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It's Time to Listen to the Survivors: Understanding Undergraduate College Women's Choice to Report a Sexual Assault to College Officials

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to add to the existing literature about the lived experience of undergraduate college women between the ages of 18-24 years who experienced a sexual assault while enrolled in college. This study used a semi-structured interview protocol with six undergraduate women, between the ages of 18-22 years, who were enrolled in a Western New York college. The qualitative phenomenological design, along with feminist interviewing practices, provided a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the survivors and the barriers that keep women from reporting their assaults to college officials. Six undergraduate college women shared their experience of being sexually assaulted while in college. Contextual and structural themes were developed from the analysis of the participant interviews, which explored their campus sexual assault. Contextual themes included: (a) lack of definition of the experience; (b) not a big deal, it was my fault; and (c) did not want to get self or others in trouble. Additionally, the structural themes included: (a) mistrust of the reporting process, and (b) lack of knowledge about campus support services and personnel. These themes provided valuable insight to understanding the effects of a sexual assault for college women. The findings indicate a need to improve support services and the manner in which students are asked to report being sexually assaulted and the importance of given students a voice in the develop of policies and procedures.

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It's Time to Listen to the Survivors: Understanding Undergraduate College Women's

Choice to Report a Sexual Assault to College Officials

By

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the extraordinary young women in my life, Eden, Brianne, Madeline, and Amelia. As you approach your college years and make your way in the world, I hope you never experience an act of interpersonal violence, and if you do, know that I will always be by your side.

As I finish my last academic assignment (there are no more degrees for me to collect – I think I have them all!) and reflect on my journey to becoming the first person in my family to obtain a doctorate, I am humbled and appreciative of all of the love, support, and guidance that my family and teammates provided to me on this journey. I only hope I can put into words what their love and support has meant to me as I try to thank each one of you.

To my amazing husband, Scott K. Kenney, words will never be able to convey how much I love and respect you. I am a better person because of you! You were there each and every step of this journey, from encouraging me to apply, reading every single word I wrote (sometimes at 6 a.m. or more than once), taking care of me when I was overwhelmed, listening to me complain about how I could not do it to those "gentle" pushes to get writing! I could not have it done it without you. Thank you!

To my parents, Tom and Connie Hurlburt, thank you for being my parents. I love you! You are the best role models a daughter could have. Dad, you always challenged me to try new things and taught me never to be limited because "I was a girl." Mom, you always encouraged me to strive to be my best self and treat all people with respect and

kindness. I know that your example is the reason that I chose to become a social worker working in higher education. You are a fantastic mom and have always shown us (Dad, Tracy, Tom, and me) how to put on a brave face and move forward, even when the pain was and still, at times, is too much to bare. Thank you!

To my extended family, your support and love mean more to me than you will ever know. Thank you for always checking on my progress and giving me words of encouragement when I needed them the most. Thank you!

To Dr. Montes and Dr. DeJesus-Rueff, you are the best mentors I could have asked for; you pushed and supported me when I needed it most. Dr. Montes, you challenged me to think outside of the box and explore acts of sexual assault through many lenses. I will forever be grateful for your ability to get me out of my role of a Title IX Coordinator and into the role of researcher. I know that I have developed critical and analytical skills that will allow me to continue my work as a Title IX Coordinator, with the hope of improving support services and reporting options for victims of sexual assault. Dr. DeJesus-Rueff, you generously shared your experience as a Student Affairs professional and a Title IX Coordinator. Your analysis and historical perspective of Title IX, guidance from the Office of Civil Rights, and New York State Educational Law 128-B was critical to my research. You provided me with the opportunity to challenge my understanding of "where we are and where we have been and where we need to be" in supporting, educating, and reporting options for college women who have experienced a sexual assault. Thank you!

To the very brave and giving participants in this study, Jennifer, Kelsey, Lilo, Bethany, Amanda, and Sarah, I sincerely appreciate your willingness to share your

experiences with me. Without your courage and strength, this research would not have been possible. I will forever be grateful not only for the time you gave to me but mostly the lessons you taught me. I wish you all the best; you all have so much to offer. I hope that you felt your time was well used and that this research accurately reflected your experiences and your suggestions for systematic changes for others who may experience a sexual assault while enrolled in college. Thank you!

To Team TWC2 (Terry, Wei, Chastity, and Candice), I am so grateful that we were selected to sit at the same table – dammit! You taught me to think critically and reminded me to trust my abilities. I will forever miss seeing you every other weekend. I will cherish my memories of Chastity's wedding, lunch runs for tacos, Terry's alone time, Wei's technical skills, and Candice's leadership analysis of *The Walking Dead*. Thank you so much!

To the members of Cohort 10, I learned so much for all of you. You all have unique talents that need to be shared with the world. I am so thankful that I had the chance to get to know all of you. I am honored to be able to call you my friends and esteemed colleagues. Thank you!

Finally, in loving memory of Tricia and Reed, while gone too soon, you were always with me during this journey. Thank you for helping me check off a doctorate from my bucket list and seeing me through to the end!

Biographical Sketch

Tamara H. Kenney is currently Title IX Coordinator at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Geneseo, where she has been employed for the last 20 years in multiple positions. Ms. Kenney attended Mohawk Valley Community College from 1986 through 1988 and graduated with an Associate of Arts degree in May of 1988. She attended the State University of New York (SUNY) at Oneonta from 1988 to 1990 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1990. Ms. Kenney attended Syracuse University from 1993 to 1995, and graduated with a Master of degree in Social Work in 1995. Ms. Kenney is a Licensed Master of Social Work (LMSW) in the state of New York. In May of 2015, Ms. Kenney began her doctoral studies in the Ed.D., Program in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College. Ms. Kenney's research focused on undergraduate college women's choice to report a sexual assault to college officials under the supervision of Mr. Guillermo Montes and Dr. Richard DeJesus-Rueff and earned the Ed.D. degree December 2017.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to add to the existing literature about the lived experience of undergraduate college women between the ages of 18-24 years who experienced a sexual assault while enrolled in college. This study used a semi-structured interview protocol with six undergraduate women, between the ages of 18-22 years, who were enrolled in a Western New York college. The qualitative phenomenological design, along with feminist interviewing practices, provided a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the survivors and the barriers that keep women from reporting their assaults to college officials. Six undergraduate college women shared their experience of being sexually assaulted while in college. Contextual and structural themes were developed from the analysis of the participant interviews, which explored their campus sexual assault. Contextual themes included: (a) lack of definition of the experience; (b) not a big deal, it was my fault; and (c) did not want to get self or others in trouble. Additionally, the structural themes included: (a) mistrust of the reporting process, and (b) lack of knowledge about campus support services and personnel. These themes provided valuable insight to understanding the effects of a sexual assault for college women. The findings indicate a need to improve support services and the manner in which students are asked to report being sexually assaulted and the importance of given students a voice in the develop of policies and procedures.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Incidents of campus sexual assault are defined by the U.S. Department of Justice (2017) as,

> Any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities such as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape. (para. 2)

These types of incidents have become a staple of the local and national news—not for reports of assault survivors receiving the support they need or for proper adjudication, but for the re-victimization that survivors are experiencing at the hands of colleges and local law enforcement (Krakauer, 2015; Wilson, 2014). Despite the media coverage, sexual assault on college campuses continues to be a significant public health concern across the country (McMahon, 2014). "College is a high-risk timeframe for sexual victimization, with studies reporting that one in four college women have been raped or experienced an attempted rape" (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011, p. 582).

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (2012) reported that 37.4% of women between the ages of 18-24 years reported being sexually assaulted during their time at college. While acts of sexual assault on college campuses is not a new problem, it has become viewed as a public health crisis (Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds, & Gidycz, 2011). The seminal national study of the incidents of sexual assaults perpetrated against women was conducted almost 30 years ago by Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987).

The rate of incidents of sexual assault have not decreased (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2012; DeGue et al., 2012). The reported rates of sexual victimization of one in four women (CDC 2012; Koss et al., 1987) during their college career has remained consistent, despite recent legislative action at the federal and state level, for example the provisions of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (1990), the Violence Against Women Act (1994), guidance from the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (Ali, Rose, & Perez, 2011), the Campus Save Act (2013), and Enough is Enough: New York State Education Law Article 129-B (2015). These documents have provided guidance on prevention programming, how to respond to a survivor of a sexual assault, and how to process a sexual assault report, but little guidance has been offered as to how to increase the rates of reporting to campus officials. Wooten and Mitchell (2015) stated that:

> While such studies are useful in their description of prevention approaches and the effectiveness of such approaches, a gap remains in the literature regarding the role of policy as a solution to the problem of interpersonal violence (Jackson, Bouffard, & Fox, 2013) and specifically sexual violence on campus. (p. 15)

Legislative action. A number of federal and state laws, as well as guidance from the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights via the Dear College letters (Ali et al., 2011) and the recent, Enough is Enough: New York State Education Law Article 129-B have outlined a structure and procedures for how colleges are to respond to reports of sexual assault occurring on campus. Response to an incident of sexual assault occurring

on college campuses began with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Education

Amendments of 1972, specifically Title IX.

Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was to prohibit discrimination in

employment based on religion, race, color, or national origin, yet there was no provision

for prohibition based on gender until the Education Amendments of 1972, specifically

Title IX. "Title IX mirrored civil rights legislation, involving the regulatory powers of

the state to reform postsecondary access" (Rose, 2015, p. 174). The amendment in the

Title IX Legal Manual (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015) states, in part, that, "No person

in the United States shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, be denied

the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity

receiving federal financial assistance" (para. 7).

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, specifically, Title VI, banned racial

and sex discrimination in the workplace. "The omission of the word 'sex' from the titles

of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which addressed education, was corrected in 1972,

during the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965," (Silbaugh, 2015,

p. 1053). Howard Smith, a Virginia Senator, added the word "sex" to the bill. "Smith, a

Democrat, and a segregationist hoped that what he saw as a laughable inclusion to a set

of employments regulation would give conservative Northern legislators a way to vote

down the bill without looking racist" (Dicker, 2016, p. 69). Smith was quoted as saying,

"I have just received a letter this morning, which I was going to bring to your attention

later, from the National Women's [sic] Party," he said to Rep. Emanuel Celler of New

York, who was testifying as one of the bill's sponsors. "They want to know why you did not include sex in this bill. Why did you not?" (Risen, 2014, para. 7).

Despite Senator Smith's lack of support for civil rights legislation and the rights of women in the workplace, the National Organization for Women (NOW) persuaded President Lyndon B. Johnson to include women in the legislation. The bill was passed and signed into law in July 1964 (Dicker, 2016; Friedan, 2013). The signing of the executive order by President Johnson highlighted the accomplishments of NOW and the rising internal conflicts within its membership—liberal and radical feminists. In November 1967, NOW hosted its second annual conference and adopted a Bill of Rights of 1968, but not without disagreement within the membership (radical vs. liberal feminist ideology) (Dicker, 2016). The membership was divided on the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and reproductive rights. Members of the labor movement supported the ERA, but their labor unions were concerned about the ERA impacting the opportunities and protection for women in employment, which were in opposition to their Bill of Rights. Additionally, other women in the organization who did not support NOW's support of repealing abortion laws left the organization and created the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL). By NOW's third annual conference, radical feminists, led by Ti-Grace Atkinson, created a new organization that called itself *The October 17th Movement* (later called *The Feminists*) because the liberal and radical feminists were unable to understand each other's goals (Dicker, 2016; Friedan, 2013).

As a result of the work of NOW and the executive order signed by President Johnson, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was created to address discriminatory practices in the workplace and enforce the law. To align the

requirements of Title VI with the work of the EEOC, President Johnson signed an executive order to outlaw gender discrimination in employment and required employers to provide women with equal opportunities for employment.

> Passage of Title IX was the result of intense campaigning by feminists who wanted to call attention to discrimination in educational employment – an arena that had been deliberately excluded from earlier anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds that educational institutions were autonomous bodies that should not be subjected to government interference. (American Association of University Professors, 2016, p. 3)

Title IX of Education Amendments of 1972 also provided guidelines for gender equality in women in sports and freedom from gender discrimination, including sexual assault (Henrick, 2013; Rose, 2015).

The Education Amendments of 1972, which included Title IX, began as a concern about women's access to higher education, as admission procedures outlined a quota for women eligible for acceptance into undergraduate programs or statements that women need not apply (Dicker, 2016; Rose, 2015). The inclusion of Title IX in the Education Amendments of 1972 established gender equality, protections for pregnant and parenting students, and prohibited sex discrimination in the form of sexual harassment. Additionally, the definition of sexual harassment under Title IX was expanded to include sexual assault and attempted sexual assault (Levit & Verchick, 2016; Rose, 2015).

President Richard Nixon signed the Education Amendments of 1972 (P.L. 92-318), which included Title IX, into law on June 23, 1972. "The successful passage of Title IX marked a pivotal moment for U.S. higher education policy: the birth of one of

the most significant anti-discrimination policies of the twentieth century and a dramatic shift in U.S. higher education policy" (Rose, 2015, p. 174). For institutions of higher education, Title IX prohibited sex discrimination at all colleges that receives federal funds. Single-sex private institutions, religious colleges, and military academies were exempt from the provisions of Title IX, and they were not receiving federal financial aid (Dicker, 2013; Levit & Verchick, 2016; Rose, 2015).

For many years, Title IX was viewed only as a federal act to provide equal access for women in the area of athletics, although, there was no language in the amendment that mentioned athletics. Title IX was an add-on to the Education Amendments of 1972, and it is an anti-discrimination law that required gender equality in providing equal access to educational activities, including athletics. The use of Title IX to address sexual harassment and sexual assault on college campuses only became familiar after Title IX was applied to cases of discrimination based on gender, after an interpretation of the amendment by Secretary of Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Casper Weinberger, in 1975 (Juliano, 2013).

The implementation of Title IX became the responsibility of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). "This effort was led by Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who specifically decided that Title IX would apply to sports" (Juliano, 2013, p. 3). Secretary Weinberger's vision of Title IX was that male and female teachers would be paid at the same rate, and students would have equal access to athletics. In 1995, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) became responsible for the enforcement of Title IX and issued a guidebook (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The guidebook primarily focused on access to varsity sports. Based on the guidance from the OCR, colleges were

required to provide documentation in compliance with Title IX. OCR and Title IX requirements have been legally challenged in the past, and the outcomes have defined the scope of Title IX.

One challenge to the application of Title IX was *Grove City v. Bell* (1984), which established Title IX's application for colleges that received federal funds. Title IX established federal financial aid as aid given to colleges that were directly from federal funds or indirectly from federal funds by students who received federal grants. The court ruled that federal scholarships or grants constituted federal financial aid. Further legal challenges expanded Title IX to address incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault that occurred on college campuses.

In *Franklin v. Gwinnett Country Public School* (1992), the Supreme Court ruled that women could sue for monetary damages (the private right of action) for discrimination when Title IX was not applied to college programs. In 1999, *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education,* the Supreme Court ruled that victims of gender discrimination could seek monetary damages, "when a school acts with deliberate indifference to known acts of harassment," as defined by Title IX (Henrick, 2013, p. 73). The private right of action under Title IX allows survivors of acts of interpersonal violence to sue the college for monetary damages as a result of the gender discrimination, which includes sexual assault (Title IX Legal Manual, 2017).

Later, in *Favia v. Indiana University of Pennsylvania* (1993), the court ruled that universities could not use the excuse of budgetary constraints to avoid Title IX compliance. This was demonstrated in 1994 when the University of Illinois prevailed in

the U.S. Court of Appeals when it had cut the men's swim team in 1993 for financial reasons.

> Members of that team had sued on the grounds that they were denied equal opportunity, but this case, along with several others around this time, set the precedent that men may not use Title IX to claim sex discrimination when their programs are cut for budgetary reasons. (Kwak, 2016, p. 52)

Additionally, male students, who have been a victim of sexual harassment or sexual assault, can file a Title IX complaint, just like women (Title IX, n.d.), and men who have been found responsible for acts of gender discrimination, as defined by Title IX, have also attempted to use the same gender discrimination definitions as a recourse to sue for being removed from the college. It's an unusual (but not unique) legal approach, utilizing a federal statute designed to protect the people who historically have been victimized by institutional discrimination. For male students to make a successful case for services and action under Title IX, men must demonstrate that they were discriminated against based on their status as a male, (Wilson, 2016). Beyond the Civil Rights of Act of 1964, the Education Amendments of 1972, which included Title IX, another piece of original legislation, the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 has impacted how colleges prevent and address sexual assault and other crimes on college campuses.

Crime awareness and the Campus Security Act. In 1987, the family of Jeanne Clery founded an organization focusing on educating future college students and parents about the crimes occurring on campus after the loss of their daughter, Jeanne Clery, a Lehigh University student who was raped and murdered in her residence hall (Clery

Center, 2017; Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2000). In 1990, Congress signed into law the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act (the Clery Act). The Clery Act requires colleges to:

1. publish an annual security report (ASR), which is published annually by October 1 which includes the data on crimes (including sexual assault) that have occurred on campus or at college-owned property (based on geography) and the ASR is distributed to current students, faculty/staff and prospective students and their families, with the intent of informing the community about campus crimes;

2. publish a daily crime log, which campuses security/police posts to advise the community of crimes occurring on campus on a regular basis;

3. distribute timely warnings, which are sent to the campus community when there is a belief that the community is in danger or the perpetrator of a crime is unknown; and

4. maintain crime statistics for the last 8 years.

The Clery Center publishes periodic guidance for colleges to assist them in meeting the requirements of the Clery Act. There have been a few revisions to the act, and in 1998, that act was renamed the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy & Campus Crime Statistic Act (Clery Center, 2017; Fisher et al., 2000). The Clery Center collects data and informs the campus community about sexual assaults that only occur in or on property or "the where" of the college. Title IX is concerned about the "who" of sexual assault.

Office of Civil Rights (OCR). In 2011, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights published its first "Dear Colleague Letter" (DCL) regarding a college's responsibility to address sexual harassment and, in its most severe form, sexual assault. The DCL clarified that any institution receiving federal financial assistance, including the institution that had students who received federal scholarships, was required to investigate any report of discrimination, based on gender, which was outlined in Title IX. The law stayed exactly the same, and the duties of the school stayed the same, but the federal government came in and said that the school was not doing what it needed it to be doing (Levit & Verchick, 2016). The second Dear Colleague Letter was disseminated in April 2013, and it warned colleges against retaliatory practices that discouraged students from reporting incidents of sexual assault. The OCR defined retaliation as any act by a college or another student(s) that creates an unwelcoming environment for survivors of sexual assault from reporting the assault to college officials and the police. The last DCL, published in 2015, reminded colleges of the requirements of Title IX and the role of Title IX Coordinators, which included providing support services, interim measures, and conducting an investigation of any reported act of interpersonal violence, including sexual assault.

Despite the well-intended guidance in the Dear Colleague Letters (DCLs), students accused of sexual assault are challenging the provisions outlined in the DCLs. Lau (2013) stated that:

> Now, students who have been unfairly judged and unfairly punished seek to hold colleges accountable, in a court of law, for failing to adhere to their own standards and for conduct that, although likely driven out of fear to comply with OCR's

mandate, ironically, constitutes a violation of the Title IX of the Education

Amendments of 1972, which is the very federal statue that inspired the 'Dear

Colleague Letter' in the first place. (para. 5)

Legal developments in New York State. Before 2015, New York State colleges

who received any federal financial funding addressed sexual harassment and sexual

assault incidents by following the guidance of Title IX, OCR's DCLs, and the Clery Act.

In 2015, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed New York State Education Law Article 129-B

(Enough is Enough) (NASPA Foundation, 2017) into law, and it required all New York

State colleges and universities to prevent and respond to reports of sexual misconduct in a

proactive manner.

While many provisions of Article 129-B reinforced or expand on existing

obligations imposed on higher education institutions by Title IX of Education

Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and/or Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus

Security Police and Campus Crime Statistics Act, as amended by the Violence

Against Act/Campus Sexual Violence (the "Clery Act"), Article 129-B also

includes a number of new requirements that are likely to significantly impact the

current policies and procedures of higher education institutions. (Enough is

Enough, 2015, para. 1)

These provisions included a statewide uniform definition of affirmative consent, alcohol

and drug amnesty policy for the survivor, a student's bill of rights, resources for reporting

individuals (survivors), rights with regard to campus conduct proceedings, reporting

requirements and the right to interim measures (i.e., change in residence halls, class

sections, etc.) as well as the right to appeal provisional measures. All of these provisions

are part of the Governor Cuomo's Enough is Enough campaign (NASPA Foundation, 2017) to encourage survivors of an incident of sexual assault to report the incident to campus officials.

Problem Statement

Vice President Joe Biden has said, "students across the country deserve the safest possible environment in which to learn" (Sieben, 2011, para. 4), which would provide each student with the opportunity to experience the full benefits of a college education. Despite the recent legislation and enforcement of Title IX by the Office of Civil Rights and NYS Education Law Article 129-B to address interpersonal violence, sexual assaults are still occurring on college campuses (Wilson, 2014). Undergraduate women continue to experience sexual assaults at a rate of approximately one in four (CDC, 2012 Koss et al., 1987). Feminist theory and rape myth script theory provide insight regarding factors that contribute to the perceived or real barriers for women to report an assault. In an attempt to lower the barriers for women to report, there needs to be an exploration and understanding of the survivors' lived experiences, physical and emotional needs, support services provided to them, and their ability to report an assault to campus officials and/or law enforcement, along with how accountability is defined for the assault.

Theoretical Rationale

Feminist theory. The theoretical framework for this study is feminism and feminist theory. The women's movement began with the work of Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Betty Friedan, and Gloria Steinem who challenged the status quo and demanded that women have the same rights and responsibilities as men. The history of feminism is defined by three waves from the right

to vote, to embracing the contradiction (Dicker, 2016). Anthony, Stanton, and Stone began their work in the 1850s. These women, working for the right to vote, were part of the first wave of feminism. In Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech, "Ain't I a Woman?" she challenged the dominate rights of men and asked why all women could not have the same rights as men, as Black women were expected to perform many of the same tasks as men (Gilbert, 1997). Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone and the women's suffrage movement continued Truth's work by demanding equal rights for women supported by law. The suffrage movement challenged the discriminatory language in the U.S. Constitution that limited the right to vote to men. Women won the right to vote in 1920 when the 19th amendment passed. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, there was a shift in the feminist movement, when women were no longer committed to women's equality but survival for their families (Dicker, 2016). Many White women entered the workforce during World War II, and by the end of the war, most women returned to being homemakers and housewives, but some women who wanted to continue working were fired from their positions to provide employment for the men returning from war (Dicker 2016; Friedan, 2013).

The second wave of feminism is described as women seeking liberation and equality. Betty Friedan (2013), a graduate of Smith College, spent the 1950s raising children and doing freelance work. She began researching her classmates from Smith College's class of 1942 and found that most of her White, upper-middle class female classmates found themselves in a life that did not make them happy (Dicker, 2016; Fredian, 2013). Friedan began questioning her life and asking herself, is this it? (Friedan, 2013) resulted in the 1963 publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, a seminal feminist

book. By 1966, Betty Friedan and other women began NOW, the National Organization

for Women. Friedan, the first president of NOW, included the word *for* in the

organization title because she believed every citizen should be part of the movement.

NOW's purpose was to "take action to bring women into full participation in the

mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities

thereof, in truly equal partnership with men" (Friedan, 2013, p. 463). This wave defined

the struggle for the reproductive rights of women, specifically abortion rights. Feminists

and activists protested and filed lawsuits that supported and challenged a women's right

to choose to have an abortion, which led to the landmark case of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 in

which the Supreme Court ruled that abortion was a fundamental right under the U.S.

Constitution (Dicker, 2016; Levit & Verchick, 2016).

The feminists involved in the third wave of feminism focused on changing social

institutions with the goal of changing the greater culture. The third wave began as the

result of challenging the nomination and confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Clarence

Thomas, despite reports of his sexual harassment of a female employee (Dicker, 2016).

Complaints of sexual harassment to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

(EEOC) increased after the Thomas confirmation hearings. By 1985, a new radical group

of feminists started an organization called the Guerilla Girls. The Guerilla Girls group

was formed to expose sexism and racism in films, politics, and society against women

and people of color (Dicker, 2016,). The third wave also provided greater opportunities

for women to run and be elected to the Senate, including Carol Moseley Braun, Dianne

Feinstein, and Barbara Boxer. Dicker (2016) explained:

Like the second wave feminists, third wavers share the desire to end sexism and

sexist oppression, and to do that, they work within organization formed by their

feminist predecessors, agencies such as the National Organization for Women,

Planned Parenthood, and the National Women's Political Caucus. (p. 130)

Feminist theory is woven throughout the acceptance and challenges of rape and

sexual assault that are perpetrated against women. From the colonial era to the early

1960s, men were viewed as dominant, and women were to be submissive. With the

purpose of women to serve the needs of men, women were considered property with no

rights. While sexual assault was viewed as a crime, but only if the woman could prove

that she did not consent to the sexual act and that the responsibility of the violence was

attributed to a man's inability to control his impulses (Donat & D'Emilio, 1992). Rape

and sexual assault were viewed as an act of oppression and monitoring of women and

people of color (Donat & D'Emilio, 1992). "The sexual assault of minority women

maintained the supremacy of White men" (Donat & D'Emilio, 1992, p. 12). By the

1960s, the feminist movement began to acknowledge that rape and sexual assault were

acts of political control (Brownmiller, 1975; Levit & Verchick, 2016). "The act of rape

was seen not as an end in itself, but as a means of enforcing gender roles in society and

maintaining the hierarchy in which men retained control" (Donat & D'Emilio, 1992,

p. 13).

Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape, by Susan Brownmiller (1975),

provided a common understanding of sexual assault, from the theoretical perspective of

feminism, as an issue of power and control and not a lack of impulse control.

Brownmiller defined sexual assault as something that *women are trained for* and that

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rape has *something to do with the gender of women* (Brownmiller, 1975). Brownmiller asserted that as children are taught, girls get raped and boys do not. Girls and women are taught that boys and men have more power and that being a woman means that you will have a "special status, as a victim" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 309).

By providing a standard definition of sexual assault, it challenged both parties to accept their role in this violent act, as defined by their gender roles. Under Title IX, men had become accountable for their actions and women were empowered to file charges against the men who were causing harm. "The views of feminists, in particular, the work of Susan Brownmiller, sparked research within psychology to examine a 'rape-supportive culture' that provides the context for sexual assault" (Donat & D'Emilio, 1992, p. 16). Rape-supportive cultures and the application of the guiding principles of feminist theory assisted with the reduction of victim blaming or controlling women's choices to reporting the assault to college officials.

Rape myths and rape script theory. Rape myths and rape script theory outline the social construct of sexual assault. Rape myths are defined as attitudes and beliefs that are usually false but accepted, and they serve to justify the act of sexual violence (Ryan, 2011). "Rape myths, which are present at both the individual and institutional/societal levels, are one way in which sexual violence has been sustained and justified through history" (Edwards et al., 2011, p. 761). Collective rape myths include, "women enjoy being raped," "men cannot control themselves," and "women lie about being raped" (Ryan, 2011, p. 761). Rape myths can provide a framework for men to defend their behavior(s) and for women to be responsible to protect themselves from the possibility of becoming a victim of a sexual assault in the future (Harding, 2015; Ryan, 2011). "Thus

rape myths not only influence societal attitudes towards rape victims but influence important decisions related to legal cases and how information is reported to the public" (Edwards et al., 2011, p. 769). Rape myths support the following 4-points of rape myth pattern: (a) blame the victim, (b) express disbelief that a sexual assault occurred, (c) defend the perpetrator's actions, and (d) say only *certain women* get raped. Using this pattern of understanding of the events surrounding a sexual assault is the basis of rape scripts.

Rape scripts provide an outline of how events usually proceed. "Sexual scripts are culturally determined, they create sexual meaning and desire, and they enable individuals to interpret their own and their partner's behavior" (Ryan, 2011, p. 775). Sexual scripts define behavior, such as male persistence, consent, and methods of coercion (Ryan, 2011). Most rape scenarios describe the most accepted form of rape, which is a stranger who is hiding in the bushes who attacks and rapes the sweet undergraduate student (Germain, 2016; Harding, 2015; Ryan, 2011). This script does not match the experience of many college women who experience acquaintance rape. For example, at the sentencing of convicted rapist, Beau Donaldson, a former member of the University of Missoula Grizzlies' football team, Allison Huggett, a survivor of a sexual assault, said: "As we grow up, we are taught to stay away from strangers and creepy people in the alleyways, . . . and not to go anywhere without someone you trust. [But] what happens when it's the person you trust who rapes you?" (Krakauer, 2015, p. 315) Acquaintance rape scripts include the elements of the excessive alcohol consumption and friends having a misunderstanding of the events of the incident (Ryan, 2011).

Women of color in the feminist movement. Feminists and the women's movement continue to support educational programs and legal directives to reduce the number of sexual assaults occurring; yet, there has been little consideration of the experiences of women of color in the movement. "Since the 1970s, feminist critics have pointed out that the mainly White, middle-class women made up what is commonly thought of as the women's movement" (Bevacqua, 2000, p. 37). The lack of participation of Black women in the anti-rape movement may have been limited by the agenda of the White feminists in positions of leadership (Davis, 1990). Davis contended that:

> The failure of the anti-rape movement of the early 1970s to develop an analysis of rape that acknowledged the social conditions that foster sexual violence as well as the centrality of racism in determining those social conditions, resulted in the initial reluctance of Black, Latina, and Native American women to involve themselves in the movement. (Davis, 1990, p. 45)

Davis noted that the majority of feminists failed to understand the use of fraudulent rapes charges against Black men and brutal outcomes of such charges. A false claim of rape by a White woman against a Black man demonstrated the intersection of racism and rape. For women of color, there was a distrust of the feminist movement to address issues of rape because women of color did not believe the movement would address matters that were important to them, and they feared that changes in how law enforcement addressed sexual assault would disproportionality target Black men (Bevacqua, 2000). Thankfully, the grassroots efforts of women of color brought them into a national conversation about rape prevention efforts. "For example, according to Essie Green Williams, an organizer of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), the first NBFO conference in 1973

held a workshop to explore the political perspectives and [Black] women's experience of rape" (Bevacqua, 2000, p. 41).

  Criticism of feminism, Title IX, and OCR. While the feminist movement and the provisions of Title IX have provided a foundation for how incidents of sexual assault should be addressed on college campuses, there is another side of the discussion that needs to be examined in order to provide effective policies, support services, and prevention efforts to eliminate sexual assault on college campuses. A critical examination must include viewing sexual assault through the work of feminist critics, the legal standing and accountability of Title IX, the OCR guidance (i.e., due process rights and the preponderance of evidence standard), and the possible implications of the transition from President Barack Obama to President Donald Trump.

  Camille Paglia, a professor of art and a feminist/social critic, has said that young women must understand the biology of the sexes and learn not to get raped (Bevacqua, 2000) and that the epidemic of sexual assault on college campuses has been grossly overreported (Paglia, 2014). Paglia (2014) has challenged women to be skeptical of the feminist party line, to become more informed about personal risk factors (i.e., environmental distraction such as cellphones and alcohol), and to use this information to lower their risk of sexual assault (Paglia, 2014). Paglia (2015), a self-described "feminist for equal treatment and opportunity" (p. 1) and a staunch defender of individual freedom and free speech, has challenged the guidance and the definition of sexual assault provided by the OCR. She believed that the definition of sexual assault has been made so broad that either party could deem a sexual encounter a sexual assault. Additionally, Paglia (2014) believed the guidance from the OCR and the accepted definition of sexual assault

has made women into victims who need to be protected. Paglia (2014) advocated that women should be responsible for their personal decisions and safety, and that the federal government should not treat women as children who are unable to protect themselves. Christina Hoff Sommers, in a 1994 PBS interview with Ben Wattenberg and Paglia, agreed with Paglia and said, "feminists are so carried away with victimology, with a rhetoric of male-bashing . . . that it's become anti-intellectual" (Wattenberg, 1994, para. 8). Paglia (2014) asked women to not blindly follow the "hysterical propaganda about our 'rape culture'" (p. 1) but to challenge the notion that women are fragile and in need of protection in their own dating lives (Paglia, 2015). Additionally, she has stated that, "colleges should stick to academics and stop infantilizing supervision of students' dating lives, an authoritarian intrusion that borders on violation of civil liberties" (Paglia, 2014, p. 1). Paglia (2014) and Sommer's (1994) concerns were demonstrated in two Title IX grievances filed against Northwestern University Professor Laura Kipnis (2015a).

In February 2015, Kipnis (2015a), wrote an article for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, entitled, "Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe," which explored many of the concepts being addressed in Camille Paglia writings. Kipnis's article demonstrated the notion that the OCR and Title IX guidance has crossed the line of academic freedom and free speech, as outlined by Paglia (2014). Kipnis's (2015a) article challenged the new notion of feminism, the helplessness of female students, trigger warnings, and the power of men and people in position of authority. Kipnis (2015a) stated, "The climate of sanctimony about student vulnerability has grown impenetrable. No one dares question it lest you're labeled antifeminist, or worse, a sex criminal" (para. 47). Additionally,

Kipnis (2015a) challenged the notion of sexual victimization of college women, as defined by federal agencies, through her academic writing and as a result of exercising her academic freedom to challenge the accepted status quo; she became the subject of not one, but two, Title IX investigations by the OCR, which both were unfounded. If a professor exploring her ideas and concerns about the application of Title IX and the guidance provided by the OCR leads to an investigation, how can college students and administrators find the right balance in supporting, adjudicating, and preventing sexual violence on campus?

In *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus,* Katie Roiphe (1993) asked the question about a woman's decision making and her perceived ability not to take care of herself. Roiphe challenged the generally accepted rate that one in four women will experience a sexual assault. Roiphe (1993) said that, "one in four . . . if I was really standing in the middle of an 'epidemic' a 'crisis' – 25 percent of my women friends were really raped – wouldn't I know it?" (Roiphe, 1993, p. 27). Rophie and Kipnis stated that these numbers create fear in young women and limit women's sexual choices and focuses on the dangers of sexuality rather than on its joys (Kipnis, 2015a; Roiphe, 1993).

Additionally, Christina Hoff Sommers (1994) wrote in her book, *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women,* "A surprising number of clever and powerful feminists share the conviction that American women still live in a patriarchy where men collectively keep women down" (Sommers, 1994, p. 19). Sommers advocated for anti-rape policies and credible statistics to support the policies (Bevacqua, 2000). Sommers noted a concern that feminists have limited their focus on sexual victimization to young college women and have not considered male rape as a problem,

and the allocation of funds provided in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) for campus prevention efforts is a waste of money (Sommers, 1994).

Additionally, there have been a number of legal challenges to the application of Title IX and the guidance provided by the OCR in 2011, especially in the area of due process rights of a male student being accused of sexually assaulting a female student. These legal challenges have been guided by two lawyers who have joined the fight against the guidance provided by the OCR that appears to limit the rights to due process for the accuser male. The lawyer, Andrew T. Miltenberg, a New York-based business litigation attorney has been labeled the rape lawyer by defending "young men whom some consider indefensible" (Roy, 2015, para. 2). Miltenberg (Roy, 2015) had two criticisms of the application of Title IX to incidents of sexual assault. First, he believed that college conduct processes do not provide the full due process rights to the accused student. Miltenberg said, "he simply believes that the accused in these situations aren't getting a fair shake" (Roy, 2015, para. 13). Miltenberg (Roy, 2015) defined due process as the right of the accused to be represented by legal counsel and being afford the opportunity to cross examine the evidence and the accuser. In the opinion of Miltenberg (Roy, 2015), the pendulum has swung from the right, from not believing women, to the left, where the rights of the accused have failed to provide due process and the right to defend oneself from the allegation of sexual assault. Miltenberg's (Roy, 2015) second criticism of the OCR guidelines reflects his belief that colleges should not be investigating nor adjudicating sexual assault cases. He has stated that all allegations of sexual assault occurring on college campuses should be investigated by the police and prosecuted through the criminal courts. The Republican Party has supported

Miltenberg's belief that colleges should not address allegations of sexual assault. The Republican Party has stated, "the Obama administration's distortion of Title IX micromanages the ways colleges and universities deal with allegations of abuse contravenes our country's legal traditions and must be halted" (Wilson, 2016, par. 5).

The Foundation of Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) joined the conversation by challenging the pro-victim guidance and the lack of due process rights for the accused. FIRE has stated that the guidance provided by the OCR in 2011 was unlawful and forced colleges to implement the guidance out of fear of losing federal financial aid (Shibley, 2016). FIRE has argued that the OCR failed to follow the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) when it issued the 2011 guidance and effectively made the guidance a law. The APA addressed concerns that federal agencies would bypass Congress and make laws without following a democratic accountability process. FIRE has reported that the OCR did not follow a democratic decision-making process when it published the 2011 guidance. The guidance required that only in cases of sexual assault that: (a) both parties could appeal a conduct decision, allowing for double jeopardy for the accused; (b) lowered the standard of evidence to a preponderance; and (c) students would be allowed to have an advisor, but that the advisor could not speak on their behalf (New, 2016; Shibley, 2016). In August 2016, Oklahoma Wesleyan University and FIRE filed a federal lawsuit that sought "to invalidate this provision of the DCL on the grounds that it was not offered public notice and comment as required by the Administrative Procedure Act" Oklahoma Wesleyan University, 2016, para. 2).

Finally, the federal oversight of how colleges respond to reports of sexual assault may change under President Trump's administration. The Obama administration

outlined policies and procedures for colleges to use when responding to reports of sexual

violence through the OCR guidance letters, which also outline the consequences for

colleges not in compliance with the guidance. Additionally, the Obama administration

published reports (Not Alone) and created a social media campaign (It's on Us) to

encourage everyone to assist with the elimination of sexual violence. As a result of these

initiatives, the OCR is investigating approximately 200 colleges after receiving

complaints of mismanagement of sexual assault reports. As a result of the oversight and

the social media campaign, the OCR has asked for additional federal funds to hire more

investigators (Wilson, 2016). Wilson (2016) stated that, "The Trump White House is

likely not to only shelve those investigations and cut back on enforcement, said higher-

education observers, but may also look to the courts instead of colleges to deal with

allegations of sexual assault" (para. 5). Ultimately, the issue of campus sexual assaults

needs to be addressed by students, faculty, and staff, as well as through campus policies

and procedures that effectively reduce the incidents of assaults occurring on campus.

Statement of Purpose

The goal of this study was to explore the barriers that obstruct women from

reporting a sexual assault to college officials and holding the perpetrator accountable for

his actions. Some studies have defined the barriers to reporting an assault from the

survivor's perspective (Branch & Richards, 2013; Krivoshey, Adkins, Hayes, Nemeth, &

Klein, 2013; Orchowski, Meyer, & Gidycz, 2009), which include feelings of shame, a

sense of guilt, and responsibility for the incident. One area that is limited in the literature

is how survivors understand their assault and why they do or do not they report the

incident to campus officials. Understanding their expert perspective may reduce the

barriers and create a system that would provide more support for survivors to report assaults to college officials for support services and accountability for their predator.

Research Questions

To lower the barriers to reporting incidents of sexual assault experienced by college women to college officials, some questions need to be answered from the assaulted women's lived experience and by seeking guidance from the experts—the survivors. This study focuses on the lived experiences of undergraduate college women who experienced a sexual assault after entering college. The study also explores if the survivors sought assistance from a college official and reported the assault. The questions that guided this study are:

1. What is the lived experience of undergraduate college women who have experienced a sexual assault on campus since their enrollment in college?

2. What are the barriers for undergraduate college women who seek campus assistance from college officials related to reporting a sexual assault?

These research questions were formulated for a phenomenological research study (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994), because women who have been assaulted have an important point of view to be explored to improve campus response procedures and prevention of future sexual assaults on college campuses.

Potential Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is to understand the lived experiences of college women who were sexually assaulted and their choice between disclosing the assault and not reporting it. Understanding a survivor's experience and choice to report could improve rates of reporting or a change policies and procedures that have been established

by a college. "College women represent an important population for research and intervention efforts in this area, as they fall within the highest age-related risk group for sexual assault: 18-34 years old" (Zinzow & Thompson, 2011, p. 712). Additionally, increased rates of reporting may lead to a shift in the campus culture and decrease the rate of sexual assaults.

Definition of Terms

For a common understanding of the terms used in this study, a list of words with definitions are provided:

Barriers – anything that restricts access to or impedes a person from disclosing or reporting an assault.

College Officials – any higher education employee who a survivor of an assault could reasonably assume would help or direct that survivor to support or reporting services.

Dear College Letter – guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

Disclosure – the act of telling another person about a sexual assault.

Feminism Movement – the group action that advocates for social, political, and economic equality for men and women.

Feminist Theory – the extension of the feminism movement into a theoretical or philosophical frame and to understand the nature of gender inequality.

Formal Support Systems – professional people, that is, social workers, counselors, and/or college officials, who can help a survivor of a sexual assault.

Informal Support Systems – peers, friends, family, and nonprofessional people who can help a victim of sexual assault.

Rape Myth – a false, stereotypical, and prejudicial belief about sexual assault.

Rape Script Theory – a supposition that all sexual assaults (rapes) are committed by strangers or that sexual assaults only happen to *good girls*.

Reporting – the act of formally disclosing an act of sexual assault to a college official and/or law enforcement.

Sexual Assault – an intimate act committed against someone without that person freely giving consent and the act includes as fondling, intercourse, and or sodomy.

Survivor – a term used in place of victim for a woman who has experienced a sexual assault. The word survivor is viewed as an empowering term used to honor the woman's individual strength to overcome the experience.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the current problem, purpose, research questions, and the potential significance of this study to understand the lived experience of college women who have experienced a sexual assault while enrolled in college. A glossary of terms with definitions has been included to provide clarification to the reader.

A review of the literature of barriers to reporting, disclosures of sexual assaults, policy development, and reporting rates of college women who have been sexually assaulted on college campuses is presented in Chapter 2. The research design, methodology, and analysis are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the results and findings, and Chapter 5 discusses the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Incidents of campus sexual assault have become a staple of the local and national news—not for reports of assault survivors receiving the support for their needs nor proper adjudication but for the re-victimization survivors are experiencing at the hands of colleges and local law enforcement. This chapter provides an overview of the empirical literature exploring the barriers for women to report sexual assaults to college administrators, and it reviews studies that have guided policy development that could reduce the barriers to reporting a sexual assault. This overview provides a frame for the empirical studies and an analysis of each study as it connects to the research topic. Based on the analysis of the empirical studies, gaps in the research are identified and explored for future research and application.

A systemic review of peer-reviewed studies published during the years of 2000-2015 was conducted to develop a comprehensive and balanced review of the literature on sexual assault on college campuses and the use of policies to decrease the rates of incidences of sexual assault, barriers to reporting, and accountability for perpetrators. Multiple online databases were searched to narrow the search of empirical studies to fit the research criteria. Searches began by using broad search terms, such as sexual assault, college campus, and barriers to reporting. In a more narrowed search of the empirical studies, the search terms were limited to: (a) sexual assault, (b) college women, (c) barriers to reporting/disclosure, and (d) policy. The term *rape* was not used as a search

term because it is a very broad term and limited to the acts of nonconsensual intercourse, usually by a man against a woman. The use of the phrase *sexual assault* allowed for a richness and breadth in the search, as sexual assault can refer to any nonconsensual sexual act from fondling to nonconsensual intercourse. The terms *reporting* and *disclosure* were used interchangeably in the search; yet, the terms have very different meanings for a survivor. The term disclosure specifically refers to the person or agency that a survivor first shares the incident with, usually an informal support group, such peers/friends or family members. Reporting refers to the act of formally seeking assistance for an incident of sexual assault and possibly seeking criminal or campus action against the perpetrator. The search term *college women* was defined as a female student who is or was enrolled in a college or university at the time of participation in the study. The final search term, *policy* was defined as campus policies and procedures, state or federal legislation, and guidance from the Office of Civil Rights. Understanding trauma, proper interviewing technique, and evidence collection is essential for exploring the reporting barriers for law enforcement, but they fall outside the scope of understanding the barriers to reporting a sexual assault to formal support providers on a college campus and, therefore, these studies were eliminated.

Scanning the abstracts provided an overview of the studies located, and most of these studies focused on the use of drug/alcohol during an assault, prevention programming, risk reduction, and an understanding of rape and a *hooking up* culture. Understanding a rape culture that might be present on a college campus could be a critical piece in understanding why a student might report an assault to informal support providers instead of a formal support provider. If survivors do not know if they will be

believed or not, based on their experiences on campus and the apparent rape supportive culture that is present within the student body, why would they disclose or report an assault? Understanding a perceived rape supportive culture, similar to the environment at the University of Missoula in which sexual assault reports were not taken seriously or the survivor was asked not to report (Krakauer, 2015), provides a framework for understanding the lack of disclosure to formal support providers and reporting sexual assaults to the college.

Using the abstract as a tool to narrow the studies to be reviewed, several themes reoccurred throughout the studies. These themes included campus procedures, resistance programs, legislative action, response procedures to a sexual assault, and to whom do students report a sexual assault. Several of these studies provided a clearer picture of the barriers to reporting a sexual assault to informal and formal support providers.

Reviewing the articles and references narrowed the selections of empirical literature to only studies that included discussions of a survivor's disclosure of sexual assault to informal support and formal support providers by college women. Additionally, the studies that explored the barriers to disclosures and reporting and guidance on how to increase reporting to reduce incidents of sexual assault were included in the review of the literature, as outlined in Table 2.1, which articulates the inclusion and exclusion criteria and provides an overview of the selected studies. While the table does not include an overview of each study, it does provide a reference to the studies selected in the review process. Table 2.1 also provides an overview of the target population, study design, research method, and the types of the peer-reviewed journals from which the studies were selected. The search parameters limited the studies to those published

between the years of 2000 and 2015, focusing on college women's disclosure or reporting of a college sexual assault.

Table 2.1

Inclusion and Exclusion of Criteria

	Included	Excluded
Publication type	English language Peer-reviewed articles 2000-2015	Non-English language, editorials, review articles, dissertations, or theses
Study design	Primary research information related to the exploration of women reporting sexual assaults	Meta-analysis Insufficient methodological quality
Study population	College women 18-24 years old Sexual assault survivors and non-survivors	Adults or children survivors Women not enrolled in college GLBTQ community
Interventions	Barriers to reporting Informal support providers/disclosures Formal support providers/reporting	
Outcome	Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods measures showing proven supports and reporting of sexual assaults of college women to reduce incidents of sexual assault on college campuses	

The inclusion and review of these empirical studies were to evaluate the barriers that affect a survivor's choice to disclose to a friend or report a sexual assault to law enforcement and a college administrator for formal action. Understanding the barriers to reporting, physical or perceived, could lead to policies or models of intervention that would allow survivors of sexual assault to choose to report an assault with the knowledge that they would be believed and supported through the reporting process.

Survivors of sexual assault generally do not report their assault to college officials nor law enforcement. Instead, they turn to informal support providers for assistance (Walsh, Baynard, Moynihan, Ward, & Cohen, 2010). The seminal research of Koss et al. (1987) on sexual victimization of college women, completed almost 30 years ago, found that 42% of survivors of a sexual assault never disclose the assault (Koss et al., 1987; Sable, Danis, & Mauzy, 2006). The National College Women Sexual Victimization Survey (NCESV) reported that only approximately 5-7% of survivors report to law enforcement, college officials, or college counseling services to seek accountability for an assault (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Sable et al., 2006; Walsh et al, 2010). The same survey also reported that approximately 66% of survivors disclosed to a friend that they had been sexually assaulted (Sable et al., 2006). The definitions of the barriers, disclosure, and reporting, shown in Table 2.2, were understood to limit the literature review to only those studies that addressed the barriers to reporting an assault.

Table 2.2

Definitions of Key Terms

Term	Definition	Example
Barriers	Real or perceived obstacles to seeking assistance after an incident of a sexual assault	Feelings of shame, guilt, fear of retaliation, embarrassment
Disclosure	To reveal a sexual assault to someone who can provide support	Telling a friend of family member
Reporting	To communicate an incident to someone who can assist with formal action against the offender	Filing a report with the police, Title IX Coordinator, student conduct board

The use of the terms *sexual assault*, *rape*, and *sexual violence* are all used to describe a nonconsensual sexual act perpetrated by one person upon another. The term rape was utilized in the seminal study by Koss et al. (1987) and is defined by the Federal

Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as the "carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her consent" (Koss et al., 1987, p. 162). As research in the field of sexual assault continues to grow, the term *rape* has been replaced by sexual assault or sexual violence (Sable et al., 2006). Sexual assault or sexual abuse is defined as a nonconsensual sexual act between two individuals. These terms still include the FBI's definition and have expanded to include any act that is sexual in nature and does not include consent, including but not limited to intercourse. Additionally, the term *disclosure* refers to the act of telling another person of sexual assault with the hope of receiving emotional support and guidance from that person. A survivor's disclosure can be in the form of informal support (friends) or informal disclosure (to law enforcement and a college official), for only for documenting the incident without pursuing accountability for the perpetrator.

Finally, the term *reporting* refers to the act of describing a sexual assault to law enforcement and a college administrator and seeking action. Reporting allows the survivor with the ability to explore possible criminal or conduct charges. Reporting can assist with reducing rates of sexual assault on a college campus by holding the perpetrators accountable for their actions (Orchowski et al., 2009). By making a formal report, the survivor can explore options for holding the perpetrator responsible for his actions, and it ensures that the survivor will receive information on resources and assistance with emotional or medical needs. A supportive response to a report of a sexual assault not only assists the survivor with recovery but also encourages others to formally report other sexual assaults (Paul et al., 2013).

Significant Empirical Findings

Barriers to reporting. The effects of sexual assault on a female college student can be devastating, and the ability of that survivor to disclose the assault to informal support or formal support providers could be the difference between dropping out of college and graduating with a degree. Informal support providers are defined as peers and friends who offer emotional guidance to the survivor after a disclosure or a report of an assault. Formal support providers are agencies, offices, college administrators, and law enforcement that can provide emotional guidance, academic assistance, and the framework for a survivor to report an assault. Despite having informal and formal support providers and resources available on campus, the rate of sexual assault among college women continues climb at an alarming rate, and sexual assault continues to be grossly unreported (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). Additionally, college women are less likely to report a sexual assault to a formal support than to women of the same age who reside in the local community (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). The low rate of formally reporting a sexual assault to a campus official reduces the ability of a survivor to receive academic, mental health, conduct/legal, and social support from trained professionals. Survivors may be unwilling to report a sexual assault because of real or perceived barriers in their college community. Legislative action and college policies have attempted to remove obstacles for survivors to report assaults. Barriers to reporting include physical barriers, lack of knowledge of where to find resources or offices, and perceived barriers, such as the feeling of guilt, shame, and fear of not being believed, when disclosing a sexual assault to another person. "Understanding the factors that facilitate survivors' ability to 'break the silence' regarding experiences of violence play a

key role in dismantling the relational, institutional, and societal factors that silence or shame survivors of sexual victimization" (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012, p. 277).

Guilt, shame, and embarrassment after an assault are the primary reasons that women do not report an incident to formal support providers (Sable et al., 2006). Guilt, shame, and embarrassment can take the form of self-blaming for women. Women who were surveyed reported that their use of alcohol or drugs led to the assault and resulted in feelings of self-blame (Sable et al., 2006). Feelings of self-blame and the survivor's relationship with the perpetrator (i.e., stranger vs. peer) can influence the survivor's decision-making process about whether to report and to whom (Sable et al., 2006; Zinzow & Thompson, 2011). The relationship of the survivor to the perpetrator, along with other factors, such as the location of housing, involvement in student organizations, and social groups, could influence a survivor not to report due to fear of rejection from her peers, and retaliation from the perpetrator and his friends/social groups.

The fear of not being believed was reported as another significant barrier to reporting an incident of sexual assault to law enforcement, formal support providers, college administration, and even informal support providers such as friends (Sable et al., 2006; Thompson, Sitterle, Clay, & Kingree, 2007). Women reported a concern about being believed if they did not have visible injuries and/or a witness to the assault. The notion that students would make excuses for perpetrators like, *guys being guys* and *he is a nice guy, he would not do that*, are barriers that not only the survivor must face, but the entire campus community needs to address, in order for survivors to feel empowered and be supported to report and move forward with a formal complaint (Krakauer, 2015).

College campuses can be large in numbers but feel small in size for a survivor of a sexual assault who was perpetrated by a peer. For a survivor of sexual assault in college, the lack of privacy and confidentiality is another barrier to overcome to reporting an assault. For some survivors, this obstacle can be sufficient enough that they do not report the assault and choose to handle the incident as a private matter (Sable et al., 2006).

    Disclosure. Disclosure refers to an act of sharing a sexual assault incident with another person, informally or formally. Studies have reported that approximately 88% of college women disclose to peers, 10% to family members, 4% to campus offices, and 1% to counselors (Fisher et al., 2000; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012; Paul et al., 2013; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). "This rate of disclosure is encouraging, as the act can serve as a first step toward connecting victims to sources of support, medical care, and mental health services, and may facilitate formal reporting to authorities" (Paul et al., 2013, p. 487). Disclosing a sexual assault to an informal support provider, such as a friend, can be scary to a survivor of an assault because there is no way for the survivor to predict their friend's reaction to the disclosure. To remove this concern or barrier for a survivor to disclose an assault, more education needs to be provided to students on how to effectively and positively respond to a disclosure of an assault (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). A peer's reaction to a disclosure of a sexual assault can be received by the survivor as positive (understanding and encouragement to seek help) or negative (not believing the survivor or defining the assault as a misunderstanding) can discourage a survivor from seeking help. While considerable efforts have been taken to provide awareness of the problem, prevention programming for students, and policies that outline

support services, in an attempt to break the silence and shame that surrounds sexual assaults of college women, still more needs to be done for survivors to feel safe enough to disclose or report an incident of sexual assault (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012).

Policy development. Only two empirical studies were found in this literature review that specifically examined sexual assault policies (Tamborra & Narchet, 2011) and perceptions of college campus protocols (Amar, Strout, Simpson, Cardiello, & Beckford, 2014). Both studies explored the importance of collaborative work between students and staff in the development of sexual assault policies and protocols, response plans, and prevention planning.

Tamborra and Narchet (2011) conducted a mixed-methods empirical study to explore how sexual misconduct policies are created on a college campus, specifically investigating the input of students. "The present study emerged after a group of students, faculty, and staff were assembled to review policies utilized by other universities for the purpose of updating the existing sexual misconduct policy" (Tamborra & Narchet, 2011, p. 20). The author reported that an evaluation of the sexual assault policies required more than an administrative review, and it was necessary to have input from students to have the most effective and responsive policies and procedures to address campus sexual assault.

The participants in the Tamborra and Narchet (2011) study ($N = 116$) received a survey in upper division courses, which excludes first-year students, as the researcher asked questions about the prior academic year. The surveys were distributed to 116 students and 114 ($n = 114$) completed surveys were returned. The researchers separated the completed surveys into groups: those who had experienced a sexual assault and those

who had not experienced a sexual assault. The final sample (*n* = 30) comprised college women who had experienced a sexual assault in the past academic year (Tamborra & Narchet, 2011). The authors used the Sexual Experience Survey, which they altered *male* and *female* to *person*, and they used focus groups to explore more detailed responses.

Tamborra and Narchet (2011) found that the study confirmed that more training is needed by the campus community regarding sexual misconduct behaviors and intervention procedures. Tamborra and Narchet stated that training and procedures need continual revisions as students and national views on sexual assault are always evolving. The researchers also reported that:

> the literature and college campuses may so need to consider that we can change policies, increased education, alter reporting protocol and increase self-awareness of on-campus support services; however, despite all of this, perhaps problematic sexual encounters on college campuses are unavoidable. (Tamborra & Narchet, 2011, p. 31)

Amar et al. (2014) conducted a quantitative study to explore administrators' perceptions of campus protocols regarding incidents of campus sexual assault. The authors examined three areas: campus adjudication of reported assaults, protocols, and responses policies, and sexual assault prevention programming for college students (Amar et al., 2014). The authors acknowledged that there is a lack of research on the institutional factors that could encourage or discourage a survivor from reporting a sexual assault.

The Amar et al. (2014) study participants were defined as: deans of students, directors of student services, directors of residence life, and health services and

police/security departments, which were identified by using institutional websites, telephone, and email directory information. A total of 600 public colleges and 1,544 private colleges were asked to complete an electronic descriptive survey. Participants in the final sample (N = 1,442) completed the Campus Response to Sexual Assault Survey with a focus on the questions that relating to adjudication, guidelines for responding to a survivor, and student programming efforts (Amar et al., 2014).

Amar et al. (2014) found that 87% of the responding institutions used hearing boards to adjudicate reports of sexual assaults among college students. Participants reported through open-ended questions that there should be stricter campus sanctions for those found responsible for acts of sexual misconduct, in hopes that survivors would feel more comfortable and that there would be an increase campus safety (Amar et al., 2014). Of responding institutions, 66% report that they used a team approach when responding to reports of sexual assaults. The response teams consisted of law enforcement, counselors, and sexual assault advocates. Respondents suggested that an ideal campus team would include collaborations with local community resources to assist the survivor after disclosure (Amar et al., 2014). Many of the participants reported using the Sexual Assault Response Team model, which includes law enforcement, mental and medical health providers, and victim advocates, who work together to address the needs and concerns of the survivor. However, most of the institutions did not have clearly defined protocols for responding to a report of a sexual assault (Amar et al., 2014). Amar et al. also found that prevention efforts needed to be increased to include how to respond to a disclosure, how to assist a survivor in making a report, and how bystander intervention programs can reduce incidents of sexual violence (Amar et al., 2014).

The researchers suggested that further research is needed. "Analysis of institutional climate and comparison of student's and administration's perception of the response to sexual assault would be useful in planning campus strategies to address sexual violence" (Amar et al., 2014, p. 591). Finally, Amar et al. stated that more research is needed to explore the effectiveness of student and staff prevention programming with an eye for identifying best practices in prevention efforts.

Prevention programming. Using the previously defined search terms regarding prevention programming identified only one empirical study. Rothman & Silverman (2007) conducted a quantitative study, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, exploring the effect of sexual assault prevention programs on the rates of assaults being perpetrated against first-year college students. The authors indicated that there are some prevention programs and training being offered on college campuses, but there is very little information on the effectiveness of these prevention efforts (Rothman & Silverman, 2007). Rothman and Silverman noted small sample sizes and lack of longitudinal behavior change studies as gaps in the literature in the area of prevention programming.

Rothman and Silverman (2007) contacted first-year students enrolled in intervention and comparisons classes and invited them to participate in an anonymous online survey that was conducted during the month of September of their sophomore year. Each participant in the intervention class was informed that they would receive $5.00 for their participation, and the students from the comparison class would be entered into a drawing to win a prize for their involvement (Rothman & Silverman, 2007). "Forty-seven percent of the comparison class ($n = 744$) and 80% of the intervention class ($n = 1,244$) responded to the survey" (Rothman & Silverman, 2007, p. 285). However, in

September of 2003, the sample was exposed to a theatrical presentation and small group discussions called "Sex Signal." The researchers understood that they were no longer able to "conduct a randomized controlled study," (p. 284). Instead, the researchers "conducted a non-experimental retrospective design, using the graduating class of 2006, as the comparison sample" (p. 284).

Rothman and Silverman (2007) found that the exposure to the prevention programming reduced the reporting rate of sexual assaults for first-time survivors, and stated that:

> Students with prior history of sexual victimization who were exposed to the (prevention) program were more likely to report that they had been sexually assaulted during their first year of college than were students with a prior history who were not exposed to the program (21% and 7%, respectively). (p. 286)

The researchers also reported that exposure to prevention programming correlated to lower rates of victimization over those students who did not attend prevention programming (Rothman & Silverman, 2007).

Rothman and Silverman (2007) suggested that further research should explore a theoretical framework for sexual assault prevention programming, and if prevention programs provided to students the necessary definitions to define an act of sexual violence as a crime. Rothman and Silverman suggested that future research should include an evaluation of the prevention program effects on subgroups of the campus community, such as members of the GLBTQ community and students of color, and determine if the rates of reporting are the same. The researchers suggested that the development of prevention programs grounded in theory and constructed with a logical

framework could provide prevention programs that could be assessed and replicated (Rothman & Silverman, 2007).

Reporting. Reporting refers to the act of a survivor formally describing and seeking action against the person who sexually assaulted her. Research has demonstrated that college women are less likely to report a sexual assault incident to formal support providers such as law enforcement, professional counselors, and college administrators (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). In this literature review, four quantitative empirical studies were considered. "The National College Women Sexual Victimization Survey reported that only 2% of victims of sexual violence report it to the police, only 4% reported it to campus authorities and only 1% disclosed incidents to counseling services" (Walsh et al., 2010, p. 135). Additionally, college women have identified several barriers to formally reporting an assault. A barrier is defined as anything that impedes a survivor from disclosing, reporting, or seeking help after a sexual assault (Walsh et al., 2010). Barriers to formally reporting an assault have been defined by survivors to include: (a) the assault was not severe enough to report, (b) shame and guilt about their perceived role in the assault, (c) not wanting the perpetrator to get in trouble, (d) not being believed, and (e) afraid of the perpetrator or retaliation from others (Sable et al., 2006; Thompson et al., 2007; Zinzow & Thompson, 2011).

Thompson et al. (2007) conducted a quantitative study to explore if the type of victimization—sexual or physical—and the relationship between the victim and offender impact a women's choice to report the incident to the police. The researchers collected data from 492 female college students, with an average age of 19.5 years, who self-selected into the study by responding to flyers posted around the campus at large. The

study was conducted at a Southeastern university during April of 2004. Thompson et al. (2007) noted that because the women self-selected to participate in the study, the sample size was not representative, with a disproportionate number of first-year students completing the survey.

Thompson et al. (2007) used the Sexual Experience Survey (SES) to determine the rates of sexual victimization and the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2) to measure the rate of physical victimization among the sample. "Only 2 of the 141 women who had experienced sexual victimization reported the incident to the police, and only 3 of 135 women who had experienced physical victimization reported the incident to the police" (Thompson et al., 2007, p. 279). For the purpose of the study, the authors evaluated the responses from only the women who had experienced sexual and physical victimization ($N = 61$). The study identified eight barriers to reporting. The barriers included:

1. the incident would be viewed as my fault (27.6%);

2. the police would not be able to do anything (21.6%);

3. being afraid of the offender (8.2%);

4. the incident was not serious enough to report (79.9%);

5. feeling of shame or embarrassment (39.6%);

6. not wanting anyone else to know about the incident (48.5%);

7. did not want the police to be involved (48.5%); and

8. did not want to get the offender in trouble (32.1%) (Thompson et al., 2007).

Thompson et al. discovered that:

Women who experienced more severe sexual victimizations were more likely than were women experiencing less severe sexual victimization to say they did not report the incident to the police because they thought it would be viewed as their fault (*AOR* = 6.03%, *CI* = 2.12-18.71), because of shame and embarrassment (*AOR* = 2.81, 95% *CI* = 1.20-6.57), and because they did not want anyone to know about the incident (*AOR* = 2.45%, 95%, *CI* = 1.12-5.35). (Thompson et al., 2007, p. 280)

These findings confirm others' research, such as Fisher et al. (2000) that women who are victims of sexual assault are not likely to report the incident to the police. Real or perceived barriers to reporting to the police were cited as significant obstacles for victims of sexual assault.

Based on the Thompson et al. (2007) study, the authors suggested the following items for further investigation to understand how the barriers to reporting impact a victim's ability to seek accountability for their assault. Thompson et al., (2007) suggested that: (a) more education is needed for college women to understand the definition of sexual assault, (b) an expansion of the study be done to include a larger more representative sample size, and (c) exploration be done where the assault occurred and if the location of the assault impacted reporting rates. The Thompson et al. study suggests that the low rates of the reporting assaults to the police are a significant problem that needs further investigation.

Orchowski et al. (2009) conducted a quantitative study to examine the likelihood of college women reporting a sexual assault or victimization to a friend, law enforcement, a counselor, a resident advisor, or in a survey. In particiular, they were looking to answer

the following questions: (a) do women display variation in their likelihood to report a sexual assault to various campus agencies, (b) what are the barriers to reporting – physical and psycho-social, (c) does a prior assault influence a women's ability to report an assault (Orchowski et al., 2009). They also wanted to know how likely a victim would be to report an assault to a friend, an RA, counseling services, the police, or disclose an assault through a survey. The sample size consisted of 300 college women, between the ages of 19-20 years old (91.7%), who had been recruited from the psychology department at a medium-sized midwestern university (Orchowski et al., 2009). The participants were given extra credit points in their Introduction to Psychology course for completing the survey. Only the data of the participants who had experienced a sexual assault were used in this study.

Orchowski et al. (2009) used a number of surveys to gather the data to answer their research questions. Using the Sexual Experiences Survey, 27% ($n = 82$) of the sample reported experiences of attempted rape, sexual coercion, or forced sexual contact, and 12% ($n = 36$) reported being raped (Orchowski et al., 2009). The Dating Self-Protection Against Rape Scale was used to measure the behaviors that women might use to protect themselves from an assault, such as never walking alone. Using the Sexual Communication Scale, participants were asked, "Do you ever say yes to something sexual when you really mean no?" (Orchowski et al., 2009, p. 845). To measure assertiveness and the ability to communicate their sexual desires, the Self-Efficacy Scale was used to measure a woman's confidence in responding to threatening sexual situations. Finally, the researchers used the Rape Attribution Questionnaire to measure a woman's feeling of guilt and self-blame after a sexual assault.

The data collected from the survey tools found that women were more likely to report to a friend, compared to the police, $t(294) = 7.99, p <.001$; counseling services $t(294) = 11.61, p <.001;$ or the RA, $t(200) = 158.2, p <.001$ (Orchowski et al., 2009). It was found, too, that women who possessed higher levels of assertiveness in sexual communication were more likely to report an assault to the police and a peer. Women with higher levels of self-protective behaviors were more likely to report an assault to a peer, and women with elevated levels of self-efficacy were more likely to resist and more likely to report an assault to a peer, the police, and a counselor. Conversely, women who scored high on self-blame were less liable to report that assault to anyone (Orchowski et al., 2009).

Orchowski et al. (2009) noted that their study added to the literature by exploring the likelihood of a woman to report an assault to a variety of agencies, but they stated that there is still more research needed on examining the reporting behaviors of survivors to provide supportive reporting options. "Given the discrepancy between women's likelihood to report to a friend as opposed to the police, counseling center, or a resident advisor, further research is needed to explore whether college women perceived potential barriers to reporting to these campus agencies" (Orchowski et al., 2009, p. 850).

Wolitzky-Taylor et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study to explore the potential predictors and barriers perceived by college women. The authors noted that there had been little research on a national scale to evaluate barriers and rates of reporting of sexual assaults on a college campus. Wolitzky-Taylor et al. hypothesized that incidents of sexual assault that were perpetrated by a stranger would have higher rates of reporting to law enforcement than for the women who were sexually assaulted by a peer,

and characteristics of the survivor would impact the rates of reporting (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011).

The participants for the Wolitzky-Taylor et al. (2011) study were recruited through a purchased database, the American Student List, which included approximately 17,000 students. Participants were randomly selected and contacted via a digit dial methodology. The sample was representative of the national census of college women, which included 253 different colleges from 47 different states (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). A national surveying firm conducted 2,000 interviews, using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system and using standardized procedures (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). Only the participants who reported experiencing a sexual assault ($n = 230$) were included in the research study. The predictor variables, which included the prevalence of reporting a rape, receiving care, and prior rape history, were entered into a multivariable model of analysis.

Wolitzky-Taylor et al. (2011) found that 16% of the college women who experienced a violent sexual assault had reported the assault to law enforcement as opposed to only 2.7% of college women who reported an assault to a peer, after consuming alcohol/drugs. Additionally, the study determined that 51.9% of the women who reported an assault received medical care, while only 13.9% of the women who did not report their assault received medical care. "Importantly, findings from this study suggest that college women who report their rapes to authorities are more likely to receive medical attention and other assistance" (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011, p. 586).

Wolitzky-Taylor et al. (2011) suggested that the results of their study could assist with college sexual assault prevention programs by educating women on the definition of

sexual assault, both criminally and as a violation of the campus student code of conduct. Wolitzky-Taylor et al. (2011) suggested that to eliminate barriers to reporting, reporting procedures need to be clear and readily available for survivors. Finally, the researchers stated that survivors need to have access to medical and emotional support services after an assault (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011).

The third quantitative empirical study in this literature review explored the reporting behaviors of survivors of intimate-partner violence, which was conducted by Branch and Richards (2013). The authors investigated college freshmen's willingness to report incidents of interpersonal violence incidents among their peers. Interpersonal violence, that is physical, emotional, and sexual violence, among college students is a significant concern for colleges. It has been reported that one in five college students have experienced violence from an intimate partner (Branch & Richards, 2013). The researchers wanted to know how college students would respond to a disclosure of interpersonal violence from a peer and how a student would be a pro-social bystander to an act of violence by a peer.

Branch and Richards (2013) participants were selected from a convenience sampling of students participating in a first-year seminar at a private liberal arts college in a Southern state. Branch and Richards (2013) administered a survey containing 72 questions, which took less than 25 minutes to complete in class. The sample included 27 undergraduate students.

Branch and Richards (2013) found that when asked if a peer disclosed an incident of interpersonal violence, 98% of the participants reported that they would encourage a friend to seek help after an act of violence, while 92% would encourage a friend to end a

violent relationship. However, only 10% of the participants felt that they could offer assistance to the survivor beyond just lending an ear, and only 25% of participants reported that they would only report an act of interpersonal violence to anyone unless instructed by their peer to do so. In addition, 54% of the participants said that they would report an incident of interpersonal violence to law enforcement if they witnessed the violence.

Branch and Richards (2013) suggested that using a bystander approach can shift the focus from the survivor/perpetrator model to an approach that includes all members of the campus community. Branch and Richards stated that their research "indicates that college respondents would be more likely to personally intervene rather than report the behavior to a school official or law enforcement if they saw a friend engaging in or experiencing dating violence" (p. 3395). Branch and Richards (2013) suggested that bystander intervention programs need to be shared with all members of the campus community, as faculty and staff also receive disclosures of interpersonal violence and need to know how to best support a survivor and access services.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative researchers are interested in the lived human experiences, social structures, systems, and procedures. Qualitative research is plentiful in the human understanding of life experiences; yet, it is limited by the researcher's involvement in the study and generalizability of the findings. There are limited qualitative studies in this area. However, the two studies included in this review are framed in the positivist model. Both studies used reliable survey tools that solicited personal feedback from the participants.

Gaps and Recommendations

After reviewing the empirical studies that explored disclosure and/or reporting of a sexual assault to informal and formal support systems, there was limited amount of research on: (a) theory(s) that support disclosures and/or reporting of a college sexual assaults, (b) understanding the behavior of the recipients of a disclosure or report of a sexual assault, (c) reasons why a survivor would report a sexual assault to a formal support provider (such as a college official), and (d) the lack of research on predictors of reporting behaviors. These gaps in the literature reflect the complexity of disclosing and reporting a sexual assault for a survivor.

The first gap in the literature is the lack of a theoretical framework for the studies. While feminist theory and ideology were woven throughout the studies, as it relates to the empowerment of women to control what happens to their bodies and the ability to make choices on disclosing or reporting a sexual assault, the use of theory was not clearly defined in the included peer-reviewed studies. One theory that was clearly articulated was the theory of planned behavior. This approach was identified in Rothman & Silverman (2007) as they framed their findings in theory. The theory of planned behavior "which posits that [an] individual's behaviors are predicated upon their [his/her] intentions and that intentions are a function of the individual's attitudes, perceptions of social norms regarding the behavior, and self-efficacy" (Rothman & Silverman, 2007, p. 288). Rothman and Silverman posited that for survivors to disclose or report a sexual assault, this script must be addressed, deconstructed, and re-written to support the survivor in the reporting process. The deconstruction of this theory can be difficult given the messages and images portrayed on television and in the media, which reinforce the

myths of sexual assault. Additionally, recipients of a disclosure need to evaluate and understand their feelings and thoughts about sexual assault if they are to provide support and comfort to a survivor of sexual assault (Rothman & Silverman, 2007).

A second gap in the literature is the limited research on the behavior reaction(s) of the recipient of disclosure. Survivors of sexual assault are most likely to disclose an assault to a friend, yet little is known about the impact of a revelation upon their peers (Branch & Richards, 2013). Branch and Richards suggested that further investigation is needed to identify why survivors disclose to a particular peer, how the disclosure affects the recipient, and their knowledge of support services and providers that could assist in formally reporting a sexual assault. "Significantly less work has examined characteristics of [the] disclosure recipients, particularly informal support providers, despite evidence suggesting that victims are mostly likely to disclose to these informal providers, especially friends" (Paul et al., 2013). Peers receiving a disclosure of sexual assault can play a significant role in assisting a survivor in reporting a sexual assault to law enforcement and a college administrator for formal support services and or action.

A third gap in the literature is the need to explore further reasons why a survivor would consider reporting a sexual assault to a formal support provider. "Understanding the factors that facilitate survivors' ability to 'break the silence' regarding experiences of violence plays a key role in dismantling the relational, institutional, and societal factors that silence or shame survivors of sexual victimization" (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). Orchowski and Gidycz stated that there needs to be a greater understanding of the problem and the ability to reduce the risk of harm for college women. The researchers suggest that an important research question would be: How can campus sexual

misconduct policies assist with removing the identified barriers to reporting? Or how can campus sexual assault policies help a student identify what is a sexual assault and reporting the incident to formal support providers to reduce the rates of assaults? (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). To effectively increase the rate of reporting of sexual assaults on campuses, the researchers posited that each of these gaps needs to be explored in order develop interventions, programming, and services that would encourage a change in the acceptance of sexual assaults on a college campus (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012).

Summary

Sexual assaults on college campuses continue to occur at an alarming rate. It has been reported that one in five women will experience an attempted or completed sexual assault during her lifetime, with the highest risk during her college years. The Koss et al. (1987) seminal research on the rates of sexual victimization of women, one in four, over 30 years ago has not changed nor has the cultural landscape of colleges, where students are willing to report an assault to a formal support and seek accountability from the alleged perpetrator. The rates of sexual assaults have remained constant despite education, bystander intervention programs, and legislative action; conversely, rates of reporting a sexual assault to formal support providers has remained consistently low.

The research design, methodology, and analysis are discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Undergraduate college women continue to experience sexual assault at an alarming rate. "College is a high-risk timeframe for sexual victimization, with studies reporting that one in four college women have been raped or experienced an attempted rape" (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011, p.582); yet, the reporting rate of sexual assaults occurring on college campuses is very low (Orchowski et al., 2009, Zinzow & Thompson, 2011). Understanding the barriers to reporting a sexual assault is a critical factor in increasing reports to college officials. To reduce rates of sexual assault, women need to know and feel comfortable reporting, that is, reducing barriers, such as feelings of shame or responsibility for their assault, their experiences to college officials such as the Title IX Coordinator, for support services and possible actions. "The most frequently cited barriers to reporting among college women include shame and guilt, fear of not being believed, concern about confidentiality, not acknowledging that assault as a crime, and not wanting police involvement" (Zinzow & Thompson, 2011, p. 712). Other barriers to reporting a sexual assault include feelings of not being believed or not wanting the accused to get arrested or in trouble with the college (Zinzow & Thompson, 2011).

The influence of a women's acceptance of the rape script theory or rape myths may contribute to barriers for women to report a sexual assault to college officials. One barrier for reporting is reflected in a strand of feminist theory that describes a social construct (in the second wave of the feminist movement) where women need to be

protected and could be subjugated by men in her life (Dicker, 2016). This strand of feminist theory removes the responsibility of the sexual assault from the perpetrator, putting it back onto the survivor (McMahon, 2010). "Rape myths can also provide cautionary tales of what could happen when women are incautious or unguarded (e.g., women invite rape by engaging in overtly sexual behavior or wearing provocative dress; only certain women are raped – those who drink too much, sleep around, or hang out in the wrong places)" (Ryan, 2011, p. 775). Understanding how undergraduate college women define a sexual assault may assist with the development of reporting options that allow for accountability for the accused student and support services for the survivor. Orchowski et al. (2009) stated that, "women who do not report incidents of sexual victimization may not be exposed to potential resources and services that may aid in their recovery" (p. 840). An undergraduate college woman's recovery and continued enrollment in the college can only be accomplished when barriers for reporting are reduced, the need(s) of the survivor are addressed, and her lived experience is understood (Orchowski et al., 2009).

To understand the experience of undergraduate college women who have experienced a sexual assault and to understand their choice in seeking assistance from campus officials, the following research questions were posed to the participants of this current study:

1. What was the lived experience of undergraduate college women who have experienced a sexual assault on campus since their enrollment in college?

2. What were the barriers for undergraduate college women who sought campus assistance from college officials related to reporting a sexual assault?

Research Context

  The setting for the study was conducted at a 4-year State University of New York (SUNY) public liberal arts college, referred to as *the College*. The College is a comprehensive public college focused on student success. The College is located in Western New York, with an approximate enrollment of 7,000 full/part-time undergraduate students with 3,500 undergraduate women. Given the researcher's position as a Title IX Coordinator at her home institution, not the College, and giving the vulnerable population to be investigated, sexual assault survivors, the research was conducted at the College. The College provided the researcher with access to the study's population, undergraduate college women who had experienced a sexual assault while enrolled in college. Additionally, the College and the researcher prepared resource materials to be given to the participants, in case the participants were interested in reporting their assaults to the College's campus officials and support services.

  In a phenomenological study, the researcher is the instrument of inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Vagle, 2016; Wertz, 2005). The researcher collects data through reviewing documents, asking questions, and observing the verbal and nonverbal cues seen during face-to-face interviews. Additionally, the researcher identifies and asks open-ended questions to each participant to understand her lived experience. At the time of this publication, the researcher in this study is a Title IX Coordinator and has worked in student conduct for the last 20 years and has the skills to interact with college women in a manner that allowed for open dialogue about their sexual assault and choice of reporting the assault to a college official.

Research Participants

A purposeful sampling is employed when conducting a qualitative study. "This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and a central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). The participants included in this study reflected those undergraduate college women who had experienced a sexual assault and were willing to share their experience in a manner that would allow for a generalized measure or themes to be developed from their lived experiences. The goal of the inquiry was to approximate or approach some generalization from the study data. Phenomenological studies typically include multiple perspectives of the same experience (Creswell, 2013).

The participants were recruited through flyers posted at the College. The flyers were directed toward enrolled undergraduate college women between the ages of 18 and 22 years and who had experienced a sexual assault while in college. The flyers were posted in and around the women's center, the Title IX office, counseling services, the student union, and on every floor of each residence hall. The participants self-selected into the study by contacting the researcher via a phone number or email address. Each self-selected participant was screened, using an oral script to determine if she met the criteria for the study. The criteria included being a female undergraduate college student, who was willing to share her sexual assault experience with the researcher, and having experienced a sexual assault while on campus within the last 6 months to 4 years. The researcher anticipated that at least six to 10 women needed to be interviewed for saturation to be met. Saturation was achieved when the data collected in the interviews began to repeat itself after interviewing six women.

Given the sensitive nature of this study, particular attention was paid to the comfort of the participant, both physically and emotionally. For survivors of sexual assault participating in the research could have been a trigger for the participants, as the interview could bring up painful and traumatic experiences (Ahrens, Campbell, Ternier-Thames, Wasco, & Sefl, 2007). To support a survivor of sexual assault, the researcher hosted face-to-face interviews, which were held in a private location that was comfortable (warm, comfortable chairs, etc.) for the participant. The initial and voluntary interviews were held in a private room in the library and the students' rooms. Additionally, resources were provided at the end of each interview. Because the researcher is a licensed social worker through New York State, the researcher was able to identify that participants who were feeling discomfort by telling their lived experience and was able to identify those who are unable to continue with the interview or needed a few minutes to collect themselves because the sexual assault experience was too *raw* for them (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

Research Methods

A phenomenological study is housed in the schools of philosophy and psychology, which strive to understand the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced like phenomena (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Wertz, 2005). Philosopher Edmund Husserl was the father of this type of research method. "Husserl broadened the concepts and methods of modern science to include the study of consciousness, profoundly influencing philosophy, other humanities, and the social sciences throughout the 20th century" (Wertz, 2005, p. 167). The foundation of qualitative phenomenological studies is to assist the researcher in understanding the

human experience and to make meaning of that experience (Moustakas, 1994; Wertz, 2005). To understand the lived experiences of undergraduate college women, the researcher used feminist interviewing techniques.

The use of the method of feminist interviewing by the researcher improved the willingness of the participants to answer questions about their sexual assault experience. Feminist interviewing has three basic practices. The first practice is to ask the researcher to reduce the hierarchy of the researcher-participant relationship by engaging in a give-and-take conversation where both parties share information. Feminist researchers encourage transferring most of the control of the interview to the participants, especially for trauma survivors, as it gives the control to the participants and supports the survivors' recovery (Roberts, 2013). The second practice of feminist interviewing asks the researcher to assist the participant in normalizing her experience. "A great deal of feminist scholarship focuses on oppressive experiences in women's lives and their social and cultural isolation, so women often want to know if what they are experiencing is 'normal'" (Ahrens et al., 2010, p. 62). Additionally, feminist researchers have an obligation to provide the participant with resources, support services, and any other service the participant needs. The final practice of a feminist interviewer is to pay attention of the emotions of the participants' lived experiences (Ahren, et al., 2010). "Participants may get angry, frustrated, and cry when telling their stories, and when that happens, feminist interviewers engage those emotions" (Campbell et al., 2010, p. 63). The researcher allowed those feelings to be freely expressed and enabled the participants to explore their feelings before moving on to the next question. The exploration of these feelings provided an opportunity to explore the lived experiences of the participants

further. Using this exploratory method of inquiry allowed the voices of the survivors to be heard. Phenomenological studies and the practice of feminist interviewing allowed for generalizations to be developed from the data provided by the participants when considering previous studies and with similar contexts. Qualitative phenomenological studies allow for maximum flexibility of structure, giving the researcher and the participants the opportunity to make meaning of the lived experiences, without the constraints of predetermined theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2013; Wertz, 2005). This type of inquiry and the application of the findings will benefit the College, as well as the researcher's home institution, when developing future policies, reporting procedures, and support services for survivors.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

Phenomenological studies use in-person interviews to collect data and understand the lived experiences of the participants. Interview questions, based on the research questions, were kept short, open-ended, and simple, which allowed for each participant to share deeply and determine the content of the interview. Attention was focused on gaining insight into each participant's full experience relating to the sexual assault, her beliefs about sexual assault, and exploring her understanding of reporting options. One-hour, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994) were conducted. The interviews were held at the woman's preferred location or at a predetermined location (i.e., a reserved private room in the library or the student's residence hall room) that ensured the safety and privacy of each participant. Each initial and follow-up interview were digitally recorded and transcribed, which provided the researcher with rich data and the ability to explore themes in the undergraduate college

women's shared lived experiences. The researcher and the selected participants (member checks) reviewed the transcribed interviews to ensure accurate data were collected. After each interview, a follow-up interview was scheduled, following the same private meeting requirement, for each participant to add or clarify information gathered at the initial interview.

The following procedures were followed to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of each participant. The interviews were conducted in a location that minimized any risk of identification for any women who had self-selected into the study. All of the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. Each participant was identified, as determined by each participant, by using a pseudonym in the digital recording. Only the researcher knows the true identity of the participants.

In phenomenological studies, direct quotes from participants are used to support themes that emerge from the interview. With the small pool of participants needed for this study, there is a risk that using a direct quote from a participant, who is describing her sexual assault, could identify her. Every effort was made to properly use quotes to support the themes of the lived experience without giving too much detail that could allow a member of the College to identify the participant. Additionally, each participant was given the opportunity to review and make corrections to the data they provided to ensure that no identifiable information was included in the final study.

Each interview was scheduled by the researcher in consultation with the participant's schedule for at least a 2-hour block of time. Time was allotted after each interview for the researcher to reflect upon and elaborate on the field notes taken during the interview. If multiple interviews were scheduled for the same day, time was allotted

between interviews for the researcher to reflect on the information gathered and to ensure that the participants were not seen upon entrance or exit from the meetings to further protect the confidentiality and privacy of their identities and experiences.

While each participant self-selected into the study, a $50 gift card incentive was offered. The participants had a choice of gift cards from Wegmans, Wal-Mart, or Amazon. The incentive was meant as a thank you to the participants from the researcher for sharing a very personal experience and for the time they gave to complete this study. Each participant received a gift card of her choice at the end of the initial interview. Once the interviews and the data were collected from the participants, the researcher began analyzing the data gathered and defined themes.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

Data analysis in a phenomenological study begins with the researcher digesting the lived experience of each participant as told through her story, understanding the essence of each story, and ultimately, understanding the spirit of the collective lived experience (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2016). Analysis begins with the researcher bracketing: "past knowledge about the phenomenon encountered, in order to be fully present" (Vagle, 2016, p. 67) with the rich data provided by the participants. The researcher suspended any previous experiences with and understanding of sexual assaults to appreciate the context and expertise of the participant. Secondly, the researcher took field notes during the interviews, indicating verbal and nonverbal communication that became an essential part of the analysis. Verbal and nonverbal expressions are forms of communication that tell another part of the story and are needed to contextualize the interview data. Thirdly, the data was reviewed to units of meaning. Each digitally

recorded interview was examined to identify units of meaning from each participant's story (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2016). The development of units of meaning allowed the researcher to boil down the rich data into clear and meaningful elements of the participants' lived experiences. Cluster units of meaning provided clarity to the researcher regarding the essence of what the lived experiences were for the undergraduate college women who suffered a sexual assault, while enrolled at the College, and her choice to report to a college official.

Additionally, the researcher used cluster blocks to develop themes from the individual interviews and a collective understanding of the essence of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2016). The themes identified from the cluster were analyzed for the development of the research findings and for the recommendations.

Finally, in connecting the research questions to the final analysis of the data collected, themes were contextualized from the information provided by the participants during the interviews. The contextual description was based on what the participant said happened during and after the sexual assault. Contextual themes were developed from direct quotes from the participants about how they felt about the sexual assault, what barriers, if any, they experienced when considering reporting the assault to a college official, and if the survivor reported the incident to a college official.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2016). Data analysis in a phenomenological research study focuses on the lived experience being explained by the participant, understanding the essence of each experience, and understanding the importance of the collective lived experience of the

undergraduate women (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2016). Saldaña (2016) stated:

> The process usually involves meticulous analytic attention by applying specific types of codes to data through a series of cumulative coding cycles that ultimately lead to the development of a theory – a theory "grounded" or rooted in the original data themselves. (p. 55)

The analysis began with the researcher's experience and she bracketed that experience to provide an open approach to hearing and analyzing the participants' lived experiences. The data analyzed were conducted in a 5-step process to begin the analysis of the collected data (Creswell, 2014; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2016):

1. Organization and preparation. All interviews and field notes were recorded and transcribed, which allowed the researcher to digest the material and begin the process of sorting the data.

2. Review the data. The data needed to be considered and repeatedly digested to understand the full meaning of the data collected. A deep analysis of the rich data collected was completed more than once to gain a full understanding of the lived experiences of the undergraduate college women who had experienced a sexual assault.

3. Word counts. The transcripts were reviewed to find repeating words, such as *reporting*, *fear*, *resources*, and they were counted for further analysis. The use of the word counts assisted in the coding process and understanding what was important to the participants.

4. Keywords in context and coding. Each chunk of data was given a descriptive label or code. The coding started with chunking the data into categories or units of meaning. The chunking of data allowed for the development of themes, such as *reasons for reporting to college officials* or *barriers to reporting*, which allowed for the thorough understanding of the lived experiences of the survivors and the development of recommendations for future studies and campus response policies.

5. Finalize coding into themes. The final coding of the data into themes was produced and outlined the findings of the study.

The data analysis was member checked for accuracy by each participant. Each participant was asked to review the transcribed interview for accuracy and to ensure her lived experience was actually captured properly during the interview. Member checking also allowed the participants to add material that they felt missed. Member checks also provide credibility to the research.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the processes used in the qualitative study of the lived experiences of undergraduate college women who had experienced a sexual assault during their time in college. The chapter outlined the participants, a rationale for a phenomenological study, and how the findings were analyzed. Chapter 4 provides an understanding of the data collected.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to gain insight into the shared experience of college women have been sexually assaulted and their decision making process regarding reporting to college officials. To best allow the women to express their feelings and experiences about their sexual assault and their thoughts about reporting, a phenomenological design was utilized and analyzed through a feminist lens. The initial interviews with each of the six were conducted in semi-structured format to allow the women an opportunity to "tell their story" and to explore their thoughts regarding consideration of whether to report a sexual assault to a college official. Table 4.1 provides the demographics of each participant at the time of their assault.

A voluntary follow-up interview was offered to each of the six participants with only one participant scheduling a second voluntary interview. The voluntary interview was used to collect data that had not been presented or was not available at the time of the initial interview and to review the verbatim transcript.

Table 4.1

Demographics of Participants at the Time of Their Assaults

Name	Current academic year	Race /Ethnicity	Age at the time of the assault	Relationship status at the time of the assault	Sexual Identity
Jennifer	Junior	Caucasian/ White	18	Single	Heterosexual
Bethany	Junior	Caucasian/ White	18	Single	Heterosexual
Lilo	Freshman	Caucasian/ White	18	Single	Lesbian
Kelsey	Sophomore	Caucasian/ White	20	In a relationship	Heterosexual
Amanda	Senior	Caucasian/ White	24	Committed relationship	Heterosexual
Sarah	Freshman	Caucasian/ White	18	Recently out of a relationship	Heterosexual

Research Questions

The findings in this chapter sought to gather data that could help inform efforts to lower the barriers to reporting an incident of sexual assault experienced by college women to college officials. Some questions needed to be answered from their lived experiences and explored by seeking guidance from women who had firsthand knowledge—the survivors. This study focused on the lived experiences of undergraduate college women who had experienced a sexual assault after enrolling in college. Additionally, the study explored if the survivor sought assistance from a college official and reported the assault. The research questions asked were:

1. What is the lived experience of undergraduate college women who have experienced a sexual assault on campus since their enrollment in college?

The first research question was addressed in the stories of the women who participated in this study. The lived experience of each of the participant was explained in their personal story of how their sexual assault occurred and their ability to recognize their need(s) for healing.

2. What are the barriers for undergraduate college women who seek campus assistance from college official related to reporting a sexual assault?

The answers to the second research question helped to identify the fives themes of the barriers for the women to report their sexual assault to college officials. Despite the variations in their experiences, the barriers identified were similar for each participant.

Method of Data Analysis

A modification of the Van Kaam (Moustakas, 1994) method of analysis of phenomenological data was used to develop the themes and units of means by:

1. listing and grouping relevant experiences (horizontalization);

2. reducing and removing elements that do not add to the develop of meaning;

3. developing clusters of themes;

4. for each participant, develop an individual textual and structural descriptions;

5. for each participant, explore the essence of their experience; and

6. using the individual textural-structural descriptions of meaning, develop a summary of the essence of the experience for the group as a whole.

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 121)

Each participant's lived experience is described in narrative detail and in table format while ensuring that the descriptions do not contain any identifiable information. After completing the interviews with participants and using a modification of the Van Kaam

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method of analysis of phenomenological data, five themes emerged: (a) lack of definition of the experience, (b) not a big deal—it was *my fault*, (c) did not want to get self or others in trouble, (d) mistrust of the reporting process, and (e) lack of knowledge of campus support services and personnel.

Participant Descriptions

      Jennifer: Textural description of Jennifer's experience. Jennifer was the first participant interviewed and was the most guarded in describing her sexual assault experience. She stated that she had, "practiced telling her story" on the way to the initial interview. She was very quiet and needed time to collect her thoughts as she talked about her experience. At the time of the initial interview, Jennifer was a junior majoring in healthcare administration. She was actively involved in one on-campus student organization. She explained that she was sexually assaulted during the first semester of her first year of college by a nonstudent who she had previously met and who attended another college, at an off-campus party. As Jennifer began to tell her story, she said that she was ashamed and thought the assault was her fault because she had smoked marijuana with her offender before the assault. She explained that she went to the party with a group of friends and "partied" with her offender at the party. At the party, Jennifer, said,

> and they knew I was there just hanging out, and they knew I was going to party.
> And um, there was this guy that I met before. And I don't know, we all went up
> to his room and we, uh, some marijuana.

After smoking the marijuana, Jennifer noted, "she felt very high . . . it was kinda of hard to move." Jennifer said that she and the offender: "kissed and I told him that I didn't

want to do anything else . . . and he said okay, but he kept going . . . I don't know; I did not move, I just kinda of laid there." Jennifer reported that she did not know what to do and was afraid, so she did nothing. She said, "no one would believe me because I went to his bedroom and smoked weed, and I thought if I told anyone that I would get in trouble." Additionally, Jennifer reported that, "I said no, but it wasn't like violent, which is why I don't like talking about it, because when people . . . they always think it's like violent." She noted that she defined a sexual assault as a violent act and if she did not have bruises then there was no assault. Jennifer said, it was her first time, and "it was 2 hours straight—it was terrible." She was physically injured during her assault, had to seek medical attention at a local clinic, and she did not want to tell her parents what happened. Only when it became apparent that Jennifer had contracted a sexually transmitted disease from the assault, which spread to other infections, did Jennifer contact her parents "cause I had to tell them." Jennifer felt that she had no option but to tell her parents because the medical costs were more than she could handle herself. Jennifer was very upset about disclosing the assault to her parents and noted that she wished that she could have kept it to herself.

When asked about her thoughts of reporting her assault to a college official, Jennifer said, "the main reason I did not report was that drugs were involved, and I did not want to get in trouble . . . and I did not want to make a big deal out of it." Jennifer also reported that a few months later, she learned that "he left school and that he had assaulted three other girls, and when they went forward and told the college . . . not the police, the college, that he had violently, uh, raped them, the college did nothing." Jennifer noted that if the assault would have happened today, "I think I'd tell a friend first

and have them help me . . . 'cause I'm not entirely sure who I should report to at the college."

Structural description of Jennifer's experience. Jennifer's assault put her in a difficult situation by trying to focus on her academics and dealing with the impact of her health issues that resulted from her sexual assault. Jennifer tried to focus on her academics and "forget about the experience . . . because it was my fault." Jennifer felt that she was responsible for her assault because she had gone to his bedroom, smoked marijuana with her offender, and because she did not feel that the assault was one of violence, despite the medical injuries/illness that she experienced after the assault. Her medical issues took some time to heal. Jennifer also shared that the assault was her first sexual experience, "I was a virgin when it happened." As a result of the assault and "it being her first time," Jennifer continues to struggle with finding a healthy trusting relationship. Jennifer did not participate in the second voluntary interview, as she had transferred to another college, but she was contacted to schedule another meeting but did not return emails or phone calls.

The essence of Jennifer's experience. Jennifer has a hard time dealing with what happened to her or even speaking about the assault. She was not sure who to tell or who could help her process the experience. She only confided in a few friends about the experience. Jennifer experienced a sexual assault after voluntarily smoking marijuana with her offender. She believed then, and at the time of the interview still struggled with the idea, that a sexual assault means there is violence, and she felt responsible for the assault because she had smoked marijuana and voluntarily went to the offender's bedroom. Additionally, Jennifer continued to experience feelings of guilt and shame for

her actions during the night of the assault. This experience caused her emotional distress as she believed that a sexual assault had to be a violent act. This experience has caused difficulties in her life as she thought she could handle it on her own. She did not seek help from her friends "at the time, um, I really did not tell any of my friends" and was forced to tell her parents what had happened due to the medical complication of her assault. Jennifer felt a complete lack of control of her experience as she could not speak of her experience voluntarily and felt extreme shame and guilt. She reported that "the main reason I did not report was that I used drugs . . . and I did not want to get in trouble." Jennifer felt that the assault only occurred because she did not fight back, had voluntarily gone to the offender's bedroom, and smoked marijuana. The feelings of shame and guilt continued to support her feelings that "she does not want to make a big deal out of it."

Bethany: Textual description of Bethany's experience. Bethany was the second participant to be interviewed and the most knowledgeable of the definition of sexual assault and campus resources that were available for survivors. At the time of the interview, Bethany was a junior majoring in language and dance. She was very active in her college community, and she participated in student activities, clubs, and had a leadership role on campus. Bethany reported that she had been sexually assaulted during her first semester of her first year at college. The assault occurred in a car, off-campus, by a friend of another student. She stated that she had gone to an off-campus house party with one of her friends. Bethany noted that she had been with her offender at the same house a week before. She felt comfortable with her offender and said, "I was like, okay, he's pretty cool to hang out with." The offender invited Bethany to go out to his car to

hang out and listen to music. She noted that she felt okay about going to his car as "I was like, yeah, like I met you, I kinda know you, like sure, this is fine." She reported that she had consumed alcohol with her offender at the party before they went to his car. Bethany said that she "definitely remember saying, like, I don't want to have sex and he was, like, yeah, cool, no problem, whatever." She reported that they were hanging out in his car and "suddenly, we were having sex, which I did not consent to." She said that she "froze and I couldn't say, 'no, I don't want to do this,' it just kinda happened." After the assault, Bethany reported that she went back into the house party and told her friend that she wanted to leave. She noted that as they left the party with her friend, and "I didn't know what to think." Bethany explained that "I didn't really know what sexual assault or rape was at that point in my life." Additionally, Bethany noted that "as a freshman who was drinking at a party, I was just like, yeah, I hooked up with some guy at a party . . . like its no big deal." Bethany noted that she had consumed enough alcohol that she was "mostly in control of my body."

Bethany told her friends about the assault and said, "when I was talking with my friends about what had happened, I just played it off as being like, 'oh yeah, I just hooked up (sexual intercourse) at the party' . . . everyone does this type of thing." Bethany noted that she had a bad feeling about what had happened but "I didn't really know how to talk to my friends about it." Her friends did not seem surprised and said "everyone was like yeah, okay, like, cool, you hooked up, . . . it did not seem like a big deal." After talking with her friends who did not see the hookup as an assault, Bethany did not speak to anyone else about the assault until her sophomore year.

At the beginning of Bethany's sophomore year, as part of her leadership position, she was required to attend a Title IX training facilitated by the College's Title IX Coordinator. Only then did she began to define her experience as a sexual assault. After the training, Bethany told a male friend about her experience. She reported that her male friend "was, like, mad at me for not telling someone and coming forward sooner." His reaction made Bethany feel "mad at myself for not doing anything at first, " but he also assured her that it was not her fault and "he was sorry . . . not being able to help me through the process the way I needed at the time." Bethany also reported that she thought "because I let myself get taken advantage of" and that she "was looking for love in the wrong places" the assault was also her fault. Bethany reported that during high school, she had made poor decisions about relationships when someone was giving her a little attention and had made a promise to herself that she would make "better decisions in college and be a stronger, independent woman in college." She noted, "it happened again, right, as soon as I started college, and it was really upsetting thing to be taken advantage in that way . . . so I was mad at myself for letting it happen again."

When Bethany was asked about her thoughts of reporting the sexual assault to college officials, Bethany noted that "I think, initially, when it first happened . . . I did not really know what it was, so I didn't feel I needed to do anything." She also noted that "once I fully understood and, like, came to what happened, I didn't really want to report it . . . you hear so many stories about the harassment that victims go through when reporting." She reported that she did not want to experience the same harassment that other women experienced when they have reported an assault to a college official. Bethany said that,

I've heard stories about girls going and reporting and people not believing them . . . and asking questions, like, what were you wearing, questions and all those kinds of things, . . . why would I put myself through this whole process . . . what's gonna come out of it for me?

Structural description of Bethany's experience. Bethany was assaulted by someone who she had previously met at a social gathering. She noted that she felt comfortable with that person and did not feel uncomfortable going to his car to hang out. Bethany initially did not know what the experience was and, at first, she thought she could handle it on her own. She reported that about a year after the sexual assault, she disclosed the incident to her "best friend on campus" who encouraged her to talk to a counselor at the campus health center. "It was easier to tell my friend than I thought it would be to tell a counselor." Bethany did seek assistance at the health center and noted that, "I think the more I talk about it (the assault), definitely the easier it gets." As a result of the supportive reaction from her best friend and the support of the counselor, Bethany finally was able to define her experience as a sexual assault and seek the help to assist her on her journey to healing.

Bethany was the only participant who scheduled the second voluntary interview. During the voluntary interview, Bethany reviewed the verbatim transcript and noted that the transcript accurately reflected her experience. She noted that she now feels that she would report a sexual assault to a college official. When asked who she would report to, Bethany stated that, first, she would tell a close friend and then a resident director. She noted that students should have access to an online reporting system that would provide

the reporter with a response email that would outline reporting protocols, support services, and key personnel to contact for services.

The essence of Bethany's experience. The essence of Bethany's sexual assault experience is framed in her feeling that she had "hooked up" and that she acquired knowledge of what a sexual assault was at a Title IX training program during her junior year. Bethany reported that while attending the Title IX training, "I remember sitting there at first . . . listening to all the information and realizing that I was sexually assaulted and raped my freshman year, and I didn't even fully realize what had happened." Bethany noted that, "I had made a poor decision by getting into the car with my offender . . . there were very blurry lines . . . I never said no, but I did not say yes, either." She went on to say that she did not realize what the event, the assault, was until a year after when she had attended a campus Title IX training.

When asked about her thoughts about reporting the incident to a college official, Bethany responded by saying that she did not report the assault, because "I let myself get taken advantage of." Reflecting on the assault now, Bethany said that if she were assaulted again, she would report the assault to her residence director, but she still was unsure of campus resources and support services that could be offered to her. As a result of her assault, Bethany reported that, "I think it's definitely made me a more cautious person . . . and it definitely makes me want to be able to help other people who go through these kinds of situations." Bethany said that, "I think it's important to report an assault to the college . . . not just for you, but for others."

Lilo: Textual description of Lilo's experience. Lilo was the third participant to be interviewed for this study. She was a first-year student and had not declared an

academic major at the time of her interview. Lilo reported that she had been assaulted in her residence hall room during the first semester of her first year at the College. Lilo was the only participant in the study who identified as a lesbian and had been assaulted by another woman, whom she believed was her friend, "I thought she was my friend." Lilo said that she had been sick at the time of her assault and had taken cold medicine saying, "I thought it (the assault) was a dream." Lilo stated that she had met her offender at first-year orientation. Lilo reported that her offender had helped her to bed and said that she would take care of her. Lilo reported that, "she was like, you need to go to bed . . . you're sick . . . let's just go upstairs and relax." Lilo was assaulted by a friend who she trusted when she could not and did not give consent, as she was incapacitated from the cold medicine. Lilo stated, "I was like in and out of consciousness when everything happened." She reported that her roommate was in the room at the time of the assault and "I just kind of froze when I realized what was happening . . . I didn't move or say anything . . . and when it was over, I just rolled over and went to sleep." Lilo stated that she thought "maybe I'm dreaming." Lilo stated that she felt very warm from being sick, "like my whole body was just really warm, and her hands were really cold . . . I could feel her hands when she put them down my shorts . . . and then she slid her fingers inside of me." Lilo explained that she could not believe it was happening to her, "um, she was one of my friends . . . I met her at orientation, and um, we seemed like friends." Lilo said, "a couple of weeks later, when I actually talked it [the assault] out with one of my friends, she's like, no, you weren't dreaming . . . that was actually real." Lilo noted that she "was scared, um, at first, . . . I just chocked it up to well, maybe I was dreaming." Lilo did not remember saying yes or no, "maybe I said yes, and don't remember." Lilo

said that she never thought something like that could happen to her because she is usually a very guarded person and does not trust people easily.

When asked about her thoughts about reporting her sexual assault, Lilo responded by saying, "there was no evidence of the assault . . . she is an upper-class student leader who has a lot of power on campus, and I would only be a statistic." She said that, "why would I report . . . but it would just be 'a he said, she said'. . . 'cause there was no evidence." Lilo went on to say that, "I decided not to report it for, um, several reasons." She explained that no one would believe that she [her offender] would do something like that. Lilo felt that other students would "back her [the offender] up and, um, get them to say that I was lying and I wasn't telling the truth." Lilo reported that, "you usually don't hear about another woman sexually assault another one . . . I didn't want anybody to think I was lying." However, Lilo did report to a campus sexual assault service advisor that she felt would be helpful in processing the experience for her. Lilo asked the sexual assault service advisor about reporting option, and was told that "she could report the assault to the Title IX Coordinator or not report it to anyone . . . [the advisor] encouraged me to report, but at the same time . . . she made sure it was my decision." Ultimately, Lilo decided not to report her assault to a college official because, "I don't wanna be put down on a piece of paper just to become a statistic, and that's what they're [the College] looking for, is a statistic . . . I don't wanna be a part of that."

Structural description of Lilo's experience. Lilo experienced a sexual assault by someone who she believed was her friend and by a person who Lilo believed had more "power" on campus. Lilo's offender was a woman who Lilo respected as a student leader and thought she would take care of her because she was ill and had just taken some

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cold medicine. Lilo's experienced is framed by feelings of being violated by someone she trusted and who had a position of leadership on campus, and that she felt that she would only be a statistic to the College if she reported it. Lilo's feelings that the College would just take her report as a number and not investigate because her offender was a student leader informed her choice not to report at all. She did not participate in the second voluntary interview but was contacted to schedule another meeting but did not return emails or phone calls.

The essence of Lilo's experience. The essence of Lilo's experience was bound in her feelings that her assault could not be proven, as it was a,"he said – she said." Lilo reported that there was "no evidence of the event . . . so who would believe me." It was also challenging for Lilo to believe that she had been sexually assaulted. At first, she thought, "I thought it was a dream" and only believed that it happened after speaking to her roommate. Finally, Lilo struggled with the decision to stay at the college or transfer out of concern for running into her offender on campus. Lilo reported that she "thought about transferring, but that would only leave her [the offender] with a win."

Kelsey: Textual description of Kelsey's experience. Kelsey was the fourth participant to be interviewed for this study, and she was the first participant who spoke of reporting her assault to the College. She was a second-semester sophomore and a childhood education major at the time of her assault. Kelsey reported that "I was going out with friends,and I had been drinking . . . the problem was I had a bit too much to drink, I guess . . . so by the end of the night, we got separated, and I ended up walking home alone." Kelsey reported that she got lost walking home, and "I met this group of guys . . . I really couldn't even walk to get home." The men offered to walk Kelsey

home, "but then they told me that they had to stop at their room first to drop off their friends." Kelsey agreed to go to their residence hall room. Kelsey remembers that:

> We walked up into their room, at first I was alone . . . and then the two . . . there were two men, they came in, um, I don't really remember much, but I remember them coming in and like kind of blocking me up against the window.

Kelsey reported that one of the men was the "doer" and the other guy was "more of a watcher kind of person." She reported that the "doer" began kissing me and taking off my shirt and my bra, without consent, and then the other boy came over and they were asking me to give them a hand job and trying to make me touch them and stuff like that." She said, "I remember I started crying at that point, and I was, like, saying, no . . . but the other guys just like kept going." Kelsey reported that she continued, "trying to say no" and finally was able to push her way out of the room. Once outside of the residence hall, Kelsey was crying when she was approached by a resident assistant. The resident assistant said, "oh, I just heard you run down the stairs, and you're crying . . . is everything okay?" Kelsey reported that she told the resident assistant, "I just kept telling her that I told them to stop, and that I didn't want anything." Finally, the resident assistant "ended up calling campus police . . . this was the first time I had to tell my story." Kelsey was transported to the hospital by campus police for a "rape kit to be done . . . they collected DNA swabs . . . but I never got the results back." She reported that "I got really freaked out again [at the hospital], 'cause I realized that I didn't have my shirt or bra on." Kelsey reported that she felt the "campus police seemed to be trying to do something, but no one was really doing anything." Kelsey said it was, "kinda of um, irritating to me." Kelsey said that she talked to campus police about her reporting options

and after the police explained all of her options, she decided to report the assault to the Title IX Coordinator and pursue a student conduct process, "I wanted to have the guys face some kind of punishment . . . like probation, or expulsion." Kelsey reported that she talked to the Title IX Coordinator, and they "were talking, and then, I met with a bunch of other people and, um, at the end, they told me that they had to drop the case 'cause they couldn't find anything." Kelsey reported that she felt very "irritated" by the process and that if "I had gotten to see one sheet of people [composite pictures] from the residence hall . . . I could have identified them."

When Kelsey was asked about her thoughts about reporting her assault, she said, "um, I know that if an RA didn't find me, I probably would've just gone home and, like, forgot about it." But after speaking to the Title IX Coordinator and the campus police, Kelsey noted that she felt that "I probably would've not wanted to have contact with them, but I would've wanted them to have some form of punishment." Kelsey reported that she was, "offered a lot of resources to help me." Kelsey also noted that she would encourage others to report an assault to a college official, "I guess I would say, like, definitely report it . . . at least you know someone knows about it."

Structural description of Kelsey's experience. Kelsey's experience was different than the other women, as she did not know the names of her offenders. Kelsey reported that she had experienced flashbacks when trying to describe the details of the assault and descriptions of her offenders with working with the police and the college. She was troubled by the lack of communication and information shared with her regarding the findings of the rape kit and status of a campus investigation into her assault.

She reported that these feelings have led to her to be more distrustful of the College's ability to respond to a report of a sexual assault efficiently.

The essence of Kelsey's experience. Feelings of lack of control and frustration framed Kelsey's experiences after her sexual assault. Kelsey was not able to make her own decisions about what happened to her during her assault, nor was she able to make her own choice about reporting the assault to the police or the College. Kelsey's ability to make her own decisions was removed by the resident assistant finding Kelsey crying, and in an attempt to provide support, the resident assistant removed any control that Kelsey had to determine the path of her actions. Additionally, Kelsey was frustrated with the investigation process. She said the process was "irritating 'cause people weren't talking to each other." Finally, Kelsey reported that she was concerned "knowing that they [the offenders] were still on campus." Kelsey did not participate in the second voluntary interview but was contacted to schedule another meeting but did not return emails or phone calls.

Amanda: Textual description of Amanda's experience. Amanda was the fifth participant to be interviewed and she was the oldest participant and had been sexually assaulted 6 months prior the initial interview. At the time of the interview, Amanda was a senior majoring in psychology and substance abuse counseling with a minor in women's studies. Amanda had been in a serious relationship with "Adam" for "about a year" who "was a couple of years older than me." She reported that their relationship was "going well." She felt that "everything was going to be alright, I trusted him . . . um, didn't think ever that he would take advantage of me or go against my wishes with anything." Amanda reported that on the night of her sexual assault, she had been

working on "a huge theory paper . . . one of the longest papers I had ever written . . . I was trying to get an A." She reported that she had gone to Adam's apartment for the weekend, with the plan of finishing her paper. While working on her paper, Amanda reported that Adam was asleep but "kind of waiting up for me" to come to bed. Amanda reported that when she was ready to go to bed, "I remember it being kind of like warm, and so I took some of my clothes off, to like, go to bed with him . . . I was exhausted and fell asleep." She reported that a short time later, "I kind of like woke up in this like weird state of consciousness, and I was like not exactly sure what was going on, but I felt him like, rubbing himself, like his penis, against my back and I told him to stop." She reported that she did not understand what was happening and why, when asked to stop, that Adam did not stop. Amanda said that she, "was getting mad about it, because I was getting really irritated, like why is he trying to rub himself up against me?" She remembers telling Adam to stop. Amanda stated that Adam would not stop and "he held me down, and he . . . he didn't actually put it inside me, put his fingers inside me, . . . he like used my body as a way for himself to ejaculate." Amanda noted that Adam was rubbing himself against her back and then turned her over and began "rubbing himself like against me in front." Amanda spoke of being held down and how scared and confused she felt. She said, "I was getting held down, . . . trying to fight back, but like, I didn't know what was really going on, I was so confused, I did not know why he was doing that or why he thought it was okay." Amanda reported that when Adam was "done" that he told her that "he was really horny, and I had been studying, . . . and I was, you know, not, I guess, like, giving him what he wanted as much lately or something." She said that Adam said, "he told me that he didn't care that I said no."

After the assault, Amanda reported that she asked Adam, "What were you thinking? Why didn't you respect the fact that I said no?" She said that Adam told her, "I don't know, I just didn't care at the moment." Amanda said she felt awful and needed to leave, but she needed Adam to drive her home as his apartment was about an hour away. Amanda reported that the car ride home, "I felt stuck in the car him . . . he was trying to make small talk, and I was so upset . . . I was in shock." Amanda said that she wanted to tell Adam that she never wanted to see him again, but was afraid to tell him in the car because he "might do something dangerous." Amanda reflected, "it was very difficult to get away from him." Amanda noted that after breaking up with Adam, he would not accept her rejection. Amanda reported that Adam, "got his mother involved, and it was just like . . . she and Adam were blaming me for it" and "I guess for a while I did feel like it was my fault." Amanda explained that:

> I should have been wearing more clothes . . . I should've, like fought, back more
> or really tried to get away . . . but I did'not do that; I guess I feel like it's kinda of
> my fault in a way, not totally my fault, but like, partially.

When Amanda was asked about her thoughts about reporting the assault, Amanda noted that she first told her mom. Amanda reported that she had called her mother immediately after the assault but was "so scared that she [her mother] was going to tell me it was my fault, but she was on my side, so that was good." Having the support of her mother helped Amanda feel safe enough to tell her older sister, who was also supportive. Amanda reported that others were asking her questions, "do you want to report the incident to the police?" Amanda said, "I'm, like, no, because it's like a huge scene . . . and I didn't want to be blamed for all that stuff . . . I did not even realize there were

services through the college that could have helped me heal." Amanda reported that she chose not to report to the police or the College because she said, "I felt like it wouldn't be taken seriously because it wasn't actually rape." Additionally, Amanda reported that "his family were telling me . . . sending me messages and he [Adam] sent me a letter in the mail," making Amanda question herself about the assault and causing her to feel more guilt and shame about the incident.

Structural description of Amanda's experience. Amanda's sexual assault experience was framed in confusion of what the experience was and she had a loss of trust. Amanda's assault occurred at the apartment of her long-term boyfriend. She felt that she was responsible for the assault because she was busy with her theory paper and "was not taking care of his needs." She reported that she felt responsible for the assault because she had not worn clothing to bed and "he was just horny." Despite Amanda's academic studies in psychology and gender studies, she was not able to define the experience as a sexual assault. She expressed a feeling that she had been in a long-term, trusting relationship with Adam, and she felt safe with him, and after the assault, she reported that, "I have been impacted by, like, trust issues and kind of resentment towards men in general."

As a result of the experience and the emotional trauma that was caused, Amanda's academics suffered that semester. She reported that her theory paper was never completed and "that semester, I ended up not doing as well as I had hoped." Amanda noted that she was seeing a counselor at the time of the incident. She reported that she increased her visits with the counselor and found that, "it was very helpful for me to talk it through and to work through it." Amanda did not participate in the second voluntary

interview but was contacted to schedule another meeting but did not return emails or phone calls.

The essence of Amanda's experience. The essence of Amanda's experience is wrapped in feelings of mistrust, shame, and lack of knowledge of campus support services. Amanda expressed a sense of personal frustration that she did not protect herself or perceive the danger she was in with Adam, as she believed that she was in a trusting and respectful relationship. The full essence of Amanda's experience can be summarized in her own words, she said that:

> He felt, he told me that he didn't care that I said no. So I felt totally betrayed and totally disgusted with him. I felt taken advantage of, and it was traumatic for me. I felt, like, this is someone I trusted, and they like just held me down and used me as, like, for sexual pleasure.

Sarah: Textual description of Sarah's experience. Sarah was the final participant to be interviewed and the most emotional as she described her assault. Sarah was a second-semester, first-year student who had not declared a major at the time of the initial interview. Sarah noted that she was involved in student organizations. She reported that at the time of her sexual assault, she had just recently broken up with her boyfriend prior to the beginning of her first year of college. She explained that her assault happened at the beginning of her first semester at college.

Sarah reported that on the night of her assault, she had gone to an off-campus party with friends and had been consuming alcohol and was feeling, "it was my freshman year, I might as well have a good time." She reported that she was intoxicated and had "little memory or spotty memory" of the events of the assault. Sarah said that she met

her offender at the off-campus party, and he invited her to his apartment as it was raining, and she did not want to walk back to campus in the rain. Sarah reported that they engaged in nonconsensual intercourse because she felt coerced into it because her offender told her "or she could leave and walk home alone." Sarah noted that the sex was rough, but she "allowed it to happen" because she said, in the past, she was "people pleaser." The following morning, Sarah reported that "he woke me up in the morning . . . he said he wanted to have sex again . . . I did not want to have sex with him," but he said, "okay, well, the only way that you're going to be able to stay here is if you have (oral) sex with me." Sarah said, "I was extremely groggy . . . and said okay whatever," and she said she just wanted to go back to sleep. Eventually, Sarah was awoken by her offender who told her to go home. She reported that "I felt used." She reported that "I hadn't really processed everything until a few weeks later when he texted me again to come over (for sex). . . . It wasn't really what I wanted . . . and he said, "okay never mind," like, I didn't want you to come over anyways. Sarah said she felt that her offender was only interested in her sexually and disregarded her as a person. Sarah reported that she did not realize the incident was an assault until "once the semester was over, and I was back at home." She said, "I realized that, like, you know, I told him that, that wasn't what I wanted, and he didn't care." She noted that she experienced a couple of medical concerns as a result of the assault but did not seek medical attention.

When asked about her thoughts of reporting the incident, Sarah reported that the first person she told was her ex-boyfriend, who was not supportive and "he told me that he couldn't be, like, friends with me . . . and he told me that I was selfish." However, when she returned to campus, she told a male friend. The friend, who held a student

leadership position on campus, was supportive and told Sarah "it's not your fault, you know. You may think like you had some blame in this, but it's not your fault in any way." Sarah noted that she did not know that due to his leader position as a resident assistant on campus, he would be required to report the incident to his supervisor. He told Sarah that his supervisor, "did not really encourage him; she told him that once I told him, I had to report it." Sarah acknowledged that she "kinda of knew about the College's reporting policies" but did not know that she would "have to meet with someone right then" Sarah felt that when she was called to administrator's office to discuss her assault and reporting options, that "she was bothering" the administrator. She noted that she felt it would have been a more positive process for her if she had been allowed to schedule her own appointment to disclose her assault. Sarah reported that the administrator "told me about my resources, and what actions, I could take against her offender, if I want to, and I didn't, I still don't." Sarah reported that she felt that she was provided with support services but that the entire process was "very procedural . . . and did not feel optional."

Structural description of Sarah's experience. Sarah reported that she used her academics as a distraction—a way not to deal with the assault. She reported that she received excellent grades that semester. She stated that she focused on her classes to not have to think about the assault or running into her offender. Sarah reported that she felt that she had no control of when, how, or who she had to talk to about her assault. The process was in motion before she had a chance to think about her options or make her own appointments to discuss the assault.

Additionally, she reported that she felt triggered when she returned to campus in the fall and attended a College-sponsored comedian who remarked that the College was

located in a space that "it's so quiet you can hear the rapes occurring." Sarah said that when students around her laughed, she felt very isolated and was flooded with memories of her assault. Sarah did not participate in the second voluntary interview but was contacted to schedule another meeting but did not return emails or phone calls.

Essence of Sarah's experience. The essence of Sarah's experience is framed in feelings of being "forced to report" and the narrative she heard from her family about personal responsibility. Sarah thought she was talking to a friend about her assault in a manner to seek support but, instead, her friend was responsible for reporting the assault to a College official. She felt that the process was causing her stress because she did not want to deal with it at that time, maybe later, but in her own time. Additionally, Sarah's experience is bound to the voice of a family member who told her that "if you get drunk or go to a boy's place . . . what do you expect." Sarah had not shared her assault with her family due to feelings of shame and embarrassment that she "was that girl." Ultimately, Sarah defined the essence of her experience through a poem from the book, *The Sun, and Her Flowers,* by rupi kaur. Sarah said that the poem that most defined her experience and journey to recovery, which reads:

> the rape will
> tear you in half
>
> but it
> will not
> end you
>   (kaur, 2017, p. 26)

Composite of textural-structural descriptions for all participants. Using a modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data, a composite

of the textural-structural descriptions of all the participants' experiences was developed.

Based on the verbatim transcripts of each of the interviews, which offered the "what" and

the "how" of the participants' experiences, the individual textural-structural description

of each of the six participants' experiences was intergraded into the composite

descriptions of the experience, representing the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). The

composite textural-structural descriptions of the participants provided the essence of their

experiences and highlighted the shared themes that existed in all of their experiences.

Table 4.2 outlines the identified composite textual-structural themes that were present in

all of the participants' experiences.

Table 4.2

Composite of Textual-Structural Themes for All Participants

Textual Themes	Jennifer	Bethany	Lilo	Kelsey	Amanda	Sarah	Total
Lack of definition of the experience	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
Not a big deal; my fault	X	X	X		X	X	5
Did not want to get self or others in trouble	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
Structural Themes							
Mistrust of the reporting process			X	X	X	X	4
Lack of knowledge of campus support services/personnel	X	X	X	X	X	X	6

Essence of all participant's experiences. Being survivors of a sexual assault,

Jennifer, Bethany, Lilo, Kelsey, Amanda, and Sarah, found that the assault affected every

part of their person and college experience. The impact of their assault affected their

mental health, physical health, social relationships, feelings of shame and guilt, and self-

confidence. All of the women in this study reported that as a result of their assault, they experienced difficulties in their social and academic lives. These challenges led to problems attending classes or completing coursework, in finding new trusting friendships and personal relationships, and trusting their own decision-making abilities. Ultimately, the sexual assault changed their experience of just being college students who were free to challenge themselves and their values and to explore all that the college experience had to offer. Their experiences caused these women to feel shame, guilt, and a lack of trust of those around them. These women were looking for support from family, friends, and the College to offer support services and allow them to be in control of the decision to report their assault in a manner that was comfortable and safe for them.

Data Analysis and Findings

Given the information provided and analyzed from the six participants, the five themes identified in Table 4.3 provide the findings of this study.

Table 4.3

Themes and Units of Meaning Supported by Sample Quotes

Textual Themes	Units of Meaning	Sample Quotes
Lack of definition of the experience	Did not know what it was	I did not know what it was.
	I did not say; I did not say yes	I was not willing to say I was assaulted.
	Sexual assault is violent	Women don't assault each other.
Not a big deal; my fault	Wrong place	I went to his bedroom.
	Poor decision making on my part	I should not have gotten into his car.
	Went to or allowed others access to me	It's my fault; I did not say no.
Did not want to others or self in trouble	Use of a substance	I smoked marijuana.
	Parents	I consumed a lot of alcohol.
	Friends would not believe me	I was afraid of what my parents or friends would say.
	Loss of peers or harassment by social group	My friends would not believe me.
Structural Themes		
Mistrust of the reporting process	Lack of control	The RA called campus police; I had no control.
	Nothing will happen	I would only be a statistic.
		Nothing will happen if I report to the College.
Lack of knowledge of campus support services/personnel	Unsure where offices are located	I do not know where the Title IX office is or who the Title IX Coordinator is.
	Uncertain of what resources were available or what I needed	I could not identify any support services available on my campus.
	Did not know to whom or how to report	I did not know where or to whom I should call for help.

The data analysis process began with an in-depth review of the transcribed

interviews and field notes. To ensure that each participant's confidentiality was

protected, each was given the opportunity to select a pseudonym for herself and the

offenders, and all identifiable information was eliminated or altered. The same interview process was used with all of the six participants. Each participant was offered the opportunity to schedule a second voluntary interview to review the transcript and add any information that was not available at the time of the initial interview. Only one of the participants, Bethany, chose to participate in the second voluntary interviews.

Theme 1: Lack of Definition of the Experience

      Units of meaning: (a) I did not know what it was, and (b) I did not know how or to whom to report the assault. During the initial interviews, each of the six participants described their sexual assault experience without using the word *sexual assault* or *rape*. Each of the participants viewed their assault as something that happened, but their words could not define the experiences. For example, Jennifer said, "I did not know what is was, it was my first time . . . and there was no violence," and Kelsey noted that she had no words to describe the experience but knew it was not okay.

      Jennifer said that she was not able to label the experience until a year later when she attended a Title IX training that provided definitions and examples of sexual assaults. Additionally, Lilo reported that she was further confused about the definition of the experience because, "I thought it would never happen to me because women don't rape women."

      Units of meaning: (a) I did not say no, and (b) no violence equals no assault. Each of the six participants spoke of "not saying no" during their assaults. Lilo spoke about her experience with blurry lines and not being able to say anything, and Jennifer said, "I did not say no." Bethany spoke of "not saying no but always not saying yes." In

contrast, Sarah spoke of initially saying no and then being pressured into not saying anything by her offender's actions and words.

Amanda was the only participant that reported experiencing violence during her assault, but she was unable to equate the violence to a sexual assault. Amanda spoke of being held down at the shoulders by her offender and having feelings of being disassociated, but she was unable to translate that experience into a definition of sexual assault for herself. Additionally, Jennifer reported ongoing medical issues that related to her assault but could not identify the violence that occurred during her assault. Jennifer stated "I wasn't fighting it . . . but it wasn't like violent . . . they always think it's like violent or something like that," despite the fact that Jennifer needed to seek medical attention for bruising and bleeding after her assault and she contracted an infection. For Jennifer to identify the assault, she believed that physical violence had to occur to give the experience the label of a sexual assault.

Theme 2: Not a Big Deal; My Fault

Units of meaning: (a) wrong place, and (b) poor decision making on my part. Jennifer, Bethany, Lilo, Amanda, and Sarah all stated that they did not want to get into trouble. Jennifer, Bethany, and Sarah spoke about their "poor decision" going into a car, a bedroom, or to the apartment of their offender, which they noted as being in the wrong place. Jennifer reported that "I went to his bedroom," and Sarah said, "I went with him to his apartment because I did not want to walk home in the rain." Bethany reported that she willingly went to her offender's car to "hang out." Each of these women spoke of their poor decision making in the events that led up to their assault. They reported that they were the ones making the poor decisions by their choice to go with the offender

willingly or by making decisions that put them at greater risk, like being alone with their offender or going to a private location. Bethany said, "I think because I let myself get taken advantage of . . . it was really an upsetting thing to be taken advantage of in that way." Amanda reported that she felt that she had made a poor decision when she willingly got into bed with her boyfriend with no clothes on.

Theme 3: Did Not Want to Get Self or Others in Trouble

Units of meaning: (a) use of a substance, and (b) in trouble with parents. All of the women spoke about not wanting to get others or themselves in trouble for the assault because of their consumption of alcohol or use of marijuana. Jennifer spoke of using marijuana and alcohol with her offender before her assault. Bethany, Kelsey, and Sarah all referred to their voluntary use of alcohol as a significant factor in their not wanting to report their experience to anyone for fear that they would be in trouble for using alcohol, as they were not of legal drinking age. They feared getting in trouble with their parents, as well as the College. Jennifer, Bethany, Kelsey, and Sarah spoke about the fear of getting in trouble with their families for their decisions and the use of a substance before their assault. Sarah shared that she feared telling her family about her assault, as she had been told "what does a woman think is going to happen" when she gets drunk and goes to a man's apartment alone. She reported, "and, part of me still, like, thinks, like, what did I think was going to happen when I agreed to go there? So, I just, I don't want to talk to them about it." Bethany, Kelsey, and Sarah spoke about disappointing their family and being blamed by them for using consuming alcohol. Kelsey reported that she was concerned about telling her mother because she thought her mother would blame her for the assault and, partially, she did. Kelsey reported that when

she did disclose the assault to her mother, her mother said, "Well, you shouldn't be letting yourself get that, um, intoxicated." Additionally, four of the six women spoke of not wanting to get others in trouble, making a huge scene, or "ruining" the life of their offender by reporting the assault, despite the impact the assaults had on their lives. Amanda reported that she did not want to make a huge scene because it would affect him and his family negatively. She said, "I don't want to, like, ruin someone's life, I guess."

Units of meaning: (a) friends will not believe me, and (b) loss of peers or harassment from social group. The women spoke of their fears of disclosing their assault to their friends because they would not believe them. Lilo stated that, "more people would back her [offender] up, and, um, say I was lying; I wasn't telling the truth." Sarah, Jennifer, and Kelsey spoke of their concerns of disclosing to their friends and being unsure if they would be supported or judged. Conversely, Bethany reported that she did not tell her best friend until a year later and was surprised that her friend believed her and encouraged her to get counseling. However, Bethany reported that she did not want to report her assault because "you hear so many stories about, like, the harassment that most victims go through." Lilo also spoke about the fear of losing the new friends she had just met if she reported her assault. Lilo said, "it's inevitable that you're gonna make friends, and you're gonna lose friends . . . try not make the wrong ones."

Theme 4: Mistrust of the Reporting Process

Unit of meaning: Lack of control. Two of the six participants spoke about feelings of mistrust of the reporting process. Kelsey and Sarah spoke directly about losing control of their choice to disclose the details of their assault. Kelsey was found by a resident assistant who took "control of the situation," with all good intentions, but it

removed any control that Kelsey had over her choice to report her assault. Kelsey said, "I kept telling her (the resident assistant) that I told them (the offenders) to stop, and I didn't want anything . . . and she [RA] ended up calling campus police, and then I had to tell them my story." Additionally, Sarah said that once she told her resident assistant friend that, "he got a call from his supervisor saying that we have to go right now [to her office]." While Kelsey and Lilo spoke directly about their feelings that no action (unit of meaning: nothing will happen) would be taken if they reported their assaults to the College, Kelsey reported that even after she spoke with the campus police and the Title IX Coordinator, the offenders where never was identified and "it was like people were trying to figure out who it was, but they weren't really doing anything to figure it out." Furthermore, Lilo said, "one of the resident assistants that used to work in this building and doesn't anymore, um, really opened my eyes to the fact that, um, that campuses don't really do a lot in general."

Theme 5: Lack of Knowledge of the Campus Support Services/Personnel

Unit of meaning: (a) unsure where offices are located, (b) unsure of what resources were available or what I needed, and (c) not know to whom or how to report the assault. All of the participants referenced their lack of knowledge of campus support services or personnel that could have assisted them with support after their assault. Jennifer, Bethany, Lilo, Kelsey, Amanda, and Sarah all noted that they had heard of some resources but did not know where to find the offices that would offer those supports. Jennifer reported that she sought off-campus services for her medical needs because she was not aware of any on-campus office that could provide her with similar services. Bethany and Lilo said they only thought of going to the health center after

friends encouraged them to go and talk to a counselor. Lilo said, "I don't really know where the Title IX office is." Sarah reported that she had been encouraged to talk with the Title IX Coordinator, but she did not know where to find the office and reported that, "I asked the secretaries, and they gave me this knowing look, like 'oh, you're here for that.'"

        Additionally, many of the women reported that they did not know what resources were available to support them or even what they needed to get through the reporting or healing process. Sarah said, "I think, initially, when it first happened, like, I didn't really know what it was, so I didn't feel like I needed any support." Amanda noted that she remembered some information being provided at orientation her first year but not much on the support services available. She said, "I did not even realize there were services through the college." Sarah reported that she was not personally aware of any support services on campus until after she made her disclosure to an administrator. Along with lack of knowledge of support services, the women also reported that they did not know to whom or where to report their assault. Jennifer reported that she would "probably" report an assault if it happened again, but she was "not entirely sure" who to tell, other than a friend. Bethany said that even after attending the Title IX training, she could not give the name of the Title IX Coordinator, but said that she would encourage another survivors to "start small, start with someone who you know." Kelsey, Amanda, and Sarah stated that they could not provide specific names of who to report an assault to but felt that telling a friend was the first step in finding the names of college staff that could help them.

Summary of Results

This study focused on the lived experience of six women who experienced a sexual assault while enrolled in college. The primary purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the participants and what was their decision-making process in considering whether to report their sexual assault their to college officials. The findings of the study are framed in a phenomenological analysis of all of the data collected during each of the six initial interviews and one follow-up interview.

Three textual themes (lack of definition of the experience; not a big deal, it was my fault; and I did not want to get others or myself in trouble) and two structural themes (mistrust of the reporting process and lack of knowledge of campus support/personnel) were identified and supported by the participants' own words. The themes gave a frame to the essence of the participants' experiences and a foundation for considering ways to improve reporting options for future survivors of an act of sexual assault to receive support and accountability for their assault.

The final chapter of this study offers a summary of the findings. Additionally, Chapter 5 includes the implications and recommendations for the applications of the findings to reporting procedures, education, and future research, which have been identified along with a discussion of the study's limitations.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Sexual violence, including sexual assault, has been called a national public health problem, with a reported rate of one in five women experiencing an attempted or completed sexual assault during their lifetime (DeGue et al., 2012; Koss et al., 1987). Sexual assault continues to be particularly prevalent on college campuses and has continued to be the focus of local, state, and national legislation (McCauley, Ruggiero, Resnick, Conoscenti, & Kilpatrick, 2009; Paul et al., 2013). This study focused on the lived experiences of undergraduate college women who had experienced a sexual assault, explored the needs of survivors, and provides recommendations for future practice.

The researcher utilized a qualitative, phenomenological methodology to better understand the experiences of undergraduate college women who had been sexually assaulted and their decision-making process when considering reporting the assault to college officials. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to understand the lived experience of the participants and to build meaning for those experiences (Creswell, 2014). The two guiding research questions used to frame this inquiry were:

1. What is the lived experience of undergraduate college women who have experienced a sexual assault on campus since their enrollment in college?

2. What are the barriers for undergraduate college women who seek campus assistance from college officials related to reporting a sexual assault?

The experiences of college women who had been sexually assaulted while in attending college were collected and analyzed to answer the central research questions. Both research questions were answered with the assistance of the participants' narrative experiences which were shared during the required interviews. Within the composite textural-structural description, the findings suggest that the overall lived experience of the participants included: lack of definition of the experience, the experience was their fault or not a big deal, and not wanting to get others in trouble. The findings define, broad concepts that must to be addressed for changes to occur within the college and for the survivors that include: (a) the type of assault was not a factor in the survivors' needs or decision to report, (b) there is a difference when using the terms *disclosure* and *reporting*, and (c) the theories behind federal, state, and campus law/polices are not consistent with the needs of survivors. While the decision-making process for the participants was most impacted by the feelings of mistrust of the campus reporting process and a lack of knowledge of campus support services/personnel, the study supports the development of three textual themes (lack of definition of the experience; not a big deal, it was my fault; and I did not want to get others or myself in trouble) and two structural themes (mistrust of the reporting process and lack of knowledge of campus support/personnel), which were identified and supported by the participants' own words. The themes gave a frame to the essence of the participants' experiences and a foundation for considering ways to improve reporting options for future survivors of acts of sexual assault to receive support and accountability for their assault. Despite the number of empirical studies that have been conducted since the seminal reseach conducted by Koss et al. in 1987, very little has changed in the rate of sexual assaults occuring on college campuses, nor have the needs

of the surivivors changed. Additionally, in 1983, Ann Wolbrt Burgess identified three

phases of trauma recovery expreienced by survivors of sexual assault. Burgess's (1983)

stages (acute phase, pseudo-adjustment, and integration) of trauma were demonstrated in

all of the participants in this study. Finally, the application of Arthur W. Chickering's

(1969) theory of student identity development, as defined in the seven vectors of

development, provides a frame to understand the reactions of each participant and a

frame for prevention education and support services. Further explanation and application

of the work of Burgess (1983) and Chickering's (1996) vectors are explored later in this

chapter.

Chapter 5 begins with a discussion and an interpretation of the findings.

Connections are made with the current literature on barriers to reporting, process of

disclosing, rape myths, rape trauma syndrome, and reporting a sexual assault.

Explanations of the limitations of this study are addressed. This chapter provides

recommendations for the application of the findings of this study to increase the rates of

sexual assault survivors reporting their assaults to college officials and having college

officials meet the needs of the survivors. Finally, this chapter ends with a summary of

the chapter and of the study.

Implications of Findings

Four major findings emerged from the research. The first finding was that the

type of sexual assault (i.e., non-consensual sexual intercourse vs. non-consensual digital

penetration) was not a factor in the survivors seeking support services or reporting the

assault to a college official, and the finding supports the barriers that outlined in previous

research (Branch, et al., 2013; Orchowski, et al., 2009; Thompson, et al., 2007). The

second finding is that there is a difference in the use of *disclosure,* as opposed to the word *reporting* and how survivors respond to those terms. The third finding is the distrust of the campus reporting process. Finally, the fourth finding is that the theory and practice of campus response does not meet the needs of sexual assault survivors. The results of this study add a unique perspective to the growing body of knowledge about campus sexual assault and the support services needed by survivors from campus officials.

Finding 1: Type of assault. The data collected in this study demonstrated that the type of sexual assault was not one of the barriers to reporting an assault to college officials. Each of the participants in this study described different types of sexual assaults and, yet, the perceived barriers to reporting the assault to college officials were generally the same. Only two of the six participants in the study reported their assault to college officials, and they did so only after a third party stepped in to make a report to a college official. Sarah and Kelsey both noted that they had disclosed their assault to a friend or a resident assistant who, in turn, made a formal report to the campus police or the Title IX office. However, all of the women spoke of the many barriers to reporting that were found in the literature review for this study. For example, the research of Sable et al. (2006) and Zinzow & Thompson (2011) defined barriers for reporting sexual assaults as feelings of shame, fear of not being believed, not wanting family members to know, lack of knowledge about support services, and a distrust of the campus reporting process. Each of the participants spoke of feelings of shame and guilt about their assaults. Jennifer said that she should not have gone to the bedroom of the man who assaulted her, and Lilo spoke about her shame of allowing the woman who assaulted her into her residence hall room. Despite the difference in each participant's assault

experience, none of the six participants were able to define their experience as a sexual assault; rather, they defined their sexual assault through the lens of rape script theory (Edwards et al., 2011). For example, Amanda thought her experience was not a sexual assault because her former boyfriend, not a stranger, assaulted her. Most of the participants felt that they could not be assaulted by an acquaintance. The findings of this study support the notion that a sexual assault is a sexual assault, and the details of the assault do not change the needs of the survivor.

  Finding 2: Language. For the women who participated in this study, the use of the word *disclosure* translated to being able to tell someone about their assault and receiving support services. However, the use of the word *report* made the women feel that they had no control over their experience and all decision making had been removed from them. The choice of language understood by survivors of sexual assault can be a barrier to reporting to a college official. The narrative of language needs to reflect the importance of not just disclosing to a friend but also to someone, such as a college official, who can offer and provide support services, as well as providing reporting options.

  Additionally, the six participants in this study did not have the language to define their sexual assault experience. Jennifer, Bethany, Amanda, and Lilo relied on friends—not only for emotional support, but also for as a sounding board—to understand what the experience truly was. If college students are to report an act of sexual assault to college officials, students need to be able to put their experience into words. The inability to recognize the experience's definition hinders a survivor's willingness to report an assault to a college official. Students need an opportunity to learn the definition of sexual assault

in a manner that they understand, and providing examples during prevention

programming can do this. If students are to acquire the language necessary to recognize

and seek support or action for their assault, they need to be part of the development of the

definitions and common language to describe the experience as a sexual assault.

Finding 3: Distrust of the campus reporting process. Each of the participants

shared that they did not understand or trust the campus reporting process for sexual

assault. Lilo stated that if she reported, she would only be a statistic to the college, not a

person who had experienced a sexual assault. The who, what, how, and where of the

assault did not change or diminish the perceived barriers that influenced the participants'

decisions to report to college officials. However, all of the women sought support from a

friend, or others, who would not make a report to the college. However, Sarah and

Kelsey experienced that the college officials required them to report their assault. Sarah

shared her experience with a friend who was a resident assistant, was required to report a

known assault to a campus official, and who was able to offer services and reporting

options. Kelsey physically ran into a resident assistant who called campus police to

attend to her physical needs. Sarah and Kelsey did not have any control over their ability

to report their assault in a manner or at a time that they were ready. If students are to

report experiences of sexual assault to a college official, the students need to understand

the cost and benefits of reporting their assault. The cost and benefit of reporting a sexual

assault is different for every survivor. For example, Amanda evaluated the cost of

reporting her assault as a loss of friends and not wanting others to know about the assault,

while Kelsey wanted to move forward with a report as she felt that it was important to

hold her attackers accountable. In order to provide students with the ability to evaluate

the cost vs. benefit of reporting a sexual assault, college officials may need to evaluate the manner in which the data could be released to the general student body that reflects positive outcomes for survivors, without disclosing confidential material. Providing students with the knowledge that perpetrators will be held accountable for their actions may increase reporting by giving students more information when weighing the cost and benefits for them to report to a college official.

Finding 4: Theory and practice. Campuses have responded to campus sexual assaults by following the tenets of Title IX, and other pieces of legislation, in a manner intended to respond to campus sexual assaults. Legislation has provided the foundation to campus policies but has failed to assist students in applying these laws to their experiences. During Bethany's interview, she was able to articulate the definition of sexual assault and the reporting options available for a survivor, however, she was not able to apply that knowledge to her experience. Bethany said, "I didn't really know what sexual assault or rape was at that point in my life nor did I know what to do." Jennifer, Kelsey, Amanda, and Sarah also expressed the same sentiment. Colleges need to educate students on the practical application of the campus sexual assault policies and reporting options. Education must begin with the surivivors and their peers, who may receive a disclosure, with teaching (with expamles) that sexual assault is a policy violation because there was lack of contsent. Policy development needs to include student input and a reflection of the students' needs when considering reporting a sexual assault to a college official.

Limitations

This study had five notable limitations: (a) limited scope of the research population, (b) participants self-selected into the study, (c) the accuracy of the participant's memory of their sexual assault experience, (d) the researcher's background as a Title IX Coordinator, and (d) ability to generalize the findings given the small sample size. The scope of the research population was limited to the timeframe allotted for the collection of data. While the inclusion of men and graduate students may have provided a deeper understanding of why survivors of sexual assault may or may not report their assault to a college official or seek support services, data collection was limited to the equivalent of one academic semester. Additionally, expanding the research participants beyond undergraduate college women could have provided a broader and more inclusive list of themes.

The second limitation of this study that should be considered is the collection of the purposeful sample of participants. In a purposeful sample "the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central to the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). The College offered a sample of participants who could address the research problems and the phenomenon being explored. The purposeful sample population for this study was collected through flyers hung on the College campus in the residence halls, academic buildings, and the library. The participants self-selected into the study by contacting the researcher and expressing their desire to share their experience of being sexual assault while on campus. While the researcher evaluated the participants by ensuring that each participant met the requirements of the study (i.e., women, undergraduate student, and

having experienced a sexual assault while enrolled in the College), the participants made their own choice as to participate in the study, and there was no way to truly know why each participant decided to participate (i.e., good experience with the College or not). Additionally, self-selection into the study limited the diversity of the study to White, mostly heterosexual women.

The third limitation of the study was the accuracy of participant's memory of their sexual assault experience. There is a body of literature research exploring rape myth acceptance (Buddie & Miller, 2001; Hayes-Smith & Levitt, 2010), which states that survivor's perceptions of their assaults "are more multifaceted" (Buddie & Miller, 2001, p. 139). It is possible that as the participants shared their sexual assault experience, their perceptions could have been impacted by their experiences when reporting or seeking support services from the College. For example, Kelsey and Sarah were uncomfortable in the manner that the reporting of their sexual assault was made to the College. However, given the phenomenological design of the study with an emphasis on the lived experience of the participants' experiences, their perceptions are an important part of their narrative.

The fourth limitation of this study is the profession of the researcher. While great effort was made to ensure reflection and bracketing of the data collected, it is still possible that the researcher's education and role as a Title IX Coordinator may be reflected in the themes defined in Chapter 4. In order to minimize this limitation, the researcher reviewed the data multiple times (i.e., reading transcripts and listening to the audio recording of each interview) to reduce the possible bias. Despite, these safeguards, the interpretation of the data and the development of themes may have been different if

the participants were evaluated by another researcher, regardless of the validation strategies.

The final limitation of this study is the possible lack of generalizability to a wider campus community, although that generalizability is not necessarily considered a limitation of a qualitative study. When using a phenomenological design, the number of participants is generally low, but the data is collected until saturation is met (Creswell, 2014). However, including men and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender queer, intersex and/or asexual (LGBTQIA) community might have allowed for greater understanding of the college students' decision-making process when considering reporting their sexual assault experiences with college officials or seeking support services.

Recommendations

The findings of this study demonstrate three potential avenues for future research related to increasing the reporting rates of sexual assaults on campus. The first recommendation is to expand research on the lived experience of sexual assault on men, same sex couples, and transgender students. The second recommendation is to develop a framework that will increase reporting of campus sexual assaults to college officials by focusing on the needs of the survivors. The third recommendation is to develop prevention education programs that reflect student developmental needs by applying Chickering's (1969) vectors of student development. Finally, college campuses need to develop a framework that moves the theoretical applications of Title IX to a practical application on campus.

Recommendation 1: Future research. The women who participated in this study were a small sample of six participants, and there was limited diversity among the participants. Of the six participants five were Caucasian/White heterosexual women, and only one participant, Lilo, identified as a Caucasian/White lesbian. Lilo was able to share her experience of being assaulted by another woman, but more research is needed to fully understand the effects of sexual assault on students of color, students with other cultural backgrounds, and men, gay, lesbian, and transgender students. There is limited research on women-on-women sexual assault (Gilroy & Carroll, 2009), or men being assaulted by women. There should be also more research on the rate of sexual assaults among the LGBTQIA community and the needs of that community for support and reporting. Future research, both qualitative and quantitative, exploring the intersectionality between gender and sexual assault would be beneficial in understanding the reporting rates of college students. A quantitative design could provide baseline data to determine if there is a difference in reporting rates for all genders and gender expressions. Additionally, a qualitative design could build upon the data by exploring the differences of gender and gender expression on the rates of reporting.

Recommendations 2: Increase reporting. If women who have experienced a sexual assault while enrolled in college are to report their assaults to college officials, there must be a shift in the understanding of the sexual assault trauma. There is an expectation by college officials and legislators that all survivors of sexual assault will feel empowered to seek support services and report an experience of sexual assault, but as confirmed by the participants of this study, students do not feel safe or do not know where to seek support or report an assault.

Early research on rape trauma was primarily written by feminists who defined common themes such as: (a) outrage about their assault, (b) lack of clarity in defining the experience to themselves or others, (c) feeling of frustration with reporting options, (d) lack of clarity about the benefits of reporting the assault, and (e) lack of an understanding of why the perpetrator sexually assaulted them (Burgess, 1983). Rape trauma syndrome provides a frame to understand and recognize that a sexual assault can have a significant impact on a student's college experience, as well as their life. Burgess (1983) outlined a three-phase process that survivors experience when attempting to process their own assault. The first phase is an acute phase, which is defined as shock, disbelief, and feelings of fear and anxiety. The second phase is defined as the pseudo-adjustment phase. During phase two, the survivor is engaged in developing coping skills, such as denial and rationalizing the assault to be able to cope with the trauma of the experience. The final phase is described as integration. When a survivor is ready for the integration phase, he or she has begun to accept the sexual assault and wants to hold the perpetrator accountable for his/her/their actions (Burgess, 1983; Sutherland & Scherl, 1970; Wasco, 2003). To increase students' willingness to report sexual assaults to a college official, there must be an understanding of the phases of recovery that a survivor feels. Rape trauma syndrome was identified by each of the participants in this study, even if they were not able to define the phases. Burgess's (1983) research was completed more than 20 years ago, and yet, the phases are still apparent in this current study.

To move from the theoretical purpose behind Title IX and other federal and state legislation, which informs campus policies and procedures when responding to victims of sexual assault, there needs to be a practical application that informs students of the

available resources, definitions, and ways to empower victims to seek services. In 1983,

Ann Burgess's identified three phases of rape trauma syndrome; these phases include the

acute phase (shock and disbelief), pseudo-adjustment (development of coping skills,

rationalization of the assault in order to function), and integration (feelings of wanting to

talk about the assault) of the trauma experience. Burgess (1983) said that for a victim of

a sexual assault to be willing to report their assault, there needs to be "recognition of rape

as a significant trauma and life event capable of disrupting normal life patterns" (p. 98).

Each of the participants noted that they were not able to define their assault as a sexual

assault, but that they were able to identify the impact it had on their daily activities. For

example, Amanda was not able to define her experience as a sexual assault, but she was

clear that the event had an impact on her academic success immediately after the assault.

For survivors of sexual assault to feel comfortable to report a sexual assault,

college officials need to encourage disclosures during the acute or pseudo-adjustment

phase (Burgess, 1983). With support services in place, survivors may be empowered to

report the assault to a college official for action. This may sound like a simple answer to

a very complex problem but survivor wellness must be understood and supported if there

is to be an increase in reporting. Additionally, survivors need access to professional

advisers who have been trained on campus policies and procedures, the phases of rape

trauma syndrome, and student development (Chickering's (1969) vectors of student

development) for survivors to feel secure in their choice to report a sexual assault to

college officials. College officials need to find a balance between supporting the survivor

by allowing the survivor to travel through the phases of trauma and the desire for

accountability of the perpetrator with an eye to fairness to both parties.

Recommendations 3: Prevention education. Based on the findings of this study and other studies about campus sexual assault, new student orientations can no longer be the only time college students are educated and informed about campus support services and policies regarding sexual assault. Existing guidance from NYS Law Education Law 129-B (Enough is Enough) and the Office of Civil Rights defines the on-boarding process for new and transfer students, as well as student communities (i.e., Greek, international students, varsity athletes, and leaders of student organizations), as programs that should occur at the beginning of each semester. The emphasis has been placed on early education for students. In order to improve students' abilities to define an incident as a sexual assault or to understand the support and reporting options available to them, the on-boarding process needs to reflect the application of student development theory. Arthur W. Chickering's (1969) theory of student identity development provides a frame for a prevention education program that would span the 4 years of college.

Chickering's (1969) theory of student identity development is described in seven vectors or developmental stages: (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving toward autonomy toward interdependence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity (Chickering, (1969); Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Chickering (1969) defined his first vector, developing competencies, as the ability of students to combine intellectual, physical, and interpersonal confidences that allow students to reach their goals and handle uncomfortable situations. The second vector, managing emotions, is defined as the ability of students to understand, accept, and express their emotions in a manner that allows them to appropriately express their

emotions in context of their experiences. The third vector, moving toward autonomy (interdependence), is defined as being emotionally independent, not needing emotional support and comfort from others. Vector four, developing mature interpersonal relationships, is defined as a student's ability to develop and maintain long-term intimate relationships and have empathy toward others. The fifth vector, establishing identity, is the establishment of a student's identity, based on his or her personal experience and views. Vector six, developing purpose, is described as a student's ability to make and follow through on his or her decisions, even when others challenge those decision or choices. Finally, vector seven, developing integrity, is described as the culmination of the proceeding vectors to the development of a balanced value system. If Chickering's (1969) vectors are applied to a prevention education programs, all students would be educated in a manner that they can understand and digest from understanding the definition of a sexual assault, how to disclose it for access to support services, or how and why to report an assault to college officials, without feeling peer pressure or being influenced by others not to report because, "he is a good guy," or "because they were both drunk."

Prevention education needs to be grounded in bystander intervention efforts. Bystander intervention programs, such as *Green Dot*, provide members of the college community with tools to be proactive with their response to sexual violence. Green Dot provides students with three options of intervention (distract, delegate, direct) and allows students to have the ability to choose the intervention most comfortable for them. The three interventions allow students, at different development stages, to be proactive bystanders. The interventions can be applied to all types of violence or bias acts that they

observe. Using the interventions for acts that are less threatening (i.e., sexist jokes or comments about a women's appearance) will allow students to develop their confidence in addressing more serious acts of violence (i.e., a drunk woman being taken to another room or an act of dating violence) being committed by their peers. With the ultimate goal of reducing the rate of sexual assaults on a college campus, all members of the campus community must do their part.

Recommendation 4: Theory to practice. Sexual assaults on college campuses have been called a public health crisis, but is the extent of the problem truly understood? The federal government and New York State (Education Law 129-B/Enough is Enough, 2015) have attempted to address the problem of campus sexual assaults through legislation (i.e., Title IX) and the Obama administrations' guidance as outlined in the Dear Colleague letter of 2011. These laws and guidance have provided college campuses with a frame to respond to a report of campus sexual assault, define the need for support services, and provide protection for the survivors; however, they lack the practical guidance needed to encourage students to report a sexual assault to a college official. In order to increase the rates of reporting, there needs to be a more practical application of Title IX on college campuses. To increase reporting rates, funds for training and prevention programs need to be allotted on each college campus, whether federal, state, or campus dollars are used. College officials responding to reports of sexual assault need to be informed trauma investigators to allow students to feel safe and in control of their reporting options. Reporting options need to be examined to reflect the survivors' ability to report as outlined by the theory of rape trauma syndrome. Currently, the guidance states that survivors should report immediately, so that the assault can be investigated and

adjudicated within the 60-day timeframe, which was put into place by the Obama administration, to receive services and hold the perpetrators accountable for their actions. The defined timeframe for investigations needs to be extended to reflect the survivors' healing process. Survivors need the opportunity to disclose their assault and time to process their reporting options with the college or the criminal justice system. While this will not be an easy task, colleges must balance the needs of the survivor with the safety of college campuses.

Conclusion

Undergraduate college women continue to experience sexual assault, despite the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX comprises 37 words that changed the landscape of higher education for women by addressing the disparity between genders and opportunities to participate in college programs and activities. The passage of Title IX was a watershed moment for higher education, and it was a significant anti-discrimination policy (Rose, 2015). Title IX addressed, "discrimination on the basis of sex includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, and other actions that 'bar the victim's access to an educational opportunity or benefit'" (Germain, 2016, p. 9). By 1987, Koss et al. published their seminal research on the scope of sexual assault in a sample of college students. The result of their study established the reported rate of sexual assault as one in five women will experience a sexual assault or attempted assault during their lifetime. This rate of college sexual assault has become a staple of local and national news. "Media coverage of such efforts has bolstered the anti-rape campaign and has made the issue of campus rape an important focus of its activities" (Bevacqua, 2000, p. 163). Anti-rape activities led to state legislation (NYS Education Law 129-B) and

national guidance (Not Alone, and Office of Civil Rights, Dear Colleague Letters) to provide protection and services for survivors of campus sexual assault. The protections include the right to report a sexual assault to multiple law enforcement agencies and college officials. Additionally, they can disclose their sexual assault and request support services (i.e., counseling, academic accommodations, or changes in housing assignment). Finally, college campuses were required to develop trauma-informed policies and procedures for survivors to feel comfortable to report and receive the necessary for support services (i.e., conduct counseling for survivors, and provide advisors).

Chapter 2 provided a literature review of the current studies examining the phenomena of campus sexual assault. The literature review focused on five areas of research: (a) barriers to reporting, (b) disclosure of a sexual assault, (c) policy development, (d) prevention programming, and (e) reporting. The findings of this study support the current literature addressing sexual assault on college campuses and the needs of the survivors. The participants shared that they experienced many of the barriers to reporting, such as fear of not being believed, not knowing who to report an assault to, and feelings of shame and guilt, as supported by the studies conducted by Joseph, Gray, and Mayer (2013), Sable et al. (2006), and Zinzow and Thompson, (2011).

A qualitative phenomenological design was used to collect the data for this study. Six undergraduate college students who were enrolled in a public college in Western New York chose to participant in the study. Each participated in a one-on-one interview in which they shared their sexual assault experience and provided an understanding of their lived experience during and after their assault. Using the Van Kaam method of analyzing phenomenological data units of meaning were developed by the participant's

interview (Moustakas, 1994). Textural and structural descriptions were developed for each participant with the essence of each participant being explained. The units of meaning were boiled down into themes. The five themes that emerged were: (a) lack of definition of the experience; (b) not a big deal, it's my fault; (c) not wanting to get self or others in trouble; (d) mistrust of the reporting process; and (e) lack of knowledge of campus support services/personnel.

The five themes defined by the data provided by the six participants in this study assisted in the development of four recommendations for future research. First, more research is needed to understand the lived experience of men and members of the LGBTQIA community, who have experienced a sexual assault. Secondly, to increase rates of reporting of a campus sexual assault, reporting options need to reflect the development stages of the survivors. Application of Chickering's (1969) theory of identity of student development would provide campus officials with an understanding of where the survivor is in developing his or her sense of agency. Understanding the stages of rape trauma syndrome will provide college officials with an opportunity to meet the needs of survivors by allowing the survivor to travel through the stages outlined by the research on rape trauma syndrome.

Prevention education cannot be limited to first-year orientation, and a prevention education model needs to be developed that reflects the needs of all students. Chickering's (1969) Theory of identity of student development provides a frame for the development of a prevention-programming model that addresses the needs of all students who may be at different stages of development. Prevention programming also need to be delivered to students using different methods, such as social media, bystander

intervention programs, and small-group discussions that are hosted by peers or college officials, as appropriate.

Finally, there is a need to evaluate the intent of Title IX and its practical application for college women who experience a sexual assault. College officials need to understand the protections that are provided by Title IX and the guidance and state laws that have followed and how to apply the intent to response support services and reporting options for survivors. Exploration is needed to explore different ways that student feel most comfortable when reporting a sexual assault to college officials.

In summary, this research added to the body of knowledge about campus sexual assault by exploring the lived experience of six college women who experienced a sexual assault while enrolled in college, understanding their personal need for non-judgmental support services, and how colleges can empower women to report a sexual assault, as defined by Chickering's (1969) theory of identity development. To increase the rates of reporting of sexual assaults occurring in college, college officials must develop programs and services that meet the needs of all students. Prevention programing needs to be developed through the lens of the student experience.

Women on college campuses need to demand a change in the campus culture where violence is no longer accepted or tolerated. The College administration must use all available resources to assist in the positive evolution of campus culture from a rape/sexual assault supported by a violence free community. Administrators must educate the campus community about available resources, formal and informal, bystander intervention programs, and campus policies in a manner that can be heard and digested by every student. College students need a voice in the development of sexual assault

policies and procedures for the policies to be an effective tool in reducing rates of sexual

assault and increasing rates of reporting to college officials.

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