	Middle Class	156	84.3
Christian	66	35.7	Upper Class	12	6.5
Muslim	2	1.1	Non-disclosed	12	6.5
Jewish	11	5.9			
Other	14	7.6			
None	83	44.9			
Non-disclosed	8	4.3			

Table 3:



One hundred and fifty-five (155) participants completed this particular question. Of the 89 people who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that students should have an active role in the policy making process, 20 identified as cisgender white men while 21 identified as persons of colour. The remaining 48 participants who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this question identified as white and were of various genders. Of the 29 participants who “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this statement, 18 identified as white men while 7 identified as persons of colour. The remaining 4 participants either did not disclose their gender and race, or were white of various genders.

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

As hypothesized, perceptions about campus sexual violence, and how to address it, varied based on participant demographics and patterns found within the survey.

Based on the results for question *10.1: I believe that sexual violence is an issue at Dawson College*, we noticed respondents between the ages of 46-65 make up the minority for both of those who “agreed” or “strongly agreed”. These results were expected because we presumed that people under the age of 35 would be more aware of sexual violence being an issue at Dawson College.

Our results for question *11.1: Only teachers and staff should be involved in developing this policy* show that the older the respondents are in age, the more likely they were to agree that only teachers and staff should be involved in the process of developing the policy. These results were expected because it was presumed that the older the staff members are, the more likely their interests and

priorities will be placed elsewhere compared to the new generation of staff members. Older staff members may feel less inclined to include students in policy-making.

Regarding question *11.2: Students should have an active role in policy-making*, it would appear that the majority of respondents who “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that students should have an active role within the policy-making process identify as cisgender. These results were expected because most of the staff and faculty at Dawson College are white and identify as cisgender.

It is important to note that 211 of 1929 (10.94%) staff members participated in our study, and only 157 (8.14%) completed the survey completely. This brings into question the representativeness of our results because only 8.14% of staff members completed our survey.

Regarding question *11.3: students should have an equal role in the policy-making*, it would seem that the majority of staff who “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” are White and identify as cisgender. These results were expected because it was presumed that the staff who are White and identify as cisgender are less concerned about sexual violence and the policy-making process due to the unequal distribution of power amongst White and people of colour.

Regarding question *11.4: the process of policy making should be made transparent and public*, the majority of respondents (91.72%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed”, making up most of the participants. Across demographics, the majority believe that the policy should be made public. These results were expected because this policy affects the entire student body and larger Dawson community.

Regarding question *11.5: I am confident in the administration’s ability to develop and implement an appropriate and effective policy on sexual violence*, it would seem that marginalized people were more likely not to have confidence in the administration. These results were expected

because it was presumed that non-marginalized individuals' relationship with systems of power are generally favourable. Therefore, they are more likely to have confidence in these institutions.

Limitations

The major limitations of this study include the use of self-report data. When gathering data in this manner, without a researcher directly present, the interpretation of questions and answers can be unclear and left up to the participant's interpretation. The sample size was inadequate with only 8% of staff responding. Also, due to the lack of demographic information released by the College, it is impossible to determine if the sample is representative of the wider teacher and staff population at Dawson College, in terms of demographic composition. It is impossible to determine if it is accurately representative of the overall staff's views. The distribution of the survey was limited to an online voluntary survey and no other methods of distribution were used. Two emails were sent out to remind people to fill out the survey; the first on March 16th upon release of the survey which was distributed to all staff, the second was sent out on April 3rd. However, the email was not successfully distributed to all staff for unknown reasons. Upon re-evaluation of our survey, some of our questions could have been less vague in order to leave less room for individual interpretation. The amount of time that participants were given to answer the survey was only three weeks. More time likely would have allowed us to collect more data. We believe this study could be replicated due to the concise nature of it.

Implications and suggestions for future research

Our study highlights how staff and faculty are, generally, in favour of student participation in the policy making process and for the process to be made transparent to the Dawson community. This may imply that the College environment is conducive to fostering collaboration on the development of this policy between faculty, staff, administration and students. Our findings also

suggest that staff and faculty who are white tend to have more faith in the administration's capacity to develop and implement an appropriate policy. This may shed light onto the reality of Dawson as a racialized space that tends to privilege those that can more closely identify with its structures, social relations and policies. Thus, it would be important to ensure that people of different backgrounds and lived realities are included in the policy making process to ensure that their views and realities are centred and considered, included people of colour, people with disabilities, Indigenous persons, as well as sexual and gender minorities. Ensuring the meaningful representation of historically marginalized voices and perspectives will, hopefully, translate into a policy making process, and policy, that are more inclusive and sensitive to everyone's unique reality.

Future suggestions to help us do research would be to do one-on-one interviews, it would allow us to explore more complex and in-depth perspectives and opinions. Creating small or big group discussions would allow for members to communicate their knowledge by sharing ideas on potentially wanting to create a policy and to see how people interact with each other and how and why they want to see change regarding this particular topic.

References

- Amar, A. F., Strout, T. D., Simpson, S., Cardiello, M., & Beckford, S. (2014). Administrators' Perceptions of College Campus Protocols, Response, and Student Prevention Efforts for Sexual Assault.
- Assemblée Nationale Québec. (2017). Bill n°151 : an act to prevent and fight sexual violence in higher education institutions. Québec, Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-151-41-1.html>
- Canadian Federation of Students, Ontario. (2015). Sexual violence on campus: fact sheet.
- Dawson College (2017). *Dawson College Annual Report 2016-2017* Retrieved from <https://www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/governance/annual-reports/2016-2017-annual-report/>

- Fisher, B. S., Daigle, L. E., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2003). Reporting sexual victimization to the police and others: Results from a national-level study of college women. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 30, 6–38
- Paling, E. (2018, February 18). Canada's Rape Crisis Centres Face Funding Crisis At Watershed Moment. Huffington Post. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/02/15/canadas-metoo-movement-stretches-limits-of-sexual-assault-support-centres_a_23362835/
- Potter, S. J., Edwards, K. M., Banyard, V. L., Stapleton, J. G., Demers, J. M., & Moynihan, M. M. (2016). Conveying campus sexual misconduct policy information to college and university students: Results from a 7-campus study. *Journal of American College Health*, 64(6), 438-447. doi:10.1080/07448481.2016.1178122
- Schwartz, R., McMahon, S., & Broadnax, J. (2015). A Review of sexual assault information on college websites. *Health & Social Work*, 40(4), 275-282. doi:10.1093/hsw/hlv064
- The Canadian Press. (2018). Just for Laughs founder Gilbert Rozon denies sex abuse allegations. CBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/gilbert-rozon-sex-abuse-allegations-1.4526064>
- The Canadian Press. (2014). Sexual-assault victims lack confidence in Canadian justice system | CBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sexual-assault-victims-lack-confidence-in-justice-system-study-says-1.2836408>
- Walsh, W. A., Banyard, V. L., Moynihan, M. M., Ward, S., & Cohn, E. S. (2010). Disclosure and service use on a college campus after an unwanted sexual experience. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 11, 134–151.



SAFER SPACES POLICY:

1. The DSU commits to creating a campus environment free of discrimination, harassment and violence.
2. A safer space is one where convenors are conscious of power dynamics and accessibility factors, and seek to implement mechanism of harm reduction and inclusion.
3. The Policy is not to be applied in such a way as to detract from the right of Members to engage in the frank discussion of potentially controversial matters, such as race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, politics or religion. Furthermore, the policy shall not be interpreted in such a way as to limit the use of legitimate instructional techniques, such as irony, argument, conjecture and refutation, or the assignment of readings, which may present a controversial point of view.



> How We Work

> Past Equity Projects at McGill

Who We Are

Contact Us

Work at SEDE

Our Mission



At the heart of McGill University's commitment to equity, SEDE works to ensure an equitable and inclusive experience for all students, staff, and faculty. SEDE believes that equity, diversity and inclusion are essential to the academic excellence and service to society for which McGill is known and continuously strives.

SEDE's mission is carried out through education and awareness-raising programs and initiatives which recognize and integrate diverse perspectives and experiences, and foster meaningful, respectful engagement in all aspects of life at McGill.

These are some of the things we offer:

- **Workshops and trainings** to raise meaningful understanding on campus about issues of equity, and provide tools to address acts of exclusion and discrimination
- **Events and activities** aimed at recognizing and celebrating diverse perspectives and achievements of different communities
- **Consultation, best practices, and resources** for how to integrate inclusive and community-based practices into research and curriculum, in order to uphold McGill's commitment to academic excellence
- **Partnership-building and support** through identifying barriers to meaningful involvement in McGill life, and collectively addressing them
- **Research and community exchange** which promotes experiential learning through an equity lens as a part of academic study
- **Volunteer and mentorship opportunities** in order to promote exchange between communities and share our capacities for research and knowledge-sharing

SAFER SPACES POLICY:

1. The CSU commits to creating a campus environment free of discrimination, harassment and violence.
2. A safer space is one where convenors are conscious of power dynamics and accessibility factors, and seek to implement mechanism of harm reduction and inclusion.

Responsibilities

3. Councillors and Executives should see themselves as particularly concerned with creating a culture shift on campus to promote safer spaces and safer events which reduce the risk of sexual violence and create opportunities for education on consent culture.
4. Each member of the University community is responsible for helping to create an environment that is free from harassment and discrimination. Those actively engaged in the governance of the Union and in student activities on campus it supports are encouraged to contribute to the prevention of, intervention in, and effective response to, sexual violence. All members of the community can play a role in building a just social and educational environment by:
 - a) Learning about sexual assault and sexual violence and participating in educational programs
 - b) Modeling healthy and respectful behavior in personal and professional relationships;
 - c) Speaking out against behaviour that encourages the perpetuation of sexual violence including sexism, ableism, racism, homophobia and transphobia;
 - d) Speaking out against behaviour which perpetuates rape culture such as racism and sexism, the perpetuation of rape myths and blaming of the survivor, and joking about gender inequality or sexual assault;
 - e) Intervening in situations that could lead to situations of assault when it is safe to do so;
 - f) Interrupting misconduct or assault when it is safe to do so;

Training

5. Prior to September 1st of their mandate, each member of the CSU Executive shall complete a minimum of 6 hours of consent training and power dynamics training.

8

From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces

A New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice

Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens

THE PRACTICE OF establishing ground rules or guidelines for conversations and behavior is foundational to diversity and social justice learning activities. As student affairs educators, we expect this process will help create a learning environment that allows students to engage with one another over controversial issues with honesty, sensitivity, and respect. We often describe such environments as *safe spaces*, terminology we hope will be reassuring to participants who feel anxious about sharing their thoughts and feelings regarding these sensitive and controversial issues.

But to what extent can we promise the kind of safety our students might expect from us? We have found with increasing regularity that participants invoke in protest the common ground rules associated with the idea of safe space when the dialogue moves from polite to provocative. When we queried students about their rationales, their responses varied, yet shared a common theme: a conflation of safety with comfort. We began to wonder what accounts for this conflation. It may arise in part from the defensive tendency to discount, deflect, or retreat from a challenge. Upon further reflection, another possibility arose. Were we adequately and honestly preparing students to be challenged in this way? Were we in fact hindering our own efforts by relying on the traditional language of safe space?

As we explored these thorny questions, it became increasingly clear to us that our approach to initiating social justice dialogues should not be to convince participants that we can remove risk from the equation, for this is simply impossible. Rather, we propose revising our language, shifting away from the concept of safety and emphasizing the importance of bravery instead, to help students better understand—and rise to—the challenges of genuine dialogue on diversity and social justice issues.