

BOOK REVIEW/ COMPTE RENDU

Elizabeth Quinlan, Andrea Quinlan, Curtis Fogel, and Gail Taylor. (Eds.) *Sexual Violence at Canadian Universities: Activism, Institutional Responses, and Strategies for Change*. Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2017, 342 pp, \$44.99 paper, (9781771122832).

S*exual Violence at Canadian Universities: Activism, Institutional Responses, and Strategies for Change* is a welcome and much needed volume of analyses, accounts, and reflections upon the current climate at post-secondary institutions across Canada. Until now, the dearth of scholarly literature investigating sexual violence at Canadian post-secondary institutions has forced Canadian researchers to depend upon research situated in the US college context or more general sexual violence research in Canada to inform their work. Beginning from a firm stance that rape culture is pervasive problem in Canadian universities, Quinlan et al. bring together 15 chapters from academics, community developers, activists, and marginalized voices to unearth the nuances of the problem, document and revisit cases, and provide inspiration for the next generation.

The book is written with a language and structure that allows a wide-range of readers to easily access and understand the complex problems and arguments laid out by the authors. With a focus on qualitative research, personal experiences, and informed commentary the collection can act as both an entry point for the less-informed reader, while simultaneously presenting otherwise undocumented information for sexual violence scholars. Albeit the majority of the chapters confirm what experienced scholars already know or would expect, such as that what has been documented at US colleges is also happening at Canadian institutions. While feminist, Marxist, intersectional, anti-colonial and anti-neoliberal thought broadly serve as the intellectual foundation for the book, these theories and the scholars who developed them are not discussed at length. Scholarly readers looking for extensive theoretical frameworks and protracted philosophical inquiry into the nuances of these theories will need to look elsewhere, as the majority of the authors focus on employing such theories to deconstruct and make sense of the realities we see playing out across the

country. Activists, professionals and volunteers who support survivors and work toward change with and within public systems are likely to benefit the most from the reading. Nonetheless, the breadth of topics and institutions covered will provide any reader with a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the history and climate of sexual violence at Canadian universities.

With particular attention to survivor experiences and activist efforts, the book offers a wealth of knowledge and tools to all stakeholders who wish to inform themselves, take action, and work towards a climate of safety and mutual respect. Sexual violence scholars will recognize many of the authors, studies and news stories cited throughout the book, but will also be presented new sources to pursue. While the authors inevitably cite US research and data, the focus remains on Canadian issues, instances, and history. The introductory chapter succinctly summarizes the nature of the problem by grounding the reader in reality—as opposed to theory—with attention to high-profile news stories, scholarly research and statistics, and the actions of activists, governments, and university administration to address, or in some cases fail to address the problem. The experiences of ethnic minority and indigenous women survivors are explored in the opening chapters to both illuminate and begin to fill the void of information surrounding experiences of these groups on campuses and the lack of attention they are given in policy and resource allocation. These chapters are followed by a damning indictment of the neoliberal forces that ultimately corporatize universities, place responsibility on the vulnerable to protect themselves and lead to institutional betrayal of survivors.

Several extensive reflections upon incidents and activism offer an in-depth and cross-sectional look at the climate of Canadian campuses and administrations, including the authors' own activist efforts as well as the various contexts in which violence occurs, including in online spaces and university sport. Some of the case universities include York University, Saint Mary's University, University of Ottawa, Dalhousie University, University of Windsor, and University of Saskatchewan, and are complemented by a history of the METRAC campus safety audit and briefer references to other high-profile cases across the country. The authors reveal factors that put students at risk of becoming perpetrators and survivors in these various contexts to ultimately provide direction for future efforts toward change. Accounts of the authors' own activist efforts detail the experience of organizing and implementing button campaigns, safety audits, support lines, bystander intervention and mandatory undergraduate classes. While detailing their successes as well as their failures, the most helpful authors are

those who most clearly explain the challenges they encountered - most frequently from university administration - and how exactly they addressed these concerns and improved their efforts. While many activists found administrators to be unsupportive, others found ways to take the administration's feedback to improve their efforts and, in some cases, create collaborative partnerships. Others worked with community partners and professors who were experts in the topic of sexual violence to develop proactive policies and prevention campaigns. Many of the chapters are light on the literature review and cursory in their exploration of alternative perspectives, but the utility of these chapters comes from the in-depth accounts of the authors' experiences of working long and hard for change.

The few academic and philosophical chapters offer insightful and important critiques of common conceptions, rhetoric, and activist efforts that may not be informed by critical scholarly thought. While these authors recognize that the work being done and the current discourse we have in Canada are of incredible value, we all still have a long road of conscious-raising ahead of us. To this end, the book closes with a thorough comparison between the Canadian and US policy contexts, which offers incredible insight to scholars struggling to understand multiple legal systems that dictate the Canadian context and how much more complicated it is than the Title IX-based system.

As noted by a few of the book's authors, some universities are developing mandatory first year courses that educate students in feminist issues, including sexual violence. I highly recommend including *Sexual Violence at Canadian Universities* on the reading list for such classes. While some authors explore philosophical and theoretical arguments, they consistently provide both quantitative and qualitative data to support their convictions and assertions. As we continue to work through this tipping point in Canadian higher education, we need more books like this one, and more people reading them.

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