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I'm Not Your Waifu: Sexual Harassment and Assault in Cosplay, Anime & Comic Conventions

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I'M NOT YOUR WAIFU: SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT IN

COSPLAY & ANIME & COMIC CONVENTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Women face sexual harassment and sexual assault far too often with one in every six women sexually assaulted during their life (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). In the anime and comic community, women face sexual assault and harassment, often in open public spaces, due to these spaces being labeled as men's (Cote, 2015; Fox & Potocki 2015; Rodriguez 2015; Schott & Horrell 2000). Policies such as Cosplay is not Consent (Facebook, 2018) are not upheld or enforced by anime and comic conventions. Policies that are enforced, have clear and concise wording, and are enforced by staff and volunteers, who have been educated or trained to deal with sexual assault and harassment, may likely promote safer sexual assault and sexual harassment free anime and comic conventions. A total of 27 participants (20 women, 6 men, and 1 non-binary) were recruited via a snowball technique through Facebook social media groups. Participants were interviewed in-depth either face-to-face or through written interviews. The results showed that: (1) cosplay is a form of embodiment it does not negate the person's identity or bodily autonomy while wearing the cosplay; (2) women are generally the targets of sexual assault and harassment; (3) policies are often not enforced or enforced well due to lack of clear policies or consequences; (4) staff and volunteers are not educated, trained or equipped to deal with sexual assault and harassment; and 5) anime and comic convention organizers need to be responsible for helping to create safer environments for their attendees, staff, and volunteers.

I would like to thank my family and best friends, who don't always get what I do, but are

nevertheless supportive in all my crazy undertakings.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Women face sexual harassment and sexual assault far too often. In a 2001 study, it was found that girls were sexually harassed more than boys, 56% versus 40% (AAUW 2001; Fineran & Bennett 1999) and about 1 in every 6 women are sexually assaulted during their life (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). In places often dictated to be men's spaces they may face even more issues with sexual assault and harassment, which has been documented for example within the video gaming community (Cote, 2015). Another such place that women must deal with men's spaces is anime and comic conventions. From my own experience as an insider into the anime and comic community, I have noticed a rise in women speaking up about being sexually harassed or sexually assaulted while at anime and comic conventions. Several years ago, to combat such issues at anime and comic conventions many of these conventions enacted using the Cosplay is not Consent policy (Facebook.com, 2018).

However, while the idea of enacting Cosplay is not Consent was a step in the right direction, anime and comic book conventions have not tried to enforce this policy. Signs and posters about Cosplay is not Consent are posted regularly at anime and comic conventions, but there is no process for how to go about dealing with sexual harassment or sexual assault, nor is there any focus from security teams to combat sexual assault or harassment. Currently, there is very little research on sexual assault or sexual harassment in conjunction with anime and comic conventions, or cosplay (combination of "costume" and "play").

Anime and Comic conventions have long been viewed as safe spaces for all who attend. They are considered safe spaces from the "normal" everyday world in which nerds and geeks can openly express their love for all things anime, comics, video games, etc. In the "normal" world

most nerds and geeks have often felt left out or bullied due to their love of such hobbies that define them as geeks, nerds, or intellectuals (Peterson & Ray, 2006). Anime and comic conventions have been around since the 1930s, though they were previously only known as science fiction conventions (Pollak, 2006; Lotecki, 2012). Since that time, it has been tradition to show love for these hobbies by dressing up in cosplay, attending anime and comics conventions, buying merchandise, and attending panels specifically geared toward these hobbies. Over time anime and comic conventions have sprouted up. Different Anime and comic conventions can have a wide range of attendees, which can be anywhere from several hundred to over 80,000 attendees, and is generally dependent on who owns the conventions, the amount of their budget, where the convention is held (such as city or state), and what the convention is able to offer attendees (such as certain guests or panels).

It is vital to establish better policies against sexual assault and sexual harassment at anime and comic conventions, as well as develop and train a security team specialized in dealing with sexual assault and sexual harassment to make anime and comic conventions a safe place for all who attend. The intent of the study was focused on providing an in-depth look at sexual assault and sexual harassment in anime and comic conventions to help anime and comic conventions to establish better policies, and appropriate training for a team to proactively combat sexual assault and sexual harassment at anime and comic conventions through exploratory research. In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted to create better policies, help establish a unique and fully trained team to be proactive against sexual assault and sexual harassment during anime and comic conventions and begin filling the gap in literature and research on this area. The findings here

may also be used in a broader sense for research, and later may become more developed through

creating a quantitative survey and framed by the current findings from this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Defined

As noted earlier, women are more likely to be sexually harassed and approximately 1 in 6 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. Sexual harassment and sexual assault are prevalent in the United States (Kopper, 1996; Reese, L., & Lindenberg, 2003) and need to be addressed. Sexual harassment and assault can happen anywhere, though it is well known for happening in workplace environments; especially toward women (Miner-Rubino, Settles, & Stewart 2009). Many companies such as Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and Wal-Mart have policies put in place to try to help reduce and/or eliminate sexual harassment and/or sexual assault within the workplace. For example, The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines (EEOC) defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature (Eeoc.gov, 2018). The EEOC's Policy Guidance on Current Issues of Sexual Harassment goes on to further state:

> The EEOC's Guidelines define two types of sexual harassment: 'quid pro quo' and 'hostile environment'. The Guidelines provide that 'unwelcome' sexual conduct constitutes sexual harassment when 'submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment'. 'Quid pro quo harassment' occurs when 'submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual'. The Supreme Court's decision in Vinson established that both types of

sexual harassment are actionable under section 703 of Title VII of the Civil Rights

Act of 1964, as forms of sex discrimination.

Although 'quid pro quo' and 'hostile environment' harassment are theoretically

distinct claims, the line between the two is not always clear and the two forms of

harassment often occur together. For example, an employee's tangible job

conditions are affected when a sexually hostile work environment results in her

constructive discharge. Similarly, a supervisor who makes sexual advances toward

a subordinate employee may communicate an implicit threat to adversely affect her

job status if she does not comply. 'Hostile environment' harassment may acquire

characteristics of 'quid pro quo' harassment if the offending supervisor abuses his

authority over employment decisions to force the victim to endure or participate in

the sexual conduct. Sexual harassment may culminate in a retaliatory discharge if a

victim tells the harasser or her employer she will no longer submit to the

harassment and is then fired in retaliation for this protest. Under these

circumstances, it would be appropriate to conclude that both harassment and

retaliation in violation of section 704(a) of Title VII have occurred (2017, para. 4-

5).

Sexual assault, though similar to sexual harassment, is more extensive in violence towards

individuals. Sexual harassment may only be the beginning and may lead up to a sexual assault as

lines between the two may become blurred. The Rape, Abuse & Incest National

Network discusses that sexual assault and rape is unwanted sexual contact that stops short of rape

or attempted rape and includes sexual touching and fondling (Sexual Assault RAINN, 2017). The

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term rape is often used as a legal definition to specifically include sexual penetration without consent. While rape is a form of sexual assault, not all sexual assault is necessarily rape. For its Uniform Crime Reports, the FBI defines rape as "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (Sexual Assault RAINN, 2017, para. 4). Though force may be physical, it does not have to be utilized to make a victim or person comply. "Perpetrators may use emotional coercion, psychological force, or manipulation to coerce a victim into non-consensual sex. Some perpetrators will use threats to force a victim to comply, such as threatening to hurt the victim or their family or other intimidation tactics" ("Sexual Assault RAINN", 2017, para. 4)

For the sake of this study, these definitions will be used as they are considered the general national guidelines, which cover all jurisdictions in the United States.

Gender and Power

Men's Space

In Jody Miller's book *Getting Played,* she makes a connection between men's domains and public spaces. She states that "…girl's treatment on the streets all reveal that public community space was, in many ways, *male space*" (2008, p 65). It is in this context that there are such spaces defined as men's spaces. One such space would be the nerd and geek community. Video games and comic books have long been defined as dominated by men spaces, which has affected the allowance of women into such spaces, and when allowed is usually followed by harassment from the community members that are men (Cote, 2015; Fox & Potocki 2015; Schott & Horrell 2000). Another problem with comics and video games being men's spaces is that it

perpetuates rape myths, as well as sexist attitudes toward women (Garland, Branch, Grimes, 2010; Fox & Potocki, 2015). In 2015, Cote proposes the reason women may face such problems in dominated men's communities is that women face sexist attitudes and sexual objectification due to being seen for their gender as the "out-group" (TAJFEL, 1970) in the video game and comic book community.

Specifically, regarding video games, studies have found that often anyone who does not fit the stereotypical nerd or geek image (straight, White, and a man) tends to face all sorts of problems from nerds and geeks (Gray, 2014; Nakamura, 2012; Salter & Blodgett, 2012). Anyone who is perceived as an "outsider" is usually a target for harassment (Cote, 2015; Fox & Tang, 2015; Kuznekoff & Rose, 2013). Women at anime and comic conventions are usually the primary targets as they are seen as threats to men's status quo (Cote, 2015). It, therefore, makes sense that women are in more danger than other minority groups for sexual assault and sexual harassment when in men's spaces such as anime and comic conventions. Rodriguez, in 2015, observed that at an anime and comic convention that in such a dominated men's space, women cosplayers are often heavily sexualized, objectified, and sexually harassed openly.

Backe 2017 states that the reason why fans that are men may behave this way is that they feel that they have the right to say who is allowed to stay in their world and who isn't. *Daily Beast*'s columnist, Arthur Chu, wrote in 2014 that he thinks that because many men, who define themselves as geeks or nerds, feel powerful in the anime and comic convention domain, whereas they may not be able to have that elsewhere. According to Weisburg 2014, "Men harassing women at conventions could be a form of gatekeeping. Men who are fans may feel threatened by women's presence in fandom, so they (subconsciously or not) marginalize them in order to feel

dominance. These men want to claim fandom spaces as their own, so they try to squeeze women out via sexual harassment".

Sexuality & Gender in Social Institutions

Gender and sexuality play a large part in social institutions and how it helps to maintain the status of social institutions. Even in anime and comic conventions they play a part. Social institutions provide basic needs or goals within a community or society (Luckmann, 1966) and usually is maintained through power and status. Generally, the most power and status are held by white men and so they make the rules of gender, perpetuate them, and get others to perpetuate these unspoken rules as well. In other words, it is the interactions of a community, of a people, are the ones that keep the institution of gender alive (Acker, 1990; Connell 1987; Lorber 1996; Lorber 1999; Rogers & Garrett). But gender is a social construct, unlike sex which is based on biology, and as such it is formed around the ideas of what gender is, a system of belief or expected norms (Williams, 2000). Since beliefs and even norms are ever changing it is assumed then social institutions would also change with periods of time (Martin, 2004). The ideas of how one should do gender are performed through cosplay at cosplay and anime conventions, though the rules are generally unspoken. Sexuality and gender play into this theming by how men are the ones who hold the power over women as comic and anime conventions are considered men's space, specifically heterosexual men, and they are the ones who gatekeep, or rather, 'make the rules'. It is through masculinity or femininity that gender is perceived by others and may constitute who usually targeted for sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions

as those who are perceived as more feminine have less power according to the 'unspoken rules' of the social institution that is anime and comic conventions via social interaction (Lorber, 1994).

<div align="center">Effects on Women</div>

Miner-Rubino, Settles, & Stewart (2009) state that if a workplace climate is so negative due to sexual harassment, then women would end up feeling excluded, disrespected, unsafe, stressed, and any type of success for women is blocked. They also argued that "the workplace climate plays a central role in setting the tone, perceptions, and expectations for employees" (p. 470). This can also be said about anime and comic conventions. Women can end up feeling excluded, disrespected, and unsafe, in a community that is meant to be a fun and safe space.

Sexual assault and sexual harassment affect women on a massive level as it affects them on a physical, mental, and emotional level. Women are often taught that any form of sexual assault or sexual harassment is their fault. It has been noted that sexual assault and sexual harassment can lead to self-objectification, which is linked to depression, habitual body monitoring, anorexia and bulimia, social physique anxiety, substance abuse, illegal drug use, and problems with drinking behaviors (Aubrey, 2006; Burney & Irwin, 2000; Kaukinen, 2002a; Kaukinen & DeMaris, 2005). Victimologists have suggested that sexual assault might be more strongly related to PTSD with major depressive episodes as compared to other types of non-sexual violence (Bourdreaux et al., 1998; Gilboa-Schechtman & Foa, 2001). Sexual assault and sexual harassment can also affect women economically and financially. Cohen and Miller 1998 found that crime victims made up about 25% of psychologists' clients and that it took up about

40% of their time when it came to treatment hours, not to mention that the cost of health treatment for crime victims was estimated to be around $9 billion U.S. dollars.

Women who attend anime and comic conventions, sexual assault and sexual harassment during these conventions end up making women feel dehumanized (Rodriguez 2015) and can end up with many of the same traumas that women who experience sexual assault and sexual harassment outside of anime and comic conventions. Victim blaming is often associated with those who hold more traditional types of ideology (Burt, 1980) and women who drink or dress in a promiscuous manner is worthy of the blame they receive when victimized (Kopper, 1996, Pollard, 1992).

Cosplay & Community Definitions

Cosplay Defined

The term cosplay is a combination of the two words "costume" and "role-play." The term comes from Japanese culture and was first used in the 1980s by Nobuyuki Takahashi in several articles in which he wrote about conventions and people who dressed up in character after attending a science fiction convention in the United States (Lunning, 2006; Peirson-Smith, 2013; Yein Jee 2008). Cosplay though a coined term by a Japanese man, originally started in the United States at the first convention ever to be held. The first convention was in 1939 and was titled World Science Fiction Convention, also known as Worldcon. It was held in New York City and it was here that people first started to dress up in cosplay, though the term had not yet been coined (Pollak, 2006; Lotecki, 2012). Today cosplay refers to anyone who wears a costume

representative of the nerd and geek community. Persons can be seen cosplaying characters from video games, Star Trek, Dr. Who, the anime Princess Tutu and Sailor Moon, Marvel comics, etc.

Cosplay and Identities

Identity has been a study in sociology for a long time. Identities have a broad spectrum, ranging from racial, to sexual, to gender identities, to social identity, self-concept, to role-based identity theories (Cross, 1971; Cass 1979; Owens, Robinson, & Smith-Lovin, 2010; Troidan, 1979). Fearson 1999 wrote that "how one answers the questions, 'who are you'?" was the basis for how identity can be described (p. 11). But identity may not be as simple as that. Many postmodern theorists think that identity is ever changing, that it is fluid (Hermans, 2001). When studying cosplayers fluidity of identity is an important theme to focus on as transforming from one's normal self to a character; possibly even multiple characters over the span of the weekend at an anime and comic convention. Perception of others and of self through social identity through the use of cosplay may play an important role in how cosplayers act and interact with others when in costume. Just as everyday normal society has rules for how persons should think and act in everyday life (Fearson, 1999) there may also be rules, expectations, and a standard for how to interact with others that are in cosplay as well as for those who are cosplaying. Collective identity may help persons to feel more of a connection with the anime and comic convention and the anime and comic community (Owens, Robinson, & Smith-Lovin, 2010; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Swan, Jetten, Gomez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012). It is also important to look at identities in cosplay as it involves an evolution of identity and transformation for the person who cosplays. It may even hold positive emotional and mental connotations for those who are often marginalized

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in society (Rappaport, 1995). Representation and being able to identify more with certain characters may be in part the key to why certain characters are chosen over others.

Waifu and Husbando Defined

The terms waifu and husbando come from a play on words between English and Japanese, in which favorite women and men characters hold a special meaning, or place in a person's heart. The character does not have to be sexy, or a husband or wife, and is usually one that is to be considered "pure." However, the waifu or husbando status can be applied to any character a person chooses. These terms have come to encompass 2D, 3D, Sci-Fi, real-life persons or characters from shows.

Cosplay is Not Consent

As conventions are becoming more mainstream it is important to recognize this subculture and its deficiencies in proactively protecting its attendees that are women from sexual assault and sexual harassment. Cosplay is meant for most to express one's love for a character or series. However, many men tend to perceive cosplay as a means for consent to women cosplayer's bodies (Rodriguez 2015). Such ideas, of course, can lead to sexual harassment and sexual assault by men. Men may feel entitled to women's bodies due to societal cues and expectations, and this may be exacerbated with cosplay as women are no longer viewed as a person but as a character. If women are no longer regarded as a person, but as the character they are embodying, then men may feel more entitled to assault or harass women regardless of the type of character. Since cosplay is often at anime and comic conventions, it impacts those who attend and are staff or volunteers.

Asselin's study on sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions found that,

> "59 percent said they felt sexual harassment was a problem in comics and 25 percent said they had been sexually harassed in the industry. The harassment varied: while in the workplace or at work events, respondents were more likely to suffer disparaging comments about their gender, sexual orientation, or race. At conventions, respondents were more likely to be photographed against their wishes. Thirteen percent reported having unwanted comments of a sexual nature made about them at conventions—and eight percent of people of all genders reported they had been groped, assaulted, or raped at a comic convention." (2014, July 22)

Many women do not report sexual assault or sexual harassment for a multitude of reasons. If this is true, then the data from this survey is probably much lower than the amount of true numbers of persons who have been sexually assaulted and sexually harassed at anime and comic conventions.

Cosplay is not Consent is a movement that started in the anime and comic convention community in 2013 (Facebook.com, 2018). Their mission statement is "to empower fan convention costume enthusiasts (aka "cosplayers") to SPEAK OUT against inappropriate social behavior of a sexual and/or stereotypical nature for themselves and fellow fans... cosplay is NOT consent!" (Facebook.com, 2018). The movement states that cosplay should constitute a fun environment for all fans at anime and comic conventions while understanding that not everyone is respectful towards others, especially those in cosplay. In part, this is because many costumes, especially for women, are sometimes revealing. The perception of access to women cosplayer's

bodies may stem from the idea that they are no longer persons, but a character. Or it could be that many characters that are women are drawn in a sexy or fan service-like manner and those men may tend to see it as dressing as a particular character means that women want attention and physical advances. This is where the phrase Cosplay is not Consent comes from. They affirm that anyone who sees inappropriate behavior towards others should speak up to maintain anime and comic conventions as fun and safe places for all attendees (Facebook.com, 2018).

Anime and comic conventions often use posters stating Cosplay is not Consent around their conventions and that inappropriate behavior such as sexual harassment and sexual assault are not permitted there is a zero-tolerance policy. However, it is well known by most attendees that the anime and comic conventions do very little, if anything, to uphold this policy. Little is known about why conventions are not more proactive or at least reactive about the zero-tolerance policy. However, please note that police or staff rarely receive training for convention staff in how to deal with such situations. Most security teams at anime and comic conventions consist of mostly or all men. This may also be a problem that needs to be addressed since women may not feel safe to come forward to men about sexual harassment or sexual assault.

Another important issue is that this movement and policy focus on targets of sexual assault and sexual harassment receiving help from bystanders. After Kitty Genovese was murdered in 1964, with little to no intervention from multiple bystanders, there has been research and time poured into the study of bystander intervention (Nicksa, 2013). This is highly problematic because research has shown that deciding as a bystander is very complicated and many may not react in the way one would hope. For example, studies have found that if a bystander was unsure about the situation or did not think the target was in much trouble, the

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bystander would more than likely not intervene (Clark & Word, 1972; Latané & Rodin, 1969; Moriarity, 1975; Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1980; Shotland & Stebbins, 1983). It is for reasons such as this that it is important to have a dedicated team that has been trained in areas of sexual assault and sexual harassment so that anime and comic conventions are not waiting on the targets or bystanders to later report an incident giving the perpetrator a greater chance to slip back into the crowd and get away. Also, anime and comic conventions with a staff that is stricter about enforcing their policies openly may help bystanders over time to learn what is and isn't appropriate behavior to look out for, as well as how to intervene in situations of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Since approximately one-third of the sexual assaults happen when others are present (Planty, 2002), it is important to help these bystanders be able to comprehend such situations and be able to intervene in a safe way that supports the victim and still keeps the bystander safe as well.

<div align="center">Policies</div>

Through developing policies, and implementing them, may not be an easy task it is imperative that they do need to be established and effectively carried out. Reese & Lindenberg 2003 found in a study on sexual harassment policies that satisfaction with the policies and implementation of the policies are important to employees, but also that it was reliant on how well employees were trained on sexual harassment and how familiar they were with the policies. In short, when regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment at anime and comic conventions it is imperative that there be clear policies and effective and concise training for staff.

Clear, concise, and effective policies with training for staff would be essential to helping women, especially women cosplayers, not only feel safer at anime and comic conventions but also to be safer at anime and comic conventions. A proactive policy with a proactive staff may not only help lessen sexual assault and sexual harassment at anime and comic conventions, it may help to change the viewpoint that cosplay equals consent. It may even go as far as to help change potential predator's views on consent issues in general and make changes to their own behaviors in and outside of anime and comic conventions. It may be that the policies are not enough though as the EEOC in 2016 suggested and that certain training such as bystander intervention may increase awareness and help enforce sexual assault and harassment policies (Eeoc.gov, 2016).

Limitation on research regarding sexual harassment policies may be because many companies only have policies based around sexual harassment and do not include sexual assault. This, in turn, may be part of why there is a huge limitation on the amount of research regarding sexual assault policies. Although there is some research on sexual harassment policies, there is an even smaller amount of research on the effectiveness of training on sexual harassment (Gutek, 1997). It is important to understand how, and what types of training, are most effective to have the most proficient policies in place and how to best carry them out to proactively protect targets of sexual harassment.

Summary

This study focuses on the participant's perceptions of their environment by using their narratives of sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions. To establish and maintain anime and comics conventions as a safe space for all who attend or work the event, it is

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imperative that policies for sexual assault and harassment be clear and concise. It is important to understand the basis for why and how the behavior occurs to change and update policies to be more informative, educational, and to support anime and comic conventions in altering these inappropriate behaviors through participants' perceptions. Cosplayers, attendees, staff, and volunteers alike deserve a fun and safe space to enjoy their interests with others. Focusing on why cosplayers continue to cosplay even when they may be sexually assaulted or harassed at anime and comic conventions, as well as how they navigate it, may be essential to understanding the dominated men's space in the anime and comic convention community and its subculture, cosplay. It may also help other industries, such as professional conventions and conferences, in dealing with sexual assault and harassment, and establishing and enforcing better policies.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Procedure

Data was collected through online posting via social media and directed at persons who frequently attend anime and comic conventions. Specific cosplay community groups, gaming community groups, or conventions community groups on Facebook through which I am a part of were the main targets for posts. The qualitative study will use in-depth pre-structured interview questions about personal stories during anime and comic conventions. Interviews were conducted by the author; through audio interviews and written interviews. Topics included:

- If they feel policies are being enforced for sexual harassment and sexual assault

- Personal experiences with sexual harassment and sexual assault and what was done in their case.

- What change would they like to see in policies and the way they are enforced?

- Do they see a difference when they are attending vs. working for the convention?

- Age and gender

- Number of anime and comic conventions attended (total and annually)

Participants

The study includes women and men ages 18+ who attend anime and comic conventions regularly (at least twice a year) within the United States where they can be classified as staff, volunteer, or attendee. There were 19 women participants (9 audio, 11 written), 6 men (3 audio, 3

written), and 1 non-binary participant (written), for a total of 27 participants. A qualitative study based on in-depth interviews with convention staff and attendees was performed to better understand how participants perceive the current issues, can be done to address these issues, and how to better implement sexual assault and harassment policies. While the purview of this study is to first gather this exploratory data, the intent is to then apply the collected data in such ways that will help develop better and clearer policies that are proficient in dealing with issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault at anime and comic conventions and will be made available to such conventions to enforce such policies.

Analytic Strategy

While the study is based on prior research that establishes dichotomy that (a) generally women are the victims, or targets, of sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions and (b) men the perpetrators the questions were phrased in a gender-neutral manner as to who are targets and who are offenders to keep bias low from both the author and the participants. The study incorporates both how participants look at others and their experiences of sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions as the topics do overlap.

Data were collected by in-depth audio interviews performed online through Facebook video chat or Skype via the author. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed into a Word document or obtained through a written interview, and then coded line by line through focused coding. The data are based on quasi-grounded theory so that the data that emerges will be more organic. Questions were gender-neutral or contain phrasing that covers all genders or asked multiple questions about specific genders. As the topic is sensitive in nature, participants were

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reminded that they do not have to answer every question, that they may take breaks, or that the interview may be stopped at any time. The overall guiding questions for the interviews are as follows:

- Is there a correlation between cosplay and sexual assault/harassment at conventions?

    - What is the link?

- Who are the targets of sexual assault/harassment at conventions?

- What kinds of sexual assaults/harassments are happening?

- Are Cosplay is Not Consent policies enough to stop persons from assaulting or harassing others at conventions?

Coding

Initial Coding

For initial coding, I chose in vivo coding as it keeps the language being used close to the data which may showcase something important in these data obtained that may not appear if language (wording) is changed. As this is a subculture within a particular community, it is useful to use words that are used across the community and may not be familiar to outsiders. This brings up important data not seen otherwise. Using in vivo coding helped to keep me on track for using grounded theory and not pull from my own bias; since I am an insider to the cosplay community. Using a computer and Word Document I printed out each transcription. To move things along quicker I highlighted important words or short phrases from each sentence that overall signified the sentence or used action words. After that, I coded a few lines together using the previous codes, or highlights.

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Focused Coding

There were themes from the initial coding that continued to show up that showed great importance to these data. Line by line coding focused on picking out keywords from each line in a Word Document that described the overall line the best. Mostly using action words to define the sentence, I then took the recurring words and themes taken from around three to five sentences and created coding and themes based on that. The codes that were then created through that were used to break down further into the base categories. The categories produced I chose to focus on are The Connection to Others & Self through Cosplay, Sexual Assault & Harassment, Institutionalization of Social Behaviors, Influential Power, and Using Influential Power to Create a Safer Environment.

Reflective Statement

Being an insider to the cosplay community gave me a great advantage in that I understood the terminology being used. It also gave me an 'in' with the community as potential participants felt safer in being able to talk with me about their lives and experiences. Having been a part of the cosplay community has been an amazing experience for me. It started when I was just a teenager myself and I first started attending anime and comic conventions back in the early 2000's. Over the years I have come to realize that I have a great passion for cosplay and the community in which I have become a part. Because of my passion for cosplay and the anime and comic community, I have started to meld my two worlds together. The one in which I am a professional and researcher of media and pop culture, inequalities, and domestic abuse, rape, sexual harassment, and intimate partner violence. I try to bring my studies and what I focus on into this

community. In part, this is due to a massive surge of problems in recent years in the community; problems I never saw when I was younger. Maybe it was because I was younger, more naïve, and less educated, but I also believe it is because the community was a tighter knit group and protective of its insiders than it is today. I want to shine a sociological light on our community because it is so understudied and misunderstood.

Along the way, I had many issues that I had to overcome. I had to learn to set aside my bias as a researcher and focus on my participants and data on sensitive topics brought up by participants. However, it must be noted that it was because of my bias to the cosplay community that is what got me started on this research topic. And although my bias is what started me off on this journey, it also had to be contained. I could not make participants feel judged for their thoughts or beliefs on topics and had to learn to listen without interjecting my own thoughts and opinions. In turn, I also had to make sure to question what participants deemed as normal to them to further understand and explore these data.

Multiple times during this research I ended up very sick. As I am chronically ill from a few different invisible illnesses, it can creep up on me at any time. I had to learn how to not just push through my illnesses, but to learn to re-schedule time appropriately with room for times when I might have a couple 'bad days'. I ended up sick often during this time which made it very difficult for me, but it was a very significant learning process for me so I know how to manage my time and my illnesses in a more balanced and healthy way.

In learning new ways of performing research, and coding, I also found that things do not always go as planned and that it is better to be overly prepared. Having probing questions handy, creating a questions/interview guide ahead of time, all helped to prepare for better, higher quality

data. What was particularly difficult was working on something that had very little research previously. For example, cosplay itself has very little research currently, as does sexual assault and harassment policies. Trying to find anything was very difficult and sometimes frustrating.

Dealing with the IRB and trying to get the research approved has been quite the problem. I knew that qualitative work was not easy, but I did not realize just how difficult it is, especially when working with grounded theory. One could say that there is no wrong way to do grounded theory or qualitative work, but then that person has probably never actually done this type of work or been able to get qualitative or grounded theory work published. In learning to motivate myself to be a better sociologist and researcher, I found it quite difficult, but very rewarding. For example, using a snowball technique took much more time to gather participants than anticipated, but data from it was so incredibly rich and has led me to want to continue doing more research on other topics that emerged that were not used for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Conceptualization of Categories

This is an exploratory study to examine participants' perceptions of sexual harassment issues in relation to Cosplay and conventions; therefore, a grounded approach was taken based in the interviews to determine the reasons why people participate/attend, how they experience or see others experience sexual harassment, how the organizations help to address it or not, and what they perceive can be done to create an inclusive and safe environment. This was done with the intent to help create a survey instrument and determine future policies. Throughout the current research five major themes emerged from these data and became important findings in my study. The connections among these five primary themes become grouped into why sexual assault and harassment are pervasive at anime and comic conventions, and how to improve the environment at such conventions for all who attend or work them. The five categories are: (1) The Connection to Others & Self through Cosplay; (2) Sexual Assault & Harassment; (3) Institutionalization of Social Behaviors; (4) Influential Power; and (5) Using Influential Power to Create a Safer Environment.

Categories

The Connection to Others & Self through Cosplay

In these data, it became apparent that cosplay was not about fully embodying a character and losing oneself to or within the character but was more about actualizing another extension or amplifying a part of one's self. It is through this form of extension or amplified personality traits that connection to others was made. The unique bond to others with same interests, hobbies, or

personal experiences was the basis for why a person would not only choose to cosplay but to continue cosplaying and attending anime and comic conventions was a very strong factor. The experience of cosplaying needed to be positive as well, and sometimes linked back to being able to challenge oneself to learn new skills such as sewing or prop making or making new friends. Another important factor to cosplaying was representation. Many participants felt that they had to identify with a character in order to cosplay them generally. Representation came in the form of skin color, shared life experiences, gender, or personality traits.

Data using keywords such as friends or interaction, identifying with, fun or enjoyable, posing, acting, or pretending was coded initially from some of the interviews and later interpreted as community, representation, embodying, and leisure. For example:

"If I'm going to cosplay somebody, I want it to be with someone I identify with."

-Jennifer

"I have many special memories related to the series (Sonic the Hedgehog) so dressing as him and meeting others with the same kind of cosplay can be nice."

-Quinn

"Like I feel a connection to that character, not necessarily on a level like I want to be the character, but because I feel like that character is a character I wanted to emulate in some way."

-Ben

"I'm pretty significantly introverted actually…But when I'm in a costume and cosplaying, I'm not thinking I'm reaching from a different energy perspective, and using creative energy differently. And it's a lot of fun and a great way to connect with people."

-Lauren

"I started because it looked like fun. I honestly would not go to Anime Weekend Atlanta anymore except I met some friends through cosplay who go there annually."

-Trevor

"It's usually personality or body type that isn't too dissimilar from mine."

-Valerie

"A lot of characters have something that I really identify with; cosplaying expresses that something for me."

-Aubrie

"I tend to favor costumes that cover me. I tend to choose characters from anime I really enjoy or love…In most cases, I choose characters from anime that I grew up with or fell in love with as a child, so it means a lot to me to bring them to life."

-Whitney

Some of the dimensions that characterize this category are positive community interactions, identifying to a character, enjoyment of the hobby, picture posing, and extension of self. Each one of these categories must be met in order for it to have a connection through cosplay. This can be described as the cosplaying with groups of friends, enjoyment of the anime and comic convention as an attendee and/or cosplayer, meeting new friends through cosplay, showing representation of self through cosplay to identify more with character, becoming more extroverted when in cosplay, and being able to interact with like-minded persons. Being able to use cosplay as an extension of one's self or personality may also be viewed as a way for perpetrators to use it as an excuse to cross physical boundaries.

Sexual Assault & Harassment

One emerging theme was sexual assault and harassment of both cosplayers and non-cosplayers; as well as for staff and volunteers, not just attendees. Different types of sexual assault, harassment, even stalking was reported, in precise locations or time frames according to the type of sexual assault or harassment received. Participants mentioned how often staff was not available or easy to find. Participants also discussed how less serious sexual assault offenses (such as groping, catcalling, inappropriate jokes, hitting on, or uncomfortable non-consensual touches) tended to happen in highly populated areas of the anime and comic convention, while more serious offenses (such as rape, or attempted rape, taking of nonconsensual photos, sexual coercion) were in low populated areas or in hotel rooms. Stalking and harassment varied also according to whether incidents happened out in the open, online, or proceeded to continue in everyday life. Participants that were harassed mentioned that harassment during a convention could last anywhere from a few hours to the entirety of the anime and comic convention, and happened both inside the anime and comic convention, as well as outside near or on the comic and anime convention grounds. Stalking could start either during a convention or continue from everyday life into a convention. Staff was often described as being unable to help unless physical touching or violence had occurred. Harassment and stalking could continue online, but was generally in the form of bullying, sharing non-consensual information about the victim (such as the sharing of non-consensual photos), or trying to obtain information about the victim's whereabouts during an anime and comic convention through others. Of the 27 participants, 13 dealt with harassment (11 women, 1 man, and 1 non-binary), 7 were stalked (6 women, 1 non-binary), and 16 participants were sexually assaulted (15 women, 1 man).

Data using keywords such as unwanted touching, bodily autonomy, inappropriate, threatened, didn't take no for an answer, boundaries, limitations, and persisted, was coded initially from some of the interviews and later interpreted as sexual assault, harassment, stalking, and nonconsensual. For example:

"And then he wanted a photo, which was fine, but then he started getting a little grabby with his hands before the photo, and I'm just like, 'Hey, no, that's not fine.' And then I walk somewhere, and my friend at the time noticed that he was following me…eventually just to make him leave me alone, I was carrying a business card and gave him my autograph."

-Kinley

"I was staying in a hotel room with my best friend from Miami and an old friend of ours. And they kinda got really drunk (and passed out)…and then this one person I used to consider a friend… I found myself kind of pushed into the bathroom. And before I knew it he started kissing me. He kinda like pushed me on the sink, and I told him, 'No. No, please stop.' He didn't listen and he kept going. And I don't remember what but all of the sudden, my pants were off and he started to assault me sexually with his fingers. I couldn't scream. I wanted to scream. I really wanted to scream. I could not believe what was happening to me. All I could do was cry. All I could do was cry would really softly repeat over and over again 'No.'"

-Alondra

"While at an overseas con(vention) I went with my husband. I left his side for a bit to look around while dressed as Harley Quinn, Jester version. And was pinched and slapped hard on the backside while leaning over to look at a comic book."

-Lexie

"I had an issue this past convention with actually a guy that was an uber squirrel girl fan, or if he was just kind of creepy or what. But I noticed him near me multiple times, like more than what you would normally see of the same person throughout the convention. Like obviously you're in a run into people more than once in the convention hall or whatever. But he was like, was there a lot and I noticed he had his phone out a couple times on like he was trying to take a sneaky picture or whatever."

       -Charlotte

"And as I was walking back to the hotel, and an attendee and I guess we were staying on the same floor. Then the attendee pulled me into his room at knifepoint and threatened to do stuff and things. And the eventually did it to me and threatened me. So it was kind of a scary experience, and when I talked about say like, I was kind of like saying like 'You, you're not going to get away with it. I'm going to tell people like you can't let this happen.' And I guess he had seen me and said like, 'Well I saw you walking around with your friends. If you say anything, I'm going to go find your friends.'"

       -Emma

"I've had people call me 'loli' or 'jailbait' before, basically implying that I'm just there to bait men into going to jail for finding an underage woman attractive. I've also had people come onto me sexually, using weird pick-up lines. I've also had attendees walk past a group of women (me included) and give us numbered ratings as they walked past."

       -Mary

"I was sharing a bed with a staff member when he cuddled me without my permission…I froze… I would joke with the staff member in a sexual sense, but my jokes were never intended to be

flirtatious. I feel it was wrong of him to assume I was comfortable with being advanced on physically without explicit permission."

-Steven

Some of the dimensions that characterize this category are bodily autonomy, uncomfortable unwanted touching, verbal conversation, or following, and lack of consent. Each one of these categories must be met for it to have been categorized under sexual assault and harassment. This can be described as persistent unwanted following, trying to touch another's breasts without consent, making inappropriate jokes, taking pictures without permission, or forcing sexual advances. Such behaviors may become normalized over time and used as a gateway for continued inappropriate behavior and sexual assault and harassment.

Institutionalization of Social Behaviors

One theme that came up often was the institutionalization of social behaviors. Specifically, it became apparent that those who shared their stories, their experiences with others openly or often were more likely to hear from others about their experiences with sexual assault and harassment. These participants were also more likely to be much more aware and conscious about the epidemic of sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions than those who were not open about their experiences or did not often share their stories with others. Another normalization was that the participants who did not have sexual assault or harassment happen often to them or discuss such issues with others, especially men, were either unaware of the pervasiveness of the issue or did not think it a problem. For example, one participant that was

a man discussed never having heard of any sexual assault or harassment issues, but also did not know if friends had been sexually assaulted or harassed and had never been either. Another participant, that was also a man, felt like it wasn't his place to ask questions about his friends, especially friends that are women, if they had been sexually assaulted or harassed at anime and comic conventions. A few participants that are women that stated they did not ask others if they had been sexually assaulted or harassed preferred to not discuss their own issues with sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions. It was also normalized for many offenders to get upset and lash back verbally at targets when targets spoke up or demanded them to stop their behavior. Often, others outside of the incidents would also normalize inappropriate behavior such as inappropriate joking, unwanted touches, etc. And lastly, there was normalization for women to be the targets more often than men of sexual assault and harassment as well as the notion that often women who did speak out about their experiences might be subjected to victim blaming.

Data using keywords such as told others, blaming (victims, alcohol, clothing, etc.), guilt, shame, yelling back, boys will be boys, and letting it slide, was coded initially from some of the interviews and later interpreted as normalized, backlash, stories, confronted, being (or not) aware of issue. For example:

"The majority of sexual harassment does occur against females and it's not just limited to the con(vention) environment that's an issue in…within general, where for whatever reason in society it seems that catcalling and sexual harassment towards women is fully acceptable and it just it's gone from just being part of state normal society and has pervaded the con(vention) society as well."

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-Dan

"I have had a guy take pictures of me underneath my skirt and when I told him to stop he simply yelled at me and told me to get down on the floor then so he can take better pictures…I feel like (I am targeted) because I am a female, females tend to be sexualized in media and in society. And because of this, people feel as though it is okay for them to behave like this to me. Most of my male cosplay friends do not experience half of the sexual harassment that I do, which confirms that it is because of my gender."

-Penelope

"…an ex-boyfriend of mine would see me regularly at weekly events in the local community and follow me room to room, including unwanted physical contact…I ignored him at first, but as he got more persistent I reported him to the event organizer and the security who did nothing…It was the worst time. I was scared of the worst happening. None of my friends believed me, and they said I was overreacting or just bitter about the breakup, which was false."

-Zoey

"I've never been to a single convention where I haven't had someone, stranger or acquaintance or friend or otherwise, approach me without soliciting and tell me about something uncomfortable that happened to them at a convention. Most often its harassment, but stalking and abuse/assault are also things I hear about a lot. I do also solicit people to submit their stories for the Cosplayer Survivor Support Network (CSSN) to publish so that they can have a voice in a supportive environment. I'm also frequently harassed depending on the outfit and venue, so I know firsthand that while this issue might not be as blatant as the early "glomping" days, it's still a major issue."

-Callie

"…so specifically at anime conventions, all of the above, it's kind of like, you know, at the end of the day when you get back to everybody gets back to the hotel room in your all kind of taking off your cosplays and getting ready to do either the next cosplay or you know, go and get dinner or something like that is always like an hour of conversation of this person did this or that person did that. And it usually revolves around somebody saying something inappropriate more frequently than somebody touching inappropriately. But every once in a while, you know will hear that story and it's like, man, you know, it really isn't safe to be in cosplay anymore."

-Lauren

"I've never heard of such behavior (sexual assault or harassment) happening, at least at the conventions I've gone to." (Participant reported to never having been sexually assaulted, harassed, or ever having been made to feel uncomfortable at anime and comic conventions.)

-Owen

Some of the dimensions that characterize this category are normalization of inappropriate behavior, past experiences, and perceptions of sexual assault and harassment. Each one of these categories must be met for it to have been categorized under institutionalizations of social behaviors. This can be described as normalizing rape jokes, 'asking for it' types of thought processes, thinking it's 'not a big deal' when sexually assaulted, or sharing past experiences and stories with friends and other anime and comic convention attendees to de-normalize the stigmas and behaviors of sexual assault and harassment. Or as in the last participant response of the current section, it may be a form of implicit or willful ignorance toward new policies on sexual assault and harassment, as it is common that men do not need to be as aware of sexual assault and harassment due to masculine privilege.

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Influential Power

It became quite clear from these data that influential power was extremely important regarding sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions. While some anime and comic conventions staff and volunteers were known for handling sexual assault and harassment well, others were not. However, some anime and comic conventions were known for their rampant issues with sexual assault and harassment because of the staff, volunteers, or even the owners of the anime and comic conventions. And others were known to have some issues with some staff or volunteers that just did not understand or care about the sexual assault and harassment at their anime and comic convention. In other words, the some of the anime and comic conventions had staff, volunteers, or owners, in which they were part of the sexual assault and harassment and sometimes the behavior was condoned or allowed simply because they were in positions of power.

Data using keywords such as staff and/or volunteer victim blaming, staff was the problem, owners were the problem, staff condoned inappropriate behavior was coded initially from some of the interviews and later interpreted as an abuse of power, and staff normalizing inappropriate behavior. For example:

"I had a stalker, young lady, about 20-ish of age. Followed me everywhere, even when I asked her politely not to. Followed me into the bathroom, to lunch, to my car, around the vendor room, everywhere. During a photo shoot that she wasn't invited to, she grabbed me, grabbed my props away from me, pushed people over to get near me, kept putting her hands on me, kept trying o push my friends away from me, kept shoving herself into the spot they had been in. She whispered to me "I wanna be just like you" When I finally had enough, I said something to her

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and she snapped. Called me every name in the book, said she didn't suffer fools lightly and she stormed off. I blocked her, then found out she was asking all my friends where I would be next, how I was going with, etc…I told security and they scoffed at me. No lie said 'Oh wait. It's a "she?" I wasn't taking seriously because my assailant was a she."

-Casey

"I was being yelled by a staff member for having a sign because they had just made a no sign rule at Otakon and I hadn't heard about it, so I was explaining that. I looked down and there was a guy, up my skirt taking a picture and the staff member didn't say anything about it. The staffer was standing next to me. The person was dressed as a ninja and the moment I looked down, they got up and ran up the escalator, and the staff member just went, 'Well, that's what you get for wearing a skirt', and walk away."

-Faith

After talking with a security person regarding a personal matter, I overheard someone talking with that security person (seemed to be a friend of theirs) and making a rape joke… I told the guy off—told him I'm a survivor of rape and that that joke isn't funny AT ALL, but especially to me, especially in the context of cosplaying from a game that deals with PTSD, which I suffer from as a result of my rape."

-Callie

"My colleague thought it was hilarious to offer me up as a date to our other staffers, despite my clear discomfort…I was annoyed. I knew what she was trying to do, and it was putting me on the spot…her antics are known in the northeast convention staff circles…My co-worker (another staff member) tried to make out with me while I was half asleep/tipsy. I was tired so I just pushed him

away. It was very clear that I was not having it, but he kept trying. Our boss and another junior staffer intervened and pulled me into the adjacent room…I still work with him."

-Zoey

"I reported the harassment of the con staffer to the chairmen of the convention at one point, and they took immediate action and had him removed from his position. By the request of the people harassed, I only lodged my complaint after the convention was over, but he didn't return for further years…I wish I made note of his personal information and let other local conventions in the area know that this guy may try to apply for con security positions or already have one at their convention. He would boast about how he had years of experience doing security for cons, but was incredibly unprofessional and possibly even dangerous. He stated that he had many ways to immobilize people, and I feel like if I was thinking for the long term I'd make sure he never sets foot in another convention center again."

-Mary

"I will say, not to name drop, but conventions run by Broder like Supercon, Animate, and stuff. A lot staff at those events tended to be really didn't care like the staff that's on their payroll and volunteers, tried to care more, but like if like sexual assault and that kind of stuff. It didn't seem like they really cared. They cared about shoplifting if they saw someone who shoplifting, like 'woah run'. But not really otherwise, unless if you mentioned drugs, like I think someone's drugging this girl. 'Oh, okay, let's go, no drugs are at this convention.'"

-Emma

"I've heard mostly positive things that staff, you know, were able to help them. In some cases, it was multiple people that were having issues with a person. And at that point like with that much,

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that many problems then that person was just like immediately ejected from the con. But I've also

heard the flip side where staff just kind of brushed it off. You know like, 'Oh, it happens.'

Lodged, ignore it, that sort of thing."

   -Charlotte

 Some of the dimensions that characterize this category are normalization of inappropriate

behavior, abusing power and privilege of being staff/volunteer, sexual assault and/or harassment

by staff. Each one of these categories must be met for it to have been categorized within

influential power. This can be described as staff and/or volunteers normalizing rape jokes, staff

and/or volunteers using 'asking for it' types of statements, staff and/or volunteers telling others

'not a big deal' when they sexually assaulted, or staff and or volunteers refusing to help a victim

of sexual assault, harassment, or stalking. In understanding that those in power can use it to

negative and inappropriate behavior, that same power can also be used as a means to help make

anime and comic conventions a safer environment.

Using Influential Power to Create a Safer Environment

The last theme was that anime and comic conventions were perceived as needing to use their

influential power to create a safer environment for everyone. While many anime and comic

conventions weren't considered part of the problem with sexual assault or harassment, they also

were often perceived by most of the participants as 'not doing enough'. Some anime and comic

conventions did not have policies regarding sexual assault and harassment, relied too heavily on

using only Cosplay is not Consent policies, had policies or consequences listed as too vague, lack

of signage or banners, did not post about such policies on anime and comic convention's social

media sites, or staff and/or volunteers could not be easily found when help was needed. Most staff and volunteers were also considered to be untrained or uneducated in matters of sexual assault and needed some sort of training completed in order to be staff or volunteer.

Data using keywords such as couldn't find, vague, doesn't include (for policies), not doing enough, no or unclear consequences, uneducated or untrained, and staff and/or volunteer did not help was coded initially from some of the interviews and later interpreted as need for clear policies and consequences, need of more staff/volunteers, education and training, and actively educating attendees and staff/volunteers about policies. For example:

"…in my experience, just because there's, like I said, maybe one or two police officers in a close proximity that security can go to really take care of the situation. And the security that are there are often extremely low in numbers, aren't properly trained, aren't really trained, certified security officers, so they don't understand quite how to handle a situation; again, just a lack of numbers. Not that more numbers would really help the situation necessarily, like adequate training and understanding. But also just the enforcement of the policies needs to also come down to holding the attendees accountable. And there's a number of ways we might be able to do that. I'm sure there are certain policies you can enforce with just the fact that they're buying a ticket. Buyers have to follow certain rules, and if they don't, they are responsible or liable for something else that's a bigger deterrent from these kinds of actions."

-Grayson

"Having clear consequences listed is a good starting point…People need to be made aware that actions do incur consequences…releasing PSAs about it beforehand could help to keep people mindful. Say a video on their website for tickets or something."

-Nina

"Having them (policies) listed sets a standard of behavior expected of guests (attendees). Unfortunately, out of the con(ventions) I have attended, I have only seen Cosplay is not Consent policies posted once, and it was at the main exit."

-Monica

"Pretty much if someone goes to them and is like, "this person is a known sexual predator and rapist" and so on and so forth, the con should make sure to, one, check it out to make sure that that's viable and it's the truth and correct. Two, make sure to publicly say we will no longer have X person at our convention for reasons listed as such. And be done with it. Cut and dry, that's it, instead of trying to use fancy words and be like, 'Well, there isn't really any known this and that, and this may not have actually happened.' And shit like that is so stupid. Don't roundabout, don't try to be okay with the fact that you have a frickin' sexual predator at your convention just because they might make you money. It's not worth it."

-Bella

"Definitely make some place within the convention that is designated where if you do feel uncomfortable you know where it is, there's always someone there, you can go to them and they're affiliated with the convention, and tell them what's happening, and then they can do something about it. Because that's the other thing, there isn't really a clear line of communication to the attendees in the event case that something like that does happen where they do need to go get a staff member."

-Hayden

"We tried to get the volunteers guarding the ballroom for entry to do something in the moment, but they told us that we had to go to security to report it. Security was three floors up. By the time we made it there, it had been nearly 15 minutes since the incident. The con needs more security stations/personnel, especially at crowded parties at night… It's important that the policy actually help enforce a safe environment through clear expectations/consequences. Otherwise, it's just lip service to pacify people who are demanding a policy. An ineffective or unclear policy is as bad as no policy at all."

-Valerie

"I would like to see improvements to the registration systems at bigger conventions. With RFID technology becoming more affordable, there is less of a reason as to why conventions do not have access systems in place to only allow active, non-banned members on the premises."

-Steven

"People need to know specifically what behavior is prohibited—not just for potential offenders, but targets of that behavior need to know they CAN report it and have the offender face consequences. Too many people just kind of deal with feeling uncomfortable, threatened, or scared because they don't know this can be handled by the con(vention)."

-Aubrie

Some of the dimensions that characterize this category are the need for education and training, having clear policies and consequences listed as well as enforcing them, and the need for more staff/volunteers. Each one of these categories must be met for it to have been categorized within influential power to create a safer environment. This can be described as anime and comic conventions holding training and education courses for staff and volunteers, anime and comic

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conventions posting regularly on their social media sites and website about their sexual assault and harassment policies, listing specific examples of appropriate and inappropriate behavior within their policies, kicking out or permanently banning offenders of sexual assault and harassment, or requiring more staff and volunteers to run help run the convention. If staff and volunteers use their power to help keep the environment safer, it may also help to reinforce that inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated during or outside anime and comic conventions by others.

<center>Strength of Categories</center>

It is the belief that these data are credible, trustworthy, and authentic. Participants were not incentivized for their time and so had to be willing to give up their own personal time for interviews that lasted anywhere from approximately 40 to 60 minutes (audio or written) which provides a deep insight into the sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions, and helps to give rich context by asking personal questions personal experiences. Though a snowballing technique was used via Facebook, it is the easier way to connect and contact potential participants as most cosplayers, anime and comic convention staff, and volunteers heavily use social media on a constant and consistent basis to stay in contact with others in their communities. Participants were interviewed either face to face, via Skype, phone, or were done in private settings. During or after the interviews I would ask clarifying questions or ask a participant to further explain if a statement may have needed more 'background' to it. And though there was only myself completing the interviews, there was a mentor to help provide additional insights or correct flaws in interpretations. There is authenticity due to the participants' responses

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being natural without worry about incentives or having to prove their own cosplayer status to a non-insider. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed or written. Notes were also taken during each interview by the researcher to obtain accurate data in case the recordings somehow failed.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

<u>Translating into Real World Practices</u>

To effectively enforce a policy against sexual assault and sexual harassment, the author will set up a specialized security team known as Masumi's Anime & Comic Sexual Assault Team (MACSA). MACSA would be a branch off the main security team that would run the entire time during pre-convention, regular convention, and post-convention hours (set-up, nights, take-down, etc.). Data provided from this study will help to designate what types of training the team shall receive, how policies should be enforced against perpetrators of sexual assault and harassment, victims of sexual assault and harassment helped, and incidents of sexual assault and harassment reported. For example, participants discussed many times the need for more security or staff in areas that are less populated during a convention. Such information should be taken into consideration, having a more trained staff to monitor areas that are less populated, and plain clothed trained staff to monitor areas that are highly populated, so attendees do not feel overwhelmed by their presence. Staff can take video and pictures of incidents that they may find to be potentially problematic should they be unable or unsure to intervene at that moment. Participants also felt that it was necessary that staff and security would be trained and better educated so as not to victim blame those that are sexually assaulted or harassed, or normalize inappropriate behavior such rape jokes. Another example would be using one of the participant's comments about RFID badges being used so those who had their badges revoked would not be able to enter the premise again (i.e. using a fake badge). Future research reports would become useful for dealing with issues in power dynamics between staff, volunteers, and attendees. MACSA reports would also be able to obtain data which would help to create clearer policies and

consequences. Also, as MACSA would technically not be linked directly to staff or volunteers of the convention they would be able to be less bias and fair in deciding how to best enforce policies and consequences should a power dynamic be used against a victim. All incidents are to be recorded which can then also be used to inform for better policies and help with the education of others for anime and comic conventions. Anime and comic conventions will be given all information about their convention specifically in the form of an annual report/evaluation as well as a collective report/evaluation from all anime and comic conventions that participated in using MACSA for that year.

The team is held accountable for enforcing the sexual assault and sexual harassment policies always and will also be held to the same standards as the rest of the convention. They undergo training specifically in being able to spot sexual assault, dealing with and intervening in situations of sexual assault and sexual harassment, sensitivity towards LGBTQ+ (due to many of the attendees at anime and comic conventions are LBTQ+), and intimate partner violence. Team members are required to take down information on:

- The name and position of the person or persons allegedly causing the harassment or assault.
- A description of the incident(s), including the date(s), location(s) and the presence of any witnesses.
- The effect of the incident(s) on the complainant's ability to perform his or her job and/or ability to enjoy the convention.
- The names of other individuals who might have been subject to the same or similar harassment.

- What, if any, steps the complainant has taken to try to stop the harassment.

- Any photos or video of the assailant.

- Any videos of the incident being reported.

- Any other information the complainant believes to be relevant to the harassment complaint.

- Contacting the police and assisting in with the police process if needed.

- Anyone under the age of 18 will be required to have police involvement and parents and/or legal guardian will be contacted.

- Information for help services such as assault hotlines, local locations for therapy, etc.

Staff is also required to report to MACSA if they witness a situation of sexual assault or sexual harassment. Submitting reports, dealing with police in cases of pressed charges or charges against minors, and confidentiality are all parts that help make this policy reliable and enforceable.

To ensure that staff or MACSA are reliable properly enforces all policies, and consequences they must undergo training from professionals. Training may include but is not limited to:

- Sensitivity training for LGBTQ+, domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment

- Training from the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

- Training from the Mentor's in Violence program

Data from incidents at anime and comic conventions where MACSA is in attendance as part of security staff will be collected in a confidential manner and used to further information on sexual assault and sexual harassment at anime and comic conventions.

Limitations

The study used a respondent-driven sampling (RDS) and snowball technique, which will be very helpful in having access to a group of persons that are normally not easy to access. However, this means that the sample will not be able to use randomized methods and it will reduce the generalizability of the findings. While the sample will not fully be able to represent the population, it is still a necessary means as the anime and comic community is one that mostly keeps to itself and is not generally open to the public so easily. It is also not easy to tell just by looking at a person whether they are into the nerd and geek community as they may not outwardly express their interests in their every day to day lives; which is why an RDS technique for which must be used.

Another set of limitations is that some participants may feel that the topic of sexual assault and sexual harassment is sensitive and feel that they cannot answer every question. I also must understand, and keep in mind, whom I am preparing the policies and training for. A non-random sample is beneficial to this study because it is focused on a select sub-culture within a community. Though not within the study, there will be some policies that have explicit examples and be very specific, while others may be more generalizable.

<center>Conclusion</center>

Anime and comic conventions are just one of many places, e.g., boardrooms of large corporations, mechanic's shops, information technology departments, that are men's space. The current study examines effects of domination of space by men at anime and comic conventions that make it difficult for women to enjoy, to feel safe in a community that they love, and dress up as the characters they adore. Sexual assault and harassment are massive problems in the cosplay and convention community. These behaviors on the part of offenders need to be addressed appropriately not only because women should feel safe at anime and comic conventions, but also because sexual assault and harassment are illegal. These data showed that women were significantly targeted for sexual assault and harassment in comparison to men. For example, out of the 20 participants that were women, 15 had been sexually assaulted at some point during an anime and comic convention. While the 6 participants that were men, 1 had been sexually assaulted at some point during an anime and comic convention. In other words, the percentage of women was 75% versus 17% of men that had been sexually assaulted. Those who cosplay, women especially, are perceived to be waifus (or husbandos) by other attendees, staff, and volunteers, which created a sense of dehumanization for those that are sexually assaulted and harassed. Though all the participants stated that they do not ever fully embody their characters, or lose their sense of identity to the character, many were perceived as being the character they are cosplaying, and no longer as themselves. The distortion of perception created opportunities and a sense of entitlement to participants' body by perpetrators. In losing one's bodily autonomy it created problems for participants ranging from anxiety, depression, guilt, to PTSD.

<center>47</center>

Some interesting aspects popped up that I was not expecting during this study. Many participants who were harassed or sexually assaulted while in "normie" clothes during anime and comic conventions was also not uncommon, however, the main difference was that the sexual assault or harassment often occurred in hotel rooms or other non-populated areas. This may suggest that behind closed doors, there is an additional element to sexual assault and harassment that comes into play at anime and comic conventions. Also, while behind closed doors (in a hotel room) there were two separate incidents of sexual coercion and rape that occurred during an intimate partner relationship while attending an anime and comic convention. The participants were unsure as to whom they could talk to, or where they could go, for such incidents. That is why I added intimate partner violence training to the types of training required for the MACSA Team.

There are two main goals to the study; (1) to better understand the issue of sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions, and (2) from the research it became apparent that anime and comic conventions needed to develop clearer and more concise policies with training on sexual assault and harassment for staff and volunteers at such events. It is not enough to simply have the Cosplay is not Consent policy at such events, but to also enforce them. Currently, there is little data for sexual assault and harassment policies, which ends up causing a huge gap in research and literature. It is my hope that these data will help with amending the lack of research and literature on this topic, as well as to provide proactive resources to anime and comic conventions in battling sexual assault and harassment. It is also the hope that the research from this study may also be used for other types of conferences and events dealing with sexual assault and harassment including, professional conferences as well as other nerd and geek events.

Future goals for this study would be to further study this issue by doing a quantitative analysis based off survey questions from more attendees, staff, and volunteers.

APPENDIX A
AUDIO INTERVIEW GUIDE

Audio Interview Guide

National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673

- Do you identify as a woman or a man?
- How long have you been attending conventions?
    - Annually/ total?
    - Do you attend out of state or in state mostly?
    - Why?
- Do you go as an attendee, staff, or volunteer?
    - Can you tell me more about why?
- Do you think it's a different experience when you are staff vs. volunteer vs. attendee?
    - Can you explain?
- Do you cosplay?
    - Why do you choose to cosplay/What makes you want to cosplay?
    - Do you buy, thrift (closet cosplay), commission, or make your cosplays?
        - Why?
    - Why do you choose certain characters over others?
    - Do you feel a sense of attachment to the characters you cosplay?
        - Can you further explain?
    - What about acting like the character? Do you try to fully embody the characters you cosplay?
        - How far do you take being the character?
- Do you think that sexual assault/battery or harassment is a problem at conventions?
    - Can you elaborate?
    - Do you think that portraying certain characters that look or are promiscuous more likely to be assaulted or harassed by others?
        - Is it fair/okay that this happens?
        - Can you tell me more about why?
    - What about persons who have on really detailed/accurate cosplays?
        - Do you think they get assaulted or harassed more or less?
        - Why do you think that?
- Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable at a convention?
    - In what way did they make you uncomfortable?
    - How did you react when it happened? What are your thoughts on it?

- o Would you describe it as assault, sexual assault, battery, or just unsure?
  - ▪ What makes you label it this way?
  - o Has this happened often at conventions for you?
- Has anyone over a period of time harassed you or made you feel uncomfortable at conventions?
  - ▪ Can you describe the event(s)?
  - ▪ Can you explain how this made you uncomfortable?
- Did this happen while you were in cosplay or "normie" wear?
  - o Can you elaborate on it, or describe an example?
  - o Do you think you were targeted because you were in cosplay?
    - ▪ Why is that?
- Do you think you were targeted because of your gender?
  - o Can you explain to me why?
- Did any convention staff help in any of these situations?
  - o How did they help?
  - o What do you wish they had done?
- Do you think that the policies conventions have listed do enough to help stop problems like this?
  - o Why or why not?
- Do you think they could do more?
  - o What could they do?
  - o What would you like to see change/happen?
- Do you think conventions should provide a safe space room?
  - o Why?
  - o What benefits/cons do you think there are to having this?

APPENDIX B
WRITTEN INTERVIEW GUIDE

Written Interview Guide

Please answer honestly and answer as many questions as you are able. If at any time the questionnaire becomes too much to handle for whatever reason you are more than welcome to stop. Even if you can't finish it all, turn in the form though still! No answer is too long or too short. Answer in the way that is honest and true to your perceptions and experiences. Your answers are important.

For anyone that needs it due to triggers, etc.:

National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673

1. What is your age range? (highlight one)
    a. 18-21
    b. 22-30
    c. 31-35
    d. 36+

2. What do you identify as? (highlight one)
    a. Man
    b. Woman
    c. Transgender man
    d. Transgender woman
    e. Non-binary
    f. Other
    g. Prefer not to answer

3. What are your sexual preferences? (highlight one)
    a. Straight
    b. Gay
    c. Lesbian
    d. Bisexual
    e. Pansexual
    f. Queer
    g. Asexual

h. Other
i. Prefer not to answer

4. Highest education Level? (highlight one)
   a. GED
   b. High School
   c. Associates
   d. Bachelors
   e. Masters
   f. PhD
   g. Technical School/training

5. How long have you been attending conventions?
   a. Annually/ total?
   b. Do you attend out of state or in state mostly?
   c. What are your reasons for attending in state and/or out of state cons?

6. Do you go as an attendee, staff, or volunteer?
   a. Can you tell me more about why?

7. Do you think it's a different experience when you are staff vs. volunteer vs. attendee?
   a. Can you explain what that difference is?

8. Do you cosplay?
   a. Why do you choose to cosplay/What makes you want to cosplay?

   b. Do you buy, thrift (closet cosplay), commission, or make your cosplays?
      i. Why?

   c. Why do you choose certain characters over others? I.e. do you like a certain type of personality, certain types of costumes, etc.

   d. Do you feel a sense of attachment to the characters you cosplay?
      i. Can you further explain?

   e. What about acting like the character? Do you try to fully embody the characters you cosplay?
      i. How far do you take being the character?
      ii. Is there a limit to how far you take acting like a character?

9. Do you think that sexual assault/battery or harassment is a problem at conventions? For example: likely, not really, it's a problem, etc.
   a. Can you elaborate?

b. True or false: (mark with a T for true, F for false)
    i. Do you think that women make a big deal out of being touched or certain jokes at cons?

    ii. Do you think that men make a big deal out of being touched or certain jokes at cons?

    iii. Do you think that women make claims about sexual assault or rape to get attention, or protect their reputations at cons?

    iv. Do you think that men make claims about sexual assault or rape to get attention, or protect their reputations at cons?

    v. Do you think women often claim sexual assault or rape after consensual sex, but have changed their minds later at cons?

    vi. Do you think men often claim sexual assault or rape after consensual sex, but have changed their minds later at cons?

    vii. Do you think that when women are in cosplay they are asking for it at cons?

    viii. Do you think that when men are in cosplay they are asking for it at cons?

    ix. Do you think that when women are in a sexy or revealing cosplay they are asking for it at cons?

    x. Do you think that when men are in a sexy or revealing cosplay they are asking for it at cons?

10. Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable with inappropriate jokes, comments, or conversation during a con? (if no skip to 11)
    a. Can you explain the situation(s)?

    b. What location of the con area did this occur in?
        i. Was it a populated area?

c. How old were you at the time of the incident(s)?

d. How did you react when it happened?

e. What are your thoughts on it?

f. Has this happened often at conventions for you?

g. Did this happen while you were in cosplay or "normie" wear?

h. Do you think you were targeted because you were in cosplay?
    i. Can you explain why?

i. How was this person(s) related to you? (highlight all that apply)
    i. Someone I had been involved or was intimate with
    ii. Con Staff or con volunteer
    iii. Friend or acquaintance
    iv. Stranger
    v. Other
    vi. Don't know

j. Have you ever told anyone about it?
    i. Why or why not?

k. If you told someone, who did you tell? (highlight all that apply)
    i. Someone I had been involved or was intimate with
    ii. A family member
    iii. Con Staff or con volunteer
    iv. Friend or acquaintance
    v. Stranger
    vi. Other
    vii. Don't know

11. Has anyone ever touched, groped, or physically touched you in a way that made you uncomfortable during a con? (if no skip to 12)

a. Can you explain the situation(s)?

b. What location of the con area did this occur in?
    i. Was it a populated area?

c. How old were you at the time of the incident(s)?

d. How did you react when it happened?

e. What are your thoughts on it?

f. Has this happened often at conventions for you?

g. Did this happen while you were in cosplay or "normie" wear?

h. Do you think you were targeted because you were in cosplay?
    i. Can you explain why?

i. How was this person(s) related to you? (highlight all that apply)
    i. Someone I had been involved or was intimate with
    ii. Con Staff or con volunteer
    iii. Friend or acquaintance
    iv. Stranger
    v. Other
    vi. Don't know

j. Have you ever told anyone about it?
    i. Why or why not?

k. If you told someone, who did you tell? (highlight all that apply)
    i. Someone I had been involved or was intimate with
    ii. A family member
    iii. Con Staff or con volunteer
    iv. Friend or acquaintance
    v. Stranger
    vi. Other
    vii. Don't know

12. Has anyone ever physically forced or coerced you to have sex (orally or penetration) you did not want during a con? (if no skip to 13)
    a. Can you explain the situation(s)?

    b. What location of the con area did this occur in?
        i. Was it a populated area?

    c. How old were you at the time of the incident(s)?

    d. How did you react when it happened?

    e. What are your thoughts on it?

f. Has this happened often at conventions for you?

g. Did this happen while you were in cosplay or "normie" wear?

h. Do you think you were targeted because you were in cosplay?
    i. Can you explain why?

i. How was this person(s) related to you? (highlight all that apply)
    i. Someone I had been involved or was intimate with
    ii. Con Staff or con volunteer
    iii. Friend or acquaintance
    iv. Stranger
    v. Other
    vi. Don't know

j. Have you ever told anyone about it?
    i. Why or why not?

k. If you told someone, who did you tell? (highlight all that apply)
    i. Someone I had been involved or was intimate with
    ii. A family member
    iii. Con Staff or con volunteer
    iv. Friend or acquaintance
    v. Stranger
    vi. Other
    vii. Don't know

13. To your knowledge, has anyone ever made a friend of yours feel uncomfortable with inappropriate jokes, comments, or conversation during a con? (if no skip to 14)
    a. Can you explain the situation(s) or give an example?

    b. What location of the con area did this occur in?
        i. Was it a populated area?

    c. How old were they at the time of the incident(s)?

    d. How did you react when it happened?

    e. What are your thoughts on it?

    f. Did this happen while they were in cosplay or "normie" wear?

    g. How was this person(s) related to them? (highlight all that apply)
        i. Someone they had been involved or was intimate with

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       ii. Con Staff or con volunteer
      iii. Friend or acquaintance
      iv. Stranger
       v. Other
      vi. Don't know

14. To your knowledge, has anyone ever touched, groped, or physically touched a friend of yours in a way that made them uncomfortable during a con? (if no skip to 15)
    a. Can you explain the situation(s) or give an example?

    b. What location of the con area did this occur in?
        i. Was it a populated area?

    c. How old were they at the time of the incident(s)?

    d. How did you react when it happened?

    e. What are your thoughts on it?

    f. Did this happen while they were in cosplay or "normie" wear?

    g. How was this person(s) related to them? (highlight all that apply)
        i. Someone they had been involved or was intimate with
        ii. Con Staff or con volunteer
        iii. Friend or acquaintance
        iv. Stranger
        v. Other
        vi. Don't know

15. To your knowledge, has anyone ever physically forced or coerced a friend of yours to have sex (orally or penetration) they did not want during a con? (if no skip to 16)
    a. Can you explain the situation(s) or give an example?

    b. What location of the con area did this occur in?
        i. Was it a populated area?

    c. How old were they at the time of the incident(s)?

    d. How did you react when it happened?

    e. What are your thoughts on it?

    f. Did this happen while they were in cosplay or "normie" wear?

g. How was this person(s) related to them? (highlight all that apply)
    i. Someone they had been involved or was intimate with
    ii. Con Staff or con volunteer
    iii. Friend or acquaintance
    iv. Stranger
    v. Other
    vi. Don't know

16. Has anyone over a period of time harassed (followed you at a convention, multiple conventions, stalked you, or made you feel cornered for example) you or made you feel uncomfortable at conventions? (if no skip to 17)
    a. Can you explain the situation(s)?

    b. What location of the con area(s) did this occur in?
        i. Was it a populated area?

    c. How old were you at the time of the incident(s)?

    d. How did you react when it happened?
    e. What are your thoughts on it?

    f. Has this happened often at conventions for you?

    g. Did this happen while you were in cosplay or "normie" wear?

    h. Do you think you were targeted because you were in cosplay?
        i. Can you explain why?

    i. How was this person(s) related to you? (highlight all that apply)
        i. Someone I had been involved or was intimate with
        ii. Con Staff or con volunteer
        iii. Friend or acquaintance
        iv. Stranger
        v. Other
        vi. Don't know

    j. Have you ever told anyone about it?
        i. Why or why not?

    k. If you told someone, who did you tell? (highlight all that apply)
        i. Someone I had been involved or was intimate with
        ii. A family member

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       iii. Con Staff or con volunteer

       iv. Friend or acquaintance

       v. Stranger

       vi. Other

       vii. Don't know

17. If you answered yes to any questions between 10 -12, do you think you have ever been targeted because of your gender during a con?
    a. Can you explain to me why? (skip to 18 if no)

18. If you answered yes to any questions between 10 -16, did any convention staff help in any of these situations?
    a. How did they help?

    b. Was there anything you wish they had done, or done differently?

19. Do you think enough cons have Cosplay is Not Consent policies listed?
    a. Do you think it's a problem if they do not have Cosplay is Not Consent policies listed?
        i. Can you explain why or why not?

20. Do you read the policies on Cosplay in Not Consent if cons have them listed?

21. Do you think that cons (on average) have clear policies on Cosplay is Not Consent if they are listed?
    a. Do you think having clear policies is important?
    b. Can you explain why or why not?

22. Do you think that cons (on average) have clear consequences listed if Cosplay is Not Consent policies are listed?
    a. Do you think it's important to have clear consequences listed?
    b. Can you explain why or why not?

23. Do you think that the policies conventions have listed do enough to help stop problems such as inappropriate touching, harassment, etc.?
    a. Why or why not?

24. Do you think conventions could do more?
    a. What could they do?
    b. What would you like to see change/happen?

25. Do you think conventions should provide a safe space room?
    a. Why?
    b. What benefits/cons do you think there are to having this?

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

University of
**Central
Florida**

Informed Consent

Title of research study:	**"I'm Not Your Waifu: Sexual Harassment and Assault in Cosplay, Anime, & Comic Conventions"**
Principal Investigator(s):	**Alexandria Ellsworth**
Faculty Supervisor:	**Dr. Lin Huff-Corzine**
Investigational Site(s):	**Anime Expo – Los Angeles Convention Center** **1201 S Figueroa St, Los Angeles, CA 90015**
	DragonCon – Westin Peachtree Hotel **210 Peachtree St NW, Atlanta, GA 30303**
	KatsuCon – Gaylord National Gaylord and Hotel Convention Center 201 Waterfront Street **National Harbor, MD 20745**
	Reserved Conference Room HPH 406i **University of Central Florida** **4000 Central Florida Blvd** **Orlando, FL 32816**

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?
We invite you to take part in a research study because you participate in cosplay conference as either attendees, staff, or volunteers. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. We are interested in your opinion and or personal experience regarding sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions.

What should I know about a research study?
- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team at aellsworth@knights.ucf.edu. This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). You may talk to them at 407-823-2901or irb@ucf.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done?

To examine the sexual assault and harassment at anime and comic conventions, along with evaluating the Cosplay is Not Consent policies that conventions currently use.

How long will the research last?

We expect that you will be in this research study for 30 - 60 minutes.

How many people will be studied?

We expect a maximum of 50 people will be in this research.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

Both interviews and surveys may be conducted. Participants that do not want to or cannot participate in face-to-face/skype interviews can participate in online written interviews. These interviews will be sent out via email or through Facebook messenger. Participants contact information will be collected as a Facebook name, or as an email.

Alexandria Ellsworth may contact you later for clarification, additional questions, etc. Please answer honestly and answer as many questions as you are able. If at any time the interview becomes too much to handle for whatever reason you are more than welcome to stop.

For online written interviews, even if you cannot finish it all, turn in the form still! No answer is too long or too short. Answer in the way that is honest and true to your perceptions and experiences. Your answers are important.

All research will be performed via Interviews will be held at cosplay conventions or, based on participant preference, at the UCF campus or Skype (or an equivalent electronic supplement).

You will be audio recorded during this study if you participate in the face-to-face option. If you do not want to be recorded, you will be able to be in the study. Discuss this with the researcher or a research team member. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place and saved on a password protected computer. The recording will be erased or destroyed after the completion of the study.

Online written interviews should be completed within 48 hours and returned to the PI, Alexandria Ellsworth, via Facebook email or sent to aellsworth@knights.ucf.edu.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?
Participation in research is completely voluntary. You can decide to participate or not to participate. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time without prejudice or penalty. Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will in no way affect your continued enrollment, grades, employment or your relationship with the individuals who may have an interest in this study.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?
You can leave the research at any time it will not be held against you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?
This study is minimal risk, however it contains sensitive questions that may cause you to reflect on past emotional events. If answering these questions has caused you to experience any kind of distress or made you feel uncomfortable in any way please contact the National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673 or contact the UCF Counseling and Psychological Services at (407) 823-2811

What happens to the information collected for the research?
Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization.

Audio recording: Per your permission, you will be audio recorded during the interview. If you do not want to be audio recorded, then discuss this with the researcher or research member and you will not be recorded. The audio recording will be saved on a password-protected computer, which only the researcher has the password and access to. The recordings will be transcribed in a rolling manner, per completion of each interview, and recordings will be saved until the completion of the study and data analysis, at which time the recordings will be deleted.

Online written interviews: written interviews will be saved on a password-protected computer, which only the researcher has the password and access to. The written interviews will be saved until the completion of the study and data analysis, at which time the written interviews will be deleted.

APPENDIX D
IRB PERMISSION FOR STUDY

University of **Central Florida**

Approval of Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Alexandria Ellsworth** and Co-PI: **Lin K Huff-Corzine**

Date: **June 29, 2018**

Dear Researcher:

On 06/29/2018 the IRB approved the following human participant research until 06/28/2019 inclusive:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form
Expedited Review Category #7
Project Title: I' m Not Your Waifu: Sexual Harassment and Assault in Cosplay, Anime, & Comic Conventions
Investigator: Alexandria Ellsworth
IRB Number: SBE-18-13865

The scientific merit of the research was considered during the IRB review. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at https://iris.research.ucf.edu .

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 06/28/2019, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

All data, including signed consent forms if applicable, must be retained and secured per protocol for a minimum of five years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained and secured per protocol. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

This letter is signed by:

Kanielle Chap

Signature applied by Kamille Chaparro on 06/29/2018 10:38:31 AM EDT

Page 1 of 2

Designated Reviewer

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