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Assessing understanding of sexual assault resources and response among health sciences students

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Assessing Understanding of Sexual Assault Resources and Response Among Health Sciences

Students

An Honors Program Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Health and Behavioral Studies

James Madison University

by Michelle M. Pappalardo

May 2016

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Health Sciences, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program.

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Abstract

Background: The widely published statistic of *1 in 5* represents the number of women on college campuses who have been sexually assaulted (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2014). Many colleges and universities have been attempting to address the sensitive topic of sexual assault for quite some time; however, sexual violence still remains prevalent on campuses throughout the United States (Allen, Ridgeway, & Swan, 2015). Many of the roadblocks an institution faces in its efforts may stem from a lack of understanding of the true nature of student attitudes surrounding the topic of sexual assault. The specific needs of community members, such as student knowledge on reporting policies, attitudes towards prevention, knowledge of existing survivor resources, and perception of community attitudes, must be understood and examined in order to improve campus response in terms of prevention, resources, and support (The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). Therefore, it is the aim of this study to assess students' existing knowledge of policies and procedures at JMU. Additionally, this study aims to identify resources and individuals, whether they be peers, professors, law enforcement, and the like, which students feel most inclined to turn in the aftermath of a sexual assault, as well as to understand why they feel as such.

Methods: A total of 13 focus groups were held, each consisting of 5-11 Health Science major students at James Madison University (JMU). Semi-structured questions were posed as prompts during a facilitated discussion during focus group meetings. With participant consent, the in-person group meetings were recorded utilizing a digital recorder. The recorded data research file was then encrypted and transcribed by the researcher post meeting.

Results: Overall, students were able to identify sexual assault survivor resources available at JMU; however, unless students were part of residence life, they did not seem to know very much about the services they actually provide. A call for advertisement and increased visibility of reactive resources was made evident as many of the identified qualities desired in an ideal survivor resource could be found in already existing resources available on campus. Additionally, students indicated a desire for the prevention program Dukes Step Up to be more comprehensive and take on a more serious tone, as well as the desire for a follow up continued education prevention program. Participants showed high interest in meeting with administration to gain knowledge about their strides towards combating sexual violence.

Key Words: Sexual assault, survivor resources, preventative practices, Health Science, higher education

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To all, thank you.

Sincerely,

Michelle Pappalardo

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Introduction

Since the 1970's, with the emergence of the modern U.S. rape crisis movement, activists and service-providers have identified the issue of (men's) sexual violence against women as an issue in dire need of our attention (Carmody, Ekhomu, & Payne, 2009). According to general population research surveys, about 17.6% of women in the United States report being victims of attempted or completed rape during their lifetimes with perpetrators victimizing nearly 1.3 million adult women per year (Carmody et al., 2009; Strout, Amar, & Astwood, 2014). Consistently, however, research completed in North American higher education institutions has yielded results indicating that students are at a higher risk for rape and sexual assault than the general population. In fact, 20-25% of female college students have experienced attempted or completed rape during their time as undergraduate students (Strout et al., 2014). Home to a concentrated number of the highest risk age group in one area, with 37% of rapes having occurred when victims were between ages 18-24, and an increased amount of dating and alcohol and drug use, college campuses provide a unique environment that fosters a disproportionate risk for sexual violence (Carmody et al., 2009; Sabina & Ho, 2014; Strout et al., 2014).

The widely published statistic of *1 in 5* represents the number of women on college campuses who have been sexually assaulted (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2014). Furthermore, in a recent study completed by Edwards, Bradshaw, & Hinsz (2014), 1 in 3 college aged men reported that "if nobody would ever know and there wouldn't be any consequences", they would force a woman to engage in sexual intercourse (i.e., rape) (p. 190). Although Congress took its first steps to ensure colleges and universities enact strategies to prevent and respond to this crime in 1990, there has been a recent spotlight on these astonishing numbers. President Barack Obama specifically included this statistic in his remarks at an event for the

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Council on Women and Girls in 2014 (Karjane, Fisher, & Cullen, 2005; White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2014). As a result of several high profile instances of sexual assault occurring on college campuses across the U.S., along with institutional failures to adequately respond to these assaults, activists and administrators have taken action on several levels.

Federally, many acts, including The Clery Act, the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act, and Title IX, have been put into place and altered accordingly (Karjane et al., 2005). In response, several initiatives have been put forth, such as the Not Alone campaign, It's On Us, and Know Your IX, which are an attempt to provide students, faculty, staff, and administrators information and resources (It's On Us, n.d.; Know Your IX, n.d.; United States Government, n.d.). As a result of the attention on recent incidences, responses can also be seen on the state level. More specifically, in the state of Virginia, Governor Terry McAuliffe's Task Force on Combating Campus Sexual Violence made recommendations to the governor, as well as amendments to existing code sections. One of the most notable changes consists of a transcript notation for all students who withdraw, or have been suspended or expelled as a result of violating a campus' code of conduct (Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, 2015).

On an individual level, many colleges and universities have been attempting to address the sensitive topic of sexual assault for quite some time; however, sexual violence still remains prevalent on campuses throughout the United States (Allen, Ridgeway, & Swan, 2015). Many of the roadblocks an institution may face in its efforts may stem from a lack of understanding of the true nature of student attitudes surrounding the topic of sexual assault. The specific needs of community members, such as student knowledge on reporting policies, attitudes towards prevention, knowledge of existing survivor resources, and perception of community attitudes,

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must be understood and examined in order to improve campus response in terms of prevention, resources, and support (The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014).

Clearly, a stigma surrounding the issue of sexual assault exists. In fact, an estimated 80% of student sexual assault incidences go unreported to the police, and fewer than one in five female students who are victims of sexual assault receive assistance from a victim service agency (United States Department of Justice, 2014). Some of the identified barriers to reporting include: a lack of recognition of the experience as a crime; an individual's fear and assumption that they will experience a lack of sensitivity from peers, as well as from the institution or a breach in confidentiality or anonymity; backlash/retaliation; and, resistance to participation in a trial (Amar, Strout, Simpson, Cardiello, & Beckford, 2014; Karjane et al., 2005). On the contrary, some of the main factors noted to aid in reporting and disclosure rates include survivors/victims ability trust and respect the individual they disclose to, in addition to the insurance of confidentiality (Strout et al., 2014).

Generally, if students are aware of resources to which they can turn to for guidance through the possible steps to take following a sexual assault, they are more likely to report. In addition, students who are aware of and have confidence in the school's policy and procedures are more likely to report (Strout, 2014; Karjane, 2005). James Madison University (JMU) is actively transforming many aspects of its policies to be in compliance with federal recommendations. Therefore, it is the aim of this study to assess students' existing knowledge of policies and procedures at JMU. Additionally, this study aims to identify resources and individuals, whether they be peers, professors, law enforcement, and the like, which students feel most inclined to turn in the aftermath of a sexual assault, and why. Moreover, students' opinions

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of assignment of mandatory-reporting responsibilities are examined. Furthermore, this study aims to identify the key factors and traits students attending JMU value most in the reporting process, resource acquisition process, or disclosure decision.

Additional purposes of this study include: educating students on general school policies and existing survivor resources; understanding which current survivor resources are found to be most effective; identifying common suggestions for new and necessary resources; and, assisting in creating an action plan tailored specifically to the needs of the JMU community. Although *1 in 5* is the widely accepted statistic of women who will experience sexual assault during their college careers, the most recent Association of American Universities report found that 1 in 3 women reported experiences of sexual misconduct during their college careers (Cantor et al., 2015). Based on this statistic, the number of women at JMU who will experience sexual misconduct during their college careers is approximately 3,773. Therefore, the overarching objective of this project is to provide information, which could be helpful in creating a more inclusive and supportive environment in which students feel comfortable and knowledgeable of resources for themselves or for others in the aftermath of a sexual assault.

There are many distinctions between forms of sexual violence and their definitions that may vary across states, and even between colleges and universities. However, as JMU's policies and procedures are to be addressed and taught, the definitions stated in section J34-100 of JMU's Student Handbook will be utilized. J34-101 defines 'sexual assault' as "engaging or attempting to engage in any sexual intercourse (oral, anal, or vaginal) or penetration (oral, anal, or vaginal), however slight, with any object or body part upon another individual without consent" (Student Accountability and Restorative Practices [SARP], 2015a, para 3). This definition of sexual assault includes rape. Definitions for 'non-consensual sexual contact', involving forced touching

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without consent, and ‘sexual harassment’, involving unwelcomed sexual acts that may create a hostile work or student environment, or otherwise affect a student’s or employee’s performance, are also included as items under J34-102 and J34-104, respectively. Additionally, item J34-103 clarifies the components of sexual exploitation. This item states:

Taking sexual advantage of another person without consent. Examples include, but are not limited to, causing or attempting to cause the incapacitation of another person for a sexual purpose; recording, photographing, or transmitting sexual utterances, sounds, or images of another person(s) without consent; prostitution; allowing a third party to observe sexual activity without consent; voyeurism or “peeping”;... inducing another to expose their breasts, buttocks, groin or genitals. (SARP, 2015a, para 5).

Other terms of importance, as clarified by the Student Handbook, include consent and incapacitation. ‘Consent’ indicates a voluntary and mutual agreement to engage in sexual activities agreed-upon in that moment. The Student Handbook states that consent can be indicated through “words or actions”, however, for the purposes of this study, actions only in the presence of contextually matching words will be an indicator of consent (SARP, 2015a, para 8). Additionally, it is important to note that silence from one party is not equivalent to consent. It is also important to note that previous consent cannot be applied to current situations, and can be withdrawn at any time, thus indicating an immediate halt of activities by both parties. ‘Incapacitation’ is defined as “the physical and/or mental inability to make informed, rational judgments” (SARP, 2015a, para 9). Incapacitated states include, but are not limited to, sleep and blackouts. Incapacity is determined by how a person’s individual decision-making competency is impacted by alcohol and/or drugs that may be consumed. While drugs and alcohol use may

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sometimes be involved in and contribute to incapacitation, to be considered incapacitated, an individual does not have to be intoxicated or drunk (SARP, 2015a).

History of Legislation and Programs

Federal Legislation and Programs

Beginning in the 1970's, federal legislation protecting survivors of sexual assault on college campuses was put into place (Rose, 2015). To date, documents and amendments are still being enacted and passed. There are four major documents that have shaped the legislation and procedures surrounding the issue of sexual assault today: Title IX; the Jeanne Clery Act; the Violence Against Women Act; and, the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (Weis, 2015).

Title IX. Previously, the purpose of Title IX has been recognized, understood, and utilized in the context of college sports. Many legal cases regarding the inclusion of women's sports programs, teams, and activities have utilized Title IX (Rose, 2015; Weis, 2015). In fact, it was not until recent years that this document's primary utilization transitioned to cases of sexual assault on college campuses (Weis, 2015; Marshall, 2014). To understand how one amendment can be so versatile, the origin and initial purpose of the document must be understood.

During the 1950's and 1960's, women faced many barriers to obtaining access to higher education opportunities, the focus being financial need. However, once the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and Higher Education Act of 1965 were passed offering women substantial financial support to pursue higher education, the focus shifted to the institutional discrimination against women, mainly in the context of admission (Rose, 2015). While women now had the means to pay for their education, they still had difficulty accessing schooling as a result of admission and registration quotas and restrictions schools put into place. More specifically, in order to gain admission to universities and seats in classes, women were held to

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higher standards than their male counterparts and were expected to produce better grades and higher test scores (Rose, 2015). Despite various obstacles, these obvious discriminatory practices were not yet identified as systematic and each instance was seen to blame a particular individual or department (Rose, 2015).

Due to the fact that this discrimination was not yet identified as systematic and there was not yet the emergence of political efforts to end sex-based discrimination in higher education institutions, the creation of Title IX was a result of the efforts of select individuals who have either had personal or vicarious experiences with sex-discrimination in higher education. Therefore, upon recognizing their incidents were not isolated, Representative Edith Green, Senator Birch Bayh, and Bernice Sandler, senior scholar on women's issues and 'godmother of Title IX', joined forces in creating a document that would allow the government to address discrimination against women in colleges and finally give women equal opportunity to access higher education (Rose, 2015; Sandler, n.d.).

While the bill itself was aimed solely on eliminating sex-discrimination in admissions and on college campuses, much of the discussion and opposition surrounding the bill focused on the potential implications Title IX would have on universities in areas other than admissions (Rose, 2015). One of the main topics of discussion and areas of concern was focused on college sports; once schools realized the potential risk to their already existing sports programs and funding, support gathered in opposition of the bill in fear that Title IX would "'destroy' their sports programs" (Rose, 2015, p.172).

Despite the sidetracked opposition to the bill, Title IX was proposed and finally passed as part of the Education Amendments of 1972 (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.; Rose, 2015; Weis, 2015). The final law reads:

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No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d, para 1).

While there is no specific mention of college sports in the final law that was passed, the heavy focus on sports during the discussion of the bill paved the way for its initial attention and application. Many legal cases focusing on the inclusion of organized women's sports activities and teams at colleges and universities utilized Title IX in their arguments. Unfortunately, it was not until 2005 that Title IX was even seen as a document that could potentially be applicable to the issue of sexual violence policy and practice (Weis, 2015).

The Supreme Court ruling in favor of the plaintiff in the 2007 *Simpson v. University of Colorado Boulder* case paved the way for the utilization of Title IX for issues of student-on-student sexual violence on college campuses (Marshall, 2014; Weis, 2015). From this case, it was determined that Title IX can be applied to situations of sexual violence if the experience proves to be discrimination on the grounds that it is "so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively bars the victim's access to an educational opportunity or benefit" (Marshall, 2014, p. 274). From this point forth, Title IX held schools responsible for student-on-student harassment under the circumstances that the school held authority over both the perpetrator and the environment in which the incident takes place (Marshall, 2014).

In 2011, a Dear Colleague Letter issued by the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Russlynn Ali, confirmed the inclusion of sexual violence under Title IX. The statement read:

The sexual harassment of students, including sexual violence, interferes with students' right to receive an education free from discrimination and, in the case of sexual violence,

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is a crime...Sexual harassment of students, which includes acts of sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX (Ali, 2011, p. 1).

In addition, in this letter, the designation of a campus Title IX coordinator is required. This coordinator is responsible for holding the school accountable for complying with requirements and providing timely solutions to complaints of any form of sex-discrimination (Marshall, 2014).

Jeanne Clery Act. Initially entitled the Campus Security Act, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, otherwise known as the Clery Act, was passed in 1991 (Marshall, 2014). This legislation aims to provide information that may impact the safety of students. Under this act, colleges and universities are required to report crime statistics and missing person alerts and incidences (Marshall, 2014; Weis, 2015). Schools are also required to provide timely notices of potential security or safety threats (Weis, 2015). Upon its renaming in honor of Jeanne Clery, a first-year student at Lehigh University who was the victim of rape and murder, the act also aimed to help prospective students and their parents make more informed decisions about which schools to attend by requiring schools to provide annual reports of crime statistics (Marshall, 2014). Additionally, schools are required to provide resources to victims, including counseling, medical care, and campus education programs (Weis, 2015).

While the Clery Act requires reports of murder, rape, robberies, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, manslaughter, and larceny, the information about these crimes is only considered and included in Clery reports if crime reports are made to school officials or campus security authorities. This requirement not only fails to take into account crimes that may go unreported, but this specific reporting detail makes the Clery Act difficult to enforce.

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Moreover, if a school is found in violation of the Clery Act, the act itself does not mandate a fine (Marshall, 2014).

Violence Against Women Act & Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was passed as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Marshall, 2014; Weis, 2015). At its core, the VAWA aims to eliminate victim-blaming ideologies and disseminate support for survivors. The law clarifies policies and practices to increase women's physical and sexual safety, and funds programs and resources for domestic violence and rape victims. The VAWA also not only trains police and court officials on issues of domestic violence and how to handle specific cases, but it also grants victims the federal right to sue an offender of gender-based violence (Weis, 2015).

The VAWA was reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and 2013; the most recent reauthorization includes amendments to the Clery Act found in Section 304, otherwise known as the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act) (Marshall, 2014; Weis, 2015). In direct amendment of the Clery Act, the SaVE Act includes the crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking to the crime statistics that must be reported. In addition to the inclusion of these crimes in annual reports, the SaVE Act provides guidelines for procedures a school can follow when handling cases (Marshall, 2014). This act also requires schools to publish procedures on reporting that students should follow, as well as requires schools to publish detailed proceedings of previous cases. The reporting procedure publication must include options for individuals if they choose to report to campus and/or local law enforcement, including a list of individuals within these organizations to whom a victim/survivor could report. Under the SaVE Act, schools are also required to provide written explanations of rights and reporting/proceeding options to survivors, regardless of the location of the crime or a survivor's

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decision to report. The survivor's right to an environment in which the chance of encountering their attacker is reduced is included in this explanation. The option to request a change of living, work, transportation, and academic arrangement and situations should be thoroughly explained (Marshall, 2014).

To ensure both the survivor and accused preserve their rights and opportunities, the SaVE Act emphasizes the importance of preserving evidence to prove the incident occurred (Marshall, 2014). However, although the preservation of evidence is emphasized, the SaVE Act emphasizes the need to only prove that "it is more likely than not that sexual harassment or violence occurred" (Ali, 2011, p.11). The SaVE Act also mandates that officials involved in campus proceedings participate in annual training on related matters, as well as training on how to maintain professionalism while conducting investigations. Furthermore, the SaVE Act requires not only the statement of a zero tolerance policy towards sex crimes, but it also requires the publication of education and awareness programs a school provides to students and faculty. These education programs must include educating students and employees on safe bystander intervention options, which include information on "interrupting situations that could lead to assault before it happens or during an incident... and having skills to be an effective and supportive ally to survivors" (Marshall, 2014; United States Government, 2014, p. 'bystander intervention').

Implemented Programs. In addition to federal legislation, the federal government has implemented several programs and campaigns to aid in the fight against sexual assault on college campuses. This review will focus on the Not Alone Campaign, It's On Us campaign, and Know Your IX.

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The Not Alone Campaign is an initiative launched by the White House in 2014 that aims to provide “information for students, schools, and anyone interested in finding resources on how to respond to and prevent sexual assault” (United States Government, 2014, para 6). The website created for this initiative, www.notalone.gov, provides a plethora of information, including state and federal legislation, a locator to assist individuals in finding resources and support in their surrounding areas, and data such as Cleary Act reports, Title IX and Title IV violations and resolutions, among other information (United States Government, 2014). The website also offers answers to students’ frequently asked questions, including:

What should I do if I have been sexually assaulted?

How can I help a friend?

How can I help as a Bystander?

How do I file a complaint about my school? And then what happens?

Will what I share with my school remain confidential? (United States Government, 2014, p. ‘students’).

Furthermore, this resource offers definitions for key terms vital for understanding situations of sexual assault, including ‘sexual violence’, ‘recipient’, ‘survivor’, as well as information and updates about important policy changes and data that involve and impact students in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary environments (United States Government, 2014).

In conjunction with the Not Alone Campaign, the It’s On Us campaign, also launched by the White House, is a bystander pledge, openly available to all members of the public to sign that “is a promise not to be a bystander to the problem, but to be a part of the solution” (It’s On Us, 2014, para 2). The full pledge reads:

I PLEDGE

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To RECOGNIZE that non-consensual sex is sexual assault.

To IDENTIFY situations in which sexual assault may occur.

To INTERVENE in situations where consent has not or cannot be given.

To CREATE an environment in which sexual assault is unacceptable and survivors are supported (It's On Us, 2014, para 3).

The initiative's website, www.itsonus.org provides videos of celebrity endorsements of the pledge, as well as information about on consent. The aim of this initiative is not only encourage potential bystanders to take a stand to prevent sexual assault, but also to raise awareness of sexual assault and consent. Furthermore, the website provides redirection information to the Not Alone website for those who suspect they may have been sexually assaulted, as well as those who would like to obtain more information about the issue (It's On Us, 2014).

Know Your IX, much like the Not Alone campaign, is a one-stop website containing extensive information about Title IX. The website for this program, www.knowyourix.org, provides students with information about their rights under Title IX, as well as information about the Clery Act, in terms that may be easier for them to access and understand (Know Your IX, n.d.). This resource also provides information about how to file a violation report. Additionally, this website provides many resources, posters, and tips on how students can become activists and effectively impact change on campuses (Know Your IX, n.d.).

While the above programs were recently created in order to combat sexual assault on college campuses, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) existed prior to the recent spotlight on the issue. The OCR is the government agency responsible for enforcing Title IX, as it examines and addresses Title IX violation cases.

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State level legislation

Although there are overarching federally mandated laws and policies under which higher education student survivors are protected, each state may take steps to further protect the students in their higher education institutions (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). One extremely recent and notable case of state legislation regarding sexual assault on college campuses is SB 967, which was passed in the California Constitution, otherwise known as the “Yes means Yes” bill. While this bill does include standard updates to regarding SaVE Act amendments, it also states that institutions receiving state funds must adopt an ‘affirmative consent’ standard during investigations (California Senate, 2014). This addition helps protect the survivor against any potential consent confusion.

The Commonwealth of Virginia, in their 2015 Virginia Legislative Session, passed several amendments updating their campus sexual assault policies and procedures (Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, 2015). While most of the amendments were slight and simply included SaVE Act amendments, one policy amendment that is quite significant and notable is SB1193. This amendment states that any student under investigation for a sexual assault infraction that withdraws, is suspended, or dismissed, will receive a notation on their transcript (Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, 2015).

Institution level legislation and programs

While the SaVE Act does provide schools with guidelines to procedures, and while schools must be in compliance with the requirements of the Clery Act and Title IX, each institution’s specific punishable behavior definitions, reporting resources, and procedures may differ (Marshall, 2014; Rose, 2015; Weis, 2015). At JMU, policy J34-100 of the Student Handbook outlines and defines behaviors that fall under this infraction, including sexual assault,

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non-consensual sexual contact, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and relational violence. In addition, the policy briefly informs students of reporting personnel and options to reporting including “counseling, the criminal process, Sexual Misconduct Accountability Process, and the Title IX Process (including non-contact orders)” (SARP, 2015a, para 1). JMU’s definitions of consent, incapacitation, and stalking can also be found in this document (SARP, 2015a).

A step-by-step script of the formal reporting process, including a list of participating mandatory reporters and groups, is further outlined in detail in the yearly issued JMU Student Handbook. This document includes the statement of the reporting and accused students’ rights, whom to turn to for assistance in determining and filing a charge, and the judicial process that follows a formal report (SARP, 2015b). As the Student Handbook is an annual publication, it is constantly being edited to fit both federal and state requirements. In fact, just this year, several changes were made to the 2015-2016 issue of the Student Handbook. To abide by SaVE amendments, the definition of a student has been more clearly defined as:

all persons who have paid a deposit for admissions or are currently taking courses at the university, either full-time, part-time, pursuing credit, and/or continuing education studies sponsored by the university, up to and including any graduation and completion date (SARP, 2015b, para 14).

Another notable change made to the Student Handbook is the exclusion of alcohol or drug violations (J38-101, J38-102) against reporting and accused parties, as well as their respective witnesses, as a result of their participation in the reporting process (SARP, 2015b). Therefore, if a student reports a classmate or is accused by a classmate, resultant alcohol or drug violations will not ensue.

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While students and other members of the institution may utilize federal programs and resources, it is important for each institution to implement programs that are unique to the needs of their community (The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). JMU currently provides several confidential and non-confidential resources available to all students on campus, including survivors of sexual assault. In addition to campus and Harrisonburg police departments, other non-confidential resources include the Office for Student Accountability and Restorative Practices, the Office of Equal Opportunity/Title IX, as well as any JMU employees, Office of Resident Life Employees, and professors and advisors (James Madison University [JMU], 2015b). As previously discussed, all JMU employees, including professors and advisors, have recently been deemed mandatory reporters. The Office of Equal Opportunity/Title IX may be contacted to file official reports as well as to access the accommodation that one has the right to under Title IX including a no contact order, class changes, and boarding room changes. The Office for Student Accountability and Restorative Practices is where students can report sexual assault cases to the university in which accused parties are current students (JMU, 2015b).

Confidential survivor resources on campus at JMU include the University Health Center, where students can receive emergency contraception and medical examinations, and The Well, a sector of the University Health Center, which provides survivor support, as well as general advocacy and prevention of issues of sexual assault. In addition, the Counseling Center, which provides individual consultation and counseling, is also home to the Sexual Trauma Empowerment Program (STEP). STEP specializes in providing individual, group, and emergency sexual counseling services to students, as well as survivor support groups and advocacy of services for survivors of sexual assault and trauma. Additionally, Campus Assault

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Response (CARE) serves as JMU's 24-hour student-run helpline geared specifically towards students seeking assistance with sexual assault cases (JMU, 2015b; JMU, 2015c)

In addition to these resources and services that are offered year-round, JMU has also implemented a program entitled Dukes Step Up, a bystander prevention program that is presented to incoming first year students during 1787 Orientation. This program consists of videos following fictional characters through a night out during which an individual is sexually assaulted. The intentions of the videos are to point out moments during which bystander intervention could have prevented the incident as well as encourage bystander intervention. Discussion of the program follows.

Additionally, beginning in 2013, JMU has implemented "Haven", a "mandatory online program designed to educate first-year students about sexual assault and relationship violence while empowering them to develop strategies to serve as effective bystanders and make decisions for themselves about healthy relationships" (JMU, 2014, para 1). This program was added to JMU's already existing Alcohol.edu, an online program required by first year and transfer students to complete upon arrival that educates about alcohol use and abuse (JMU, 2014).

Literature Review

Despite the increasing amount of federal, state, and institutional legislation and programs surrounding many aspects of sexual violence on college and university campuses, the rates of campus sexual assault do not appear to be decreasing (Weis, 2015). As indicated by Heldman (2015) during her lecture entitled, The New Networked Campus Anti-Rape Movement, the widely published statistic of *1 in 5* has been found in a number of studies spanning 15 years. However, in a recent Association of American Universities (AAU) report, 33.1% of female

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students reported being victims of sexual misconduct over the course of their college careers. Experiences include sexual penetration through means of physical force or threat thereof; incapacitation as a result of drugs, alcohol or unconsciousness; and “coercive threats of non-physical harm or rewards, failure to obtain affirmative consent” (Cantor et al., 2015, p v). This study not only indicates that rates of campus sexual assault are not decreasing, but it indicates that 1 in 3 female students experience nonconsensual sexual contact throughout their college experiences, notwithstanding the recent influx in multilevel legislation and programs.

While the instances of sexual assault on college campuses are staggering, less than 5% of these cases are reported to campus officials and less than 2% are reported to law enforcement (Amar et al., 2014; Karjane et al., 2005; Strout et al., 2014). This lack of reporting could be the result of a number of barriers, or factors that decrease the probability that a survivor will disclose their experience or seek formal help, as perceived by students (Allen et al., 2015). Common barriers students may face include the lack of recognition that their experience was a crime, potential loss of confidentiality or anonymity, and possible inability to prove the crime (Allen et al., 2015; Amar et al., 2014). Lack of community sensitivity and the risk of experiencing secondary victimization, which includes victim-blaming attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by service providers, may also prove to be barriers to reporting (Allen et al., 2015). Additionally, a report completed by the AAU in 2015 indicated that a majority of survivors of aggressive rape refrained from reporting because they perceived that the incident was not ‘serious enough’ to be reported (Cantor et al., 2015). These barriers to reporting not only decrease the ability to truly and accurately understand the severity of the problem, but, more importantly, it impedes survivors’ ability to access and utilize resources of support.

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While students may be reluctant to formally report or disclose to campus officials, students who have experienced sexual assault are more likely to initially disclose to their friends (Allen et al., 2015; Karjane et al., 2005; Strout et al., 2014). In order to provide some insight as to why this trend in disclosure exists, Strout and colleagues (2014) identified overarching qualities that survivors saw as desirable in resources and encouraging disclosure. The top two qualities survivors desired in their decision to disclose to any individual were trust and respect. These results provide a sound explanation for why survivors may disclose to friends as a first resort; survivors are most likely to disclose to individuals with whom they have already established trusting and respectful relationships (Strout et al., 2014). In addition, Strout and colleagues (2014) also identified qualities of ‘confidentiality’ and ‘presence of trained professionals’ as common desired traits in a disclosure or resource. These qualities are parallel to the commonly reported barriers perceived by survivors.

The desire for the presence of a trained and trusted professional connects with the findings of other studies. More specifically, Carmody and colleagues (2009) examined the opinions of campus sexual assault advocates and defined what they thought was necessary to aide in serving higher education institution students. One of the main findings indicated that campus workers saw an increased need for education and awareness programs (Carmody et al., 2009). If an increase in education and response training for incoming and existing students, faculty, and campus officials was implemented, although individuals may not be professional, there may be more trained individuals available, and thus options to safe and effective disclosure may increase. A climate with reduced barriers may be produced and the range of social support a survivor may encounter may increase.

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Current Study

While several cases of sexual assault on college campuses have garnered the general public's attention, the judicial processes and procedures that follow are often kept out of the public eye. Consequently, unless an individual has personal or vicarious experiences with jurisdictional processes, individuals have been found to have very limited knowledge of their institution's policies, processes, and procedures surrounding a report of sexual assault, including faculty and staff (Weis, 2015). In fact, in a study of 305 higher education institutions, approximately 73% of students were unaware of their school's legislative obligations (Marshall, 2014). Therefore, one aim of the current study is to obtain an understanding of students' current knowledge of policies and procedures, as well as the rights they are entitled to under federal legislation.

A number of studies have been completed that speak to common student perceptions of barriers to reporting sexual assault. However, there have been minimal to no studies examining students' perceptions of the helpfulness of available survivor resources (Allen et al., 2015). Therefore, this current study aims not only to understand the JMU student community's perceptions of barriers to reporting or disclosure, but student's perceived effectiveness and helpfulness of existing survivor resources.

Intervention and prevention efforts, in addition to campus response resources and practices are found to be most successful if they are tailored to the specific needs of the community that they serve (The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). Similar to Strout and colleagues' (2014) findings, a desired outcome of this study would be to identify the qualities that most impact a student's likelihood to disclose or report; more specifically, the identification of qualities that students would desire in current or future

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resources. In addition to understanding the qualities that students think would improve current and future resources, the present study also sets forth to identify and understand resources that students think would provide more available, inclusive, and effective social support to survivors. Given that an individual's adjustment following a traumatic event, such as sexual assault, is closely associated with social support, it is vital that the specific needs of JMU's student community are identified and met in order to provide an environment that is conducive to survivors (Littleton, 2010).

Methodology

Design and Sample

Upon approval from the JMU Institutional Review Board in late October 2015, focus group time slots were created within the Health Sciences Research Participation Site to allow students to register for participation in this study. Participants were recruited through advertisement in higher-level Health Science classes. Focus groups were held in the Health and Human Services building at James Madison University. Approximately two focus groups were held Monday-Friday from mid-November 2015 to mid-December 2015, resulting in a total of 13 focus groups. Each focus group contained 5-11 participants. A total of 13 student focus groups were held, with 113 total students participating.

Focus groups ranged from approximately 25 minutes to 75 minutes, depending on participant contribution and the flow of conversation. Semi-structured questions were posed as prompts during facilitated discussion focus group meetings. Upon completion of each focus group, the researcher distributed information to students regarding topics discussed (Appendix A). With participant consent, the focus group meetings were digitally recorded. The recorded data research file was then transcribed and encrypted by the researcher following the meetings.

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All data files were kept in a password-protected folder on the researcher's personal computer.

The researcher analyzed this data by searching for common themes that spanned throughout the 13 groups.

Instruments

The open-ended questions utilized to guide discussion during the focus groups were adapted from Strout et al. (2014) and Karjane et al. (2005) (Appendix B). Dependent on the direction of discussion, not all questions were utilized during each focus group.

Analysis

The discussion during each focus group session was digitally recorded on a device that was later reviewed by the researcher. This information and discussion was later transcribed and manually analyzed. The researcher searched transcriptions for words commonly mentioned within prompted discussion. As these words were identified, the researcher color-coded the transcriptions, thus enabling the identification of common themes.

Results

Awareness of Resources

Reactive Resources. While participants were able to list some available reactive resources, or resources aimed at providing support to victims/survivors after an incident occurs, the mention and discussion of the resources were largely accompanied by tentative/uncertain voice inflections, phrases, and questions – such as “maybe” and “does (insert location or service) offer something?” – indicating hesitancy and uncertainty, as well as questions surrounding many of the resources. The major resources that were frequently mentioned were CARE (a student-run crisis and advocacy hotline), the Health Center, campus police, and the counseling center.

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Students more frequently identified CARE as “the hotline” or “the number found on the back of your JMU Access Card (JAC) card.”

Although able to identify resources, a majority of participants were unclear about the services provided by those resources. The exception to this general observation were those participants employed as Resident Advisors (RA) for on-campus housing. After the group indicated their knowledge of resources, the researcher often called upon the RA participants to inform the group of their knowledge and training as a way to gauge the knowledge of the individuals in these vital mandatory reporting positions, as well as to gauge the effectiveness of the training these individuals receive in their positions. One participant demonstrated the knowledge of many of the RA participants:

... I feel like I know a little bit more about this because I know for RA's you go through a week of training and there's a whole day dedicated to what you would do if someone was sexually assaulted. I know for a freshman, like if one of my residents, or anyone in the building, came up to me, there's like a title IX officer that they can talk to and you can set up an appointment. I think you can do that at the Student Success Center or CARE, you can do it through them, but that would help them [because you could] talk to them and decide if you want to report it...But I know that there's CARE or Title IX or counseling too.

While participants may be aware of the existing resources than preventative measures, the mention and discussion of the resources were largely accompanied by voice inflections indicating hesitancy and uncertainty. Students overwhelmingly expressed that they did not think most students were aware of these resources. In reference to all the participants in the group being Health Sciences students, who more frequently discuss topics of sexual health and sexual

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assault, a participant stated, “I think just sitting here now most of us weren’t sure, so I definitely don't think anyone else would be either.” In other words, these students believed that their own uncertainty and ignorance, being students engaged in coursework more directly related to these issues than the general student population, would suggest an even deeper degree of uncertainty and ignorance across the wider student population.

Participants most often identified the counseling center as the resource victims/survivors would find most effective and helpful, followed by CARE, RA’s, and professors. The qualities of relationship-building and confidentiality were mentioned as most notable and important among these resources. As a result of exemplifying the two, the counseling center was recognized most frequently. As one participant stated: “I think counseling would be the most effective because they have one person to rely on to disclose all their feelings and emotions to without judgment.” CARE was commended because of its convenience and anonymity, and RA’s and professors, while mandatory reporters, were mentioned frequently as effective and helpful in reference to their frequent encounters and close relationships with victims/survivors. Furthermore, participant knowledge of these individual’s requirement to report showed no patterns; some students were aware of this policy and others were not. This is further explored in a latter portion of this report.

Preventative Practices. Regarding knowledge of practices at JMU geared towards prevention of sexual assault, participants often listed what they knew to be reactive resources. The resources most frequently mentioned were CARE, Dukes Step Up, emergency blue lights, Life Safe app, and the counseling center. As with the mentioning of reactive resources discussed above, students who were not trained RAs were aware of the names of resources, but unaware of what they actually did to promote prevention. One participant who was an RA was able to explain:

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Take back the night I think happens in February, and that's everything from slam poetry, to guest speakers and attendees. We have a lovely teal flow chart that is in circulation, the well does a decent job with having our stuff circulated through the table tops or on monitors or once you're in there seeing the resources, there's CARE who is the 24 hour hotline but they also do programming that will come talk to your organization about it, the Collins Center which is affiliated with JMU but is not run by JMU and that is a sexual assault help center that does advocacy as well as support, and ORL does the red flag campaign and the clothesline project which both kind of show you, whether it's domestic abuse which is what the red flag campaign is about and the clothesline project is seeing and hearing people's voices, and there are similar things that Greek life does.

Another RA added that the annual programs RAs host must surround, in part, sexual misconduct education and discussion.

On several occasions, students acknowledged that the resources they were listing were reactive rather than preventative; however, the one frequently mentioned resource that was clearly acknowledged for prevention practices was Dukes Step Up. Upon elaboration, while some students indicated a temporary positive impact the program may have had, students overall found the program ineffective. Students thought the emphasis on being an active bystander was commendable, but the way it was presented was not. A lot of discussion revolved around the light-hearted and comedic nature of the videos. A majority of the students reported ineffective experiences in this program. For example, one student said: "Our whole class started geeking when they said [Tonight's not the night]. Ours did not go down too well. We weren't too serious about it. That's pretty much the way we reacted to the program." Other students experienced the humor in a different way and thought the result was productive. One student stated:

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It's hard cause like if it's made into a joke, it's easier to talk about. All of those things make people uncomfortable and they don't want to talk about it. Whether it be because they experienced or they think like "Oh, I would never do that" or that would never happen to me so this doesn't apply to me, so I think if you put it in a way that makes it funny or light hearted, it's easier to discuss.

Two vital suggestions for improvement of this program were brought to the researcher's attention: the desire for real stories and accounts, and the need to define consent. Participants overwhelmingly requested that the program integrate true stories and personal accounts in order to emphasize the truth, existence, and severity of sexual assault, either in addition to or in place of the light-hearted videos shown. One student explained their perception of the effectiveness of this addition in regards to resonance and raising awareness:

... for, like, the Dukes Step Up program maybe bringing real life examples into it, like real life statistics - I think they did statistics... but maybe a case study or two that are like things that happened in a Virginia state school, something that makes it more real rather than a video because that might be something that resonates with someone more seriously... because there are so many examples of it but a lot of people don't know about it.

In addition to emphasis on bystander intervention, a school-wide accepted concept and definition of consent was noted as something desired in the program. As revealed in discussion, everyone's definition of consent varied. Many students stated they believed a school-wide established definition of consent would be beneficial in preventing sexual assault, as many may not realize they are committing a felony. One participant exemplified this notion, as she iterated:

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...I feel like hearing, like, other people's definitions of consent and someone hears a story of a girl saying that she wasn't giving consent and he said he thought it was consent. I think there needs to be kind of like a definition so that everyone at JMU understands what it is.

Continued Education. Addressing the effectiveness of Dukes Step Up, many participants indicated the temporary nature of its success. A follow-up program was mentioned on several accounts during discussion. Upon further discussion, there was unanimous agreement that a continued education program would be effective; however, the means by which this program would work conjured a plethora of responses and suggestions. There was an overwhelming resistance to an online program. One student's explanation of her opinion of the effectiveness of a continued education program encompasses a majority of the dialogue surrounding an online program:

If it was similar to the way alcohol EDU is set up, maybe not. Because I know that I would just play the videos and walk away because you had to let them run through. And talking to a lot of people, I know that's what they did. And so having something virtual, I don't think people would really pay attention or get much out of. I think they would just go through the motions and say "I just need to get through this so I don't have a hold on my account" type thing.

Although the impact of an online program was notably discounted, discussion of the difficulty a required in-class/in-person option led to the acknowledgement of the effectiveness and ease of utilizing an online program.

Disregarding the implementation of the program, students overwhelmingly agreed upon the necessity of such a program. The students noted than ongoing educational programming

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would aid in the creation and maintenance of an evolving and progressive campus climate in relation to the concept of consent. Students would receive new information about topics surrounding sexual assault each year, depending on the current stage in their educational careers and in their lives.

Reporting and Disclosure

Mandatory Reporting and Policy. There were no distinct patterns noted in the discussion of students' knowledge of mandatory reporters. In some groups, only some students per group were able to correctly identify mandatory reporters. In other groups, no one knew of any mandatory reporters, and in others, everyone was aware that professors are now mandatory reporters.

Within groups that did identify professors and most other JMU employees as mandatory reporters, there were mixed results regarding the effectiveness and advantageousness of this new requirement. Students grappled with the valued quality of relationships, as identified above, and how professors as mandatory reporters would impact their relationship with their students and vice-versa. One student discussed this concept, as she mentioned her opinion on the benefits of this new policy:

I think it's helpful because if you go to report, it might be really nerve wracking. But if you're in your teacher's office hours, maybe that's more comfortable because it's not so much of an environment where you're reporting a crime. Maybe you want to tell someone but the hard step is actually going and reporting it, but with this in place, they might be able to do that for you.

What this student fails to recognize in her statement is that the new policy will not indicate that professors 'might' be able to help, but rather they are *required* to report, regardless of an

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individual student's wishes. Other students, in opposition to the student quoted above, believed that this new policy violated the trust between professors and students.

Students also mentioned the necessity of informing students of the new policy. One participant emphasized the need for wide policy awareness, as she discussed student wellness:

I think that maybe reporting rates would increase but as far as wellness- like if they didn't want to report it and they were freely talking to a professor, that could hurt them in the long run because they probably don't know about that.

Policy, overall, was a topic with which students did not find much common ground. When participants were asked if they thought new policy or policy changes would assist in increasing reporting rates, their responses varied widely. One student based her opinion on already existing federal policies, as she stated:

SAVE campus act- that doesn't help survivors in the slightest. It makes mandatory reporting go even further in that you have to become a face of your experience, which is really terrible. But I think it depends on who is making the policy. If it's at the school level, make sure you have health people involved, whether it be mental health, physical health, all of it. I think federal laws are really difficult because they're trying to lock these people in, but at the same time it's such a grey area.

Other students also commented on their positive opinion of policies, as they pondered the idea of policies that ensure a common outcome and set consequences. One participant discussed the preventative nature of a policy:

I feel like there should be something well known and set ahead of time because if their punishment is that they can't come back to JMU after they graduate, that's not a serious enough punishment... I don't think people realize the seriousness of a situation like that

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and maybe at JMU it doesn't seem like that big of a deal because of the lack of punishment but if that happened in real life [i.e. outside of a college campus] it would be much more serious.

Similarly, another student discussed their positive view on policy that ensure a set consequences from the viewpoint of the victim/survivor:

When you go into a reporting incident and you know the chain of command and if this is going to happen, how will this emotionally affect [you]... In regards to the case that happened here, how must that girl have felt when they could finish out their schooling? If I were to be in that situation, and I reported them, I would have been super upset that I reported them in the first place and then nothing really happened. Just being aware and knowledgeable about where the information is going to go and how it's going to end might be a little comforting than compared to if you know nothing about where it goes and what's going to happen.

Although students were mostly divided on opinions of the effectiveness of the implementation of various policies, one common idea that most agreed upon was the necessity of students to have knowledge of the existence of policies and policy changes.

Discouragement and Encouragement to Report. When asked about what might discourage victims/survivors from reporting or disclosing their experience, there was an overwhelming consensus about these traits. From most mentioned to least mentioned, participants noted: embarrassment; public judgment; victim-blaming; fear of punishment for either themselves in regards to underage drinking or drug use or the perpetrators for the assault itself; and, not knowing what happened to them was sexual assault. Similarly, when the researcher inquired about what might encourage someone to report or disclose their experience,

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there were several recurring answers: the desire to prevent the act from happening to someone else; knowing that they are not the only ones who have gone through this experience; having the knowledge of tools and resources; having support of loved ones whom they trust; feeling safe with the individual to whom they are disclosing; and, knowing that something will come of the report.

The Ideal Resource

Participants were asked to list the qualities they would like to see in an ideal resource. Very much in-line with the perceived barriers and encouragements to disclosing or reporting, there were several recurring ideas that students had for an ideal resource, including a phone line to call, people available to direct individuals in need, support groups, an online education program for new students who are entering JMU, and a resource through which anonymity/confidentiality can be preserved. Three unique ideas that emerged in the focus groups deserve further mention. First, an idea repeated most often was the idea of a “buddy” or victim-advocate: an informed and trained individual who would not only “be there” for victims/survivors every step of the way, but who would actively and frequently reach out and check in. The purpose of this individual would not just be to make sure that an individual was coping and acclimating back into life, but also to continually keep a victim/survivor informed of their resources, options, and rights. Second, the mention of the existence of a peer organization whose sole purpose would be advocacy and education stood out from discussion. Last, the suggestion of adding a texting option or message line to the resources of CARE was made. One participant made this argument:

... I know that freshman year you share a room with someone, you share bathrooms with people and if you don't want anyone to know, you can't call a lot of places because

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people are going to hear what you're saying. And if you're upset about something and you talk about it then you're going to probably cry or get more emotional. And if you're texting, you might be able to voice what you feel without making you feel as physically upset.

This explanation resonated with many in the group that sparked high interest.

Further Interest

When posed with the possibility of meeting with the administration to gain information about their concerns related to Title IX and what is being done to combat sexual violence on campus, participants were unanimously interested. While a majority of students suggested a small focus group setting of 10-12 people, much like the ones held for the current study, a smaller proportion of students stated they would prefer a large auditorium setting. Their reasoning, across both suggestions, was to maximize students' sense of comfort in speaking up.

Discussion

Overall, the results of this study show that while students were able to identify sexual assault survivor resources available at JMU, unless students were part of residence life, they did not seem to know very much about the services various resources actually provide. This discrepancy became more evident during the discussion of an ideal resource, as participants mentioned desired traits that are present and can be found in existing resources. A possible solution to this problem, also mentioned during the ideal resource discussion, is the implementation of a peer organization whose sole purpose is to educate and advocate the issue of sexual assault on college campuses through outreach to students and organizations. Similar to the findings of Carmody et al. (2009), it was evident there is a need for programs that not only educate and bring awareness to the issue of sexual assault on college campuses itself, but also

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that educate and bring awareness to existing victim/survivor resources. Ultimately, it is absolutely vital to continue advertising and educating about a campus' existing resources, perhaps in new and different ways that are able to reach a wider range of students.

When discussing a continued education program, participants indicated that they believed a required in-class/in-person program that provided information and knowledge was built upon per year. Collectively, participants were unable to think of a scenario in which this outcome would be fabricated. The researcher would like to suggest utilizing a 'Student Work Day', similar to 'Assessment Day', in which students are required to participate. This opportunity would provide a day during which students would have assigned times of mandatory attendance confirmed through their JAC card upon arrival. This sign-in system would ensure everyone's attendance and truly display the university's dedication towards not only the prevention of sexual assault on campus, but also towards the health and well-being of its students.

Participants indicated the necessity for a school-wide established definition of 'consent'. A definition of 'consent' was included in JMU's most recently published Student Handbook for the 2015-2016 academic year (SARP, 2015a). As this amendment has already been made, the researcher suggests that this definition be brought to the awareness of all students at JMU. In order to inform incoming first-year students, this definition may be presented during the Dukes Step Up program. This information may be distributed to current JMU students through an informational e-mail. Additionally, the distribution of this information to current JMU students may also be feasible through the establishment and utilization of the researcher's suggestions mentioned above.

In the current study, students were also able to identify potential factors that might encourage and discourage victims/survivors to disclose or report specific to our community at

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JMU. Participants identified barriers nearly identical to some of those discovered by Allen and colleagues (2015), including a lack of recognition that their experience was a crime, potential loss of confidentiality or anonymity, lack of community sensitivity, and victim-blaming attitudes. Furthermore, students at JMU identified encouraging influences towards disclosing or reporting, such as confidentiality and trust, which reflect those found in the work completed by Strout and colleagues (2014). Moreover, participants in this study identified relationships as a major determinant in disclosure, a determinant also identified by Strout and colleagues (2014).

Furthermore, the participants in the current study indicated a clear split in preference in regards to the type of setting they would prefer to meet with the administration to gain knowledge about their concerns regarding Title IX and the strides they are taking towards creating a safe campus for all. A possible explanation for this difference could be that the students who suggested each type of setting (large auditorium or small focus group) had different personality types that may feel more comfortable speaking up in different types of settings. The researcher's suggests administrators and other stakeholders to hold multiple events to cater to students with different learning styles levels of comfort. After all, all students deserve to know what steps are being taken to keep them safe on campus, they also deserve to be heard.

A limitation of the current study includes its exclusivity to the JMU community. Because college/university communities differ along several dimensions, including demographics, location, and policies, another university's needs may differ from the needs of the JMU community. Therefore, the findings specific to that of JMU's community, while perhaps transferrable in some respects, may not be fully generalizable (Strout et al., 2014). Another limitation to this study includes its small sample size. This study did not inquire about the gender identity of participants, therefore, as a result of JMU's overall population demographic, the study

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may be focused on the views of white women. Furthermore, while the study is open up to the general student population, participants may have chosen to participate in the study due to a prior interest in the subject, thus providing a self-selection limitation.

A delimitation of this study includes the researcher's choice to study only health sciences students at James Madison University. While this very limited population was in part a result of a limitation of time and convenience, the results are still informative to the overall issue at hand. Additionally, due to the discussion-based nature of the study and time constraints, an all-inclusive sample comprehensively representing the attitudes of all JMU students is unrealistic and may not have been appropriately captured in the results. However, as a qualitative project, the goal of this project aimed towards obtaining a rich description of views that may provide a basis for broader research and dictate survey research that may reach the general JMU population.

Suggestions for future research include the examination of a sample consisting of students from majors other than Health Sciences. Additionally, future research may inquire about participants' gender identity, as the current study did not inquire about this demographic. Additionally, it is suggested that future research include organized groups on campus, including those actively combating sexual assault, to gain their perspectives on the current climate, what they are doing to keep their members informed, and their perceptions of necessary changes.

Conclusion

The results of this study highlighted a very important component to creating an environment that is both sensitive and supportive of survivors/victims of sexual assault: awareness. Students indicated a desire for an awareness of the true severity of this issue on campus, in addition to awareness of the systematic consequences of such a crime. Furthermore, it

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has become clear that raising awareness of survivor/victim resources on campus is crucial, as students at JMU described as their 'Ideal' survivor/victim resource as having characteristics that already exist in several resources that can be found on campus; it is not enough to simply have the resources, but an investment must be made to ensure that students are aware of them and the services they provide.

While JMU can be commended for their intuition, acknowledgement, and awareness of the climate surrounding student's desires and survivor's/victim's needs, it has become clear that dialogue surrounding this issue is nonetheless imperative. Discussion of issues of sexual assault on this campus would not only create a safer and more supportive environment through awareness of resources, but it would bring light to the overarching issue of rape culture in our society and on our campus. Students have voiced that they would like to continue discussion on different fronts regarding this issue- it is this voice that serves as most significant in a community made up mostly of this population. Sexual assault on college campuses is not inevitable. Through continued dialogue and education surrounding topics of sexual assault on campus, strides to be taken towards combating this heinous act and eliminating it from JMU's community.

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Appendix

Appendix A

A sexual assault has been reported to a JMU faculty, staff or student. Options for survivor resources:

Options for non-confidential campus and criminal resources

JMU Police
(On-campus assault)
(540) 588-8911
Anthony Seeger Hall

Office of Student Accountability and Restorative Practices
The accused party must be a current JMU student
(540) 588-8218
Student Success Center 2nd Floor

Office of Equal Opportunity/Title IX
jmu.edu/titleix
Accommodations may include:
• No contact order
• Class changes
• Room changes

Harrisonburg Police
(Off-campus assault)
Call 911

Anonymous Reporting
Silent Witness
jmu.edu/publicsafety/SilentWitness

Options for confidential health-related resources

University Health Center
Emergency contraception
medical examination/STI testing
(540) 588-6178
Student Success Center
1st & 2nd Floor

UHC's The Well
Survivor advocacy, support and prevention.
(540) 588-2831
Student Success Center, 1st Floor

Counseling Center
Sexual Trauma Empowerment Program, counseling, and consultation
(540) 588-8552
Student Success Center, 3rd Floor

Campus Assault Response
Student-run 24/7 helpline
(540) 588-8411



Collins Center & Child Advocacy Center
217 South Liberty St. #205
Harrisonburg, VA
(540) 432-8430
thecollinscenter.org
Off-campus crisis counseling, support, and advocacy

Sentara RMH Emergency Department
Within 72 hours of the assault a Physical Evidence Recovery Kit (PERK) can be performed — the following people will be called: Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE Nurse), police department investigator from where the assault occurred, advocate from the Collins Center

All JMU contacts, indicated by teal shading, can assist in exploring the judicial and criminal processes as well as health-related resources

How to help a friend:

- Listen and believe
- Monitor and control your feelings
 - Be *calm* and *supportive*
- Help your friend find resources and options
 - But ultimately allow your friend to make his/her decisions about what to do. Don't judge or question your friend's choice.
- Expect a range of emotions from your friend
 - Including lack of emotion or shock.
- Be Patient.
 - Allow your friend to move through the recovery process at his/her own pace
- Be aware of your own limits of support
 - Know the on-campus resources are here for you too

More Mandatory Reporters

- Professors
- Administrators
- Office for Residence Life Employees (RA, Hall Director, etc...)

Beyond Campus

- National Sexual Assault Hotline
 - 800-656-HOPE (4673)
 - www.rainn.org
- Know Your IX
 - One stop website informing students of their rights under the law
 - Outline of legislature pertaining to sexual violence
 - Title IX
 - Clery Act
 - Resources and instructions for reporting, activist resource
 - knowyourIX.org
- It's On Us
 - Defining sexual assault
 - Bystander Pledge- personal pledge to keep women and men safe from sexual assault.
 - itsonus.org

SEXUAL ASSAULT RESOURCES & UNDERSTANDING

Appendix B

1. Why do you think sexual assault is so prevalent on college campuses?
2. What practices have you felt to be impactful in preventing sexual assault?
3. If an individual were to experience a sexual assault, what resources could they turn to on campus?
4. Of these resources, which do you think victims would find most effective? Most helpful? Most supportive? Why?
5. Which of these resources are mandatory reporters? Do you think these mandates are appropriate and effective?
6. If an assault is reported, what is your institution's procedure?
7. Do you think most students are aware of the resources and practices surrounding sexual assault?
8. What kinds of sexual assault policies and practices do you think make victims of sexual assault more likely/less likely to report an incident and follow through with charges?
9. In an ideal world, what practices or strategies would be best for sexual assault survivors?
 - a. Do you think a continued education curricula for students would be effective in prevention and education?
10. Do you think most students are aware of the resources and practices surrounding sexual assault?
11. Would you be interested in meeting with administrators to gain information about their concerns related to Title IV and about what is being done to combat sexual violence on campus? If so, what type of setting would you prefer this interaction occur in?