2024

The Effects of Confession Evidence and Defendant Race on Juror Perceptions

Victoria E. Dodge
Antioch University

THE COLLEGE SEXUAL VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC: EXAMINING PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Antioch University New England

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

by

Casey Buonocore

ORCID Scholar No. 0009-0004-2690-913X

April 2024

THE COLLEGE SEXUAL VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC:
EXAMINING PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES

This dissertation, by Casey Buonocore, has
been approved by the committee members signed below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of
Antioch University New England
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dissertation Committee:

Katherine Evarts, PsyD, Chairperson

Lorraine Mangione, PhD

Jennifer McLean, EdM, PsyD

ABSTRACT

THE COLLEGE SEXUAL VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC:
EXAMINING PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES

Casey Buonocore

Antioch University New England

Keene, NH

A 2019 survey conducted by the Association of American Universities reported the prevalence rate of college sexual violence at approximately 13%. Additional college sexual violence research has found that there is often a significant discrepancy between rates of sexual violence and usage rates of post-assault resources (Stoner & Cramer, 2019). Given previous statistics on college sexual violence and emerging statistics on intimate partner violence, the COVID-19 pandemic likely exacerbated this existing discrepancy. Prior college sexual violence research has found that students are much more likely to access sexual violence resources if they have already received comprehensive information about those resources (e.g., C. Spencer et al., 2020). Further, it is critical that these resources reflect the most recent guidelines established by relevant federal legislation, such as the Clery Act and Title IX. One examination of universities' implementation of these policies found that only 11% of colleges were fully compliant (Griffin et al., 2017). Thus, continual evaluation of the quality of implementation of sexual violence policies and prevention programming is warranted. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation was to explore and identify, through qualitative content analysis grounded in naturalistic methodology, potential barriers to implementing these measures effectively. Results were conceptualized through theory-based categories that illuminated several barriers pertaining to the presentation of relevant data and key prevention programming. Practical implications of these

results as well as limitations of this research are explored before suggesting directions for future research. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: college sexual violence, Title IX, Clery Act, prevention and response procedures

Dedication

To those I lost along the way, Dad and Elphie, I've felt your love and support from where you are, and I couldn't have done it without you.

Acknowledgements

There are a number of people I credit with supporting me through everything the past five years have brought, including both peers and supervisors. First, my wonderful dissertation chairperson and advisor, Kate, has been a steady influence on my doctoral career. From clinical supervisor to advisor to colleague, I have learned more than even I know from our relationship. My dissertation committee, Lorraine and Jenn, most notably supported me through one of the most difficult years of this program, with qualitative exams and internship applications. They also made up a dream dissertation committee. Thank you all for cheering me on while genuinely helping to make this dissertation the best it could be.

To the amazing clinicians I have had the opportunity to learn from and work with along the way, especially Merry and my internship supervisors, thank you all for being outstanding role models and, most importantly, incredible support systems. I hope to continue to emulate each of you as I grow in my work as a clinician and a supervisor.

My peers in psychology and friends I can go to anything with—Lauren, Rachel, and Victoria—each continue to inspire me in different ways. They have been there for me through the highs and lows of the past several years, and I have no doubts that they will make lasting impacts to our field. My closest friends whom I've had the pleasure of knowing for more than 10 years now—Alex, Theresa, Sarah, Rosa, Isabella—have believed in me from the very beginning. Thank you all for the laughter and love.

Finally, I am grateful for my mom who never wavered in her support of my dreams, even when the prospect of graduate school may have seemed monumental. George, Rosa, Leo, and Gabriella provided constant laughter during the most difficult of times. Thank you for celebrating each milestone with me and for being there through it all.

Table of Contents

The College Sexual Violence Epidemic:

Examining Prevention and Response Procedures

The current dissertation aimed to assess several New York institutions' adherence to federal regulations set forth by the Violence Against Women Act, the Clery Act, and Title IX. The Violence Against Women Act, in particular, was most recently reauthorized in 2021 and now requires higher education institutions to utilize educational programming aimed at prevention (National Network to End Domestic Violence, n.d.). This update augmented the federal regulations that previously merely required institutions to publicize a clear, comprehensive sexual violence policy. Despite the expectation that these will be enforced harmoniously throughout the United States (US), the disparity in resources available to colleges is significant, which inevitably influences their implementation of these measures. Therefore, the current dissertation utilized document analysis to evaluate the status of universities' current sexual violence policies.

Problem Statement

In the US, approximately 20% of female college students have experienced sexual violence during their collegiate careers (American Psychological Association, 2020). Additionally, a 2019 systematic review of articles about college sexual violence found that, although the prevalence rate of sexual violence ranged from 4.7 to 58%, the utilization rate of on-campus resources post-assault ranged from zero to 42% (Stoner & Cramer, 2019). One potential reason for this discrepancy is a general lack of awareness of the resources available to students post-assault, which may be a result of colleges' inability to properly institute the guidelines that the federal government has established. Further, this discrepancy parallels the

larger society in that, despite seemingly comprehensive federal regulations on campus violence, many survivors of sexual violence do not report their assault.

Literature Review

Problem Background and Context

While the threat of sexual violence victimization remains a prevalent concern for female college students, the barriers that may prevent a college student survivor from reporting an act of sexual violence are equally prevalent and concerning. One of these barriers may be caused by colleges' inability to educate students on sexual violence itself (e.g., sexual assault, acquaintance rape, etc.) and the options available to survivors post-assault (e.g., mental health treatment, formal reports, etc.). Research has shown that survivors are much more likely to report their assault, either informally or formally, when their colleges provided them with ample information on factors related to campus violence. For instance, C. Spencer et al. (2020) surveyed approximately 300 college student survivors and found that those who filed Title IX reports did so because they received thorough sexual violence prevention and response training.

Additional research has suggested that comprehensive college sexual violence education programs could reduce the frequency of sexually violent acts. For instance, Linder (2018) asserted that, when a combination of exhaustive awareness, response, and prevention measures are accurately implemented by colleges, the incidence of college sexual violence could be reduced. Linder also stated that raising awareness of this epidemic should include statistics about prevalence, definitions of sexual violence, and resources for survivors. While colleges may have limited ability to alter their legal response to sexual violence, on-campus advocacy groups and counseling centers could provide individualized support to survivors that they otherwise may not receive (Linder, 2018).

Fortunately, the US has enacted several legislative policies aimed at gender-based violence on college campuses. For instance, Title IX, which is part of the Educational Amendment of 1972, prohibits gender-based discrimination, which includes sexual violence (Cantalupo, 2011). Despite this well-intentioned rationale, several changes made to Title IX during the Trump administration may have discouraged survivors from filing Title IX reports. One of these changes states that colleges can choose the burden of proof in the subsequent investigation (Beaver, 2019). This can negatively affect a survivor's pursuit of justice because a higher burden of proof requires them to submit indisputable physical evidence, which can be challenging—or even impossible—to obtain in sexual violence cases. Additionally, colleges only needed to open a Title IX investigation when the act occurred on campus or at a college-sponsored event and after a formal report has been made (Beaver, 2019). This ruling overlooks the survivors who may have reported their assault to an informal entity (e.g., a professor or a counselor) and the survivors who were assaulted off-campus (Beaver, 2019). More recently, however, the Biden administration improved Title IX for survivors in several key ways. For one, colleges were provided greater geographic jurisdiction when initiating investigations. This update stated that acts of sexual violence can and should be investigated when they occur: (a) on campus property, (b) near campus property, (c) farther away but on campus-owned property, or (d) during campus-sponsored trips or events (Nolan, 2022). In short, these changes allow a greater number of survivors to initiate Title IX investigations if they choose.

An additional prominent policy that was signed into law to protect college victims of violent acts is the Jeanne Clery Act of 1990. The Clery Act initially simply stated that, annually, colleges must disclose details about illegal and violent acts that occur on campus (DeMatteo et al., 2015). More recently, however, it also required colleges to establish violence prevention

measures and to provide protection for victims of violent acts (DeMatteo et al., 2015). Notably, despite the Clery Act, colleges generally do not report accurate rates of sexual violence. A recent study demonstrated that the incidence of sexual violence within several colleges increases by approximately 40% exclusively before Clery Act reports are audited by the federal Department of Education (Yung, 2015). An additional alarming finding is that, because of a loophole in the Clery Act, some colleges do not report sexual violence rates at all (Lombardi, 2016). Per the Clery Act, colleges are expected to gather and subsequently disseminate statistics on each crime reported by a member of the campus community. However, some colleges intentionally exclusively publish reports of crimes maintained by law enforcement (i.e., public safety) officials, overtly omitting reports made to resources such as student health centers or counselors (Lombardi, 2016). These alarming data suggest that colleges can conceal the truth about how frequently sexually violent acts occur on their campuses. Under-recording sexual violence report rates could invalidate the experience of survivors, and it could lead perpetrators to believe that they will not be disciplined for their actions.

Other higher education institutions simply have difficulty implementing all facets of Title IX and the Clery Act. Research has demonstrated that colleges generally require steady resources in order to accurately enforce these regulations. For example, one recent examination of approximately 500 colleges identified that only 11% comprehensively implemented regulations established by Title IX and the Clery Act, the latter of which President Obama extended through the Violence Against Women Act to protect college students (Griffin et al., 2017). Researchers discovered one glaring systemic barrier to comprehensive implementation: a lack of federal funding directed toward implementation (Griffin et al., 2017). Colleges must apply for grants to secure additional funding that they can use to properly update their Clery and Title IX

compliance (Griffin et al., 2017). These findings suggest that many colleges have the awareness and good intent to protect their students, but they face practical financial and staffing challenges.

Statement of Purpose

The primary purpose of the current dissertation was to complete a needs assessment that addresses how colleges are currently implementing federal policy pertaining to sexual violence in order to provide other current and future administrators with information that may further facilitate their implementation. In addition, the needs assessment may lead to suggestions for future researchers and legislators. I expected that focusing my research only on colleges in New York would yield noteworthy, and perhaps surprising, results. Previous college sexual violence research completed within has highlighted drastic differences between the allocation of resources provided to state-run versus private institutions (e.g., Chavez, 2016; Niblett, 2016). Thus, conducting research in one state, or one subsection of a given geographic location, allows college sexual violence researchers to identify both apparent and subtle similarities or discrepancies among public and private institutions and their applications of the pertinent federal regulations. Further, New York's colleges receive some of the most federal funding in the country, yet the amounts vary greatly (NCSES, 2023). Prior research suggests that colleges' implementation can vary as much as their funding does (e.g., Griffin et al., 2017). Finally, New York is one of the states that has enacted its own legislation pertaining to college sexual violence, bolstering the federal regulations that were already in place. For example, it mandated New York-based universities to utilize a uniform definition for affirmative consent and publicize a students' bill of rights (Enough Is Enough, 2015).

Rationale and Significance of this Research

College sexual violence has been considered a widespread issue within the US for several years, although research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the growing need for continued interventions targeting prevention and support for survivors (Huff, 2022). Generally, rates of gender-based violence have increased throughout several countries since the pandemic began (Muldoon et al., 2021). This increase has influenced members of the medical and mental health communities to refer to sexual violence as a second, or shadow, pandemic co-occurring with COVID-19 (e.g., Walker, 2020). Although comprehensive statistics on college sexual violence have not yet been published in the context of the pandemic, researchers with expertise in this area have posited that students' enthusiasm to either return to or to live on campus for the first time will contribute to behaviors often concurrent with sexual violence (e.g., illicit substance use; Huff, 2022). Also, given the finding that college students likely will not report an instance of sexual violence (e.g., Stoner & Cramer, 2019), the current sociocultural climate necessitates continued research in this area.

Moreover, previous research and government reports alike have demonstrated the prevalence of college sexual violence, but few have emphasized the role that barriers to reporting play in the continuation of this epidemic. Given the significant discrepancy between the rate of sexual violence victimization and the number of reports made, it remains important for researchers to examine the various social and legislative factors that act as barriers. Identifying existing gaps between resources and help-seeking may illuminate tools to improve access for survivors.

Further, needs assessments are frequently conducted within business organizations to identify which roles or functions may not be performing as well as expected (Witkin &

Altschuld, 1995). Applying this framework to social justice-oriented research has become increasingly common among psychologists within the past several years (e.g., Wood et al., 2022). According to Stoner and Cramer's systematic review from 2019, there exists an alarming discrepancy between the prevalence rate of sexual violence, which ranged from 4.7 to 58%, and the utilization rate of on-campus resources for survivors, which ranged from zero to 42%. It is clear that, generally, college survivors are not benefitting from the resources that most higher education institutions have implemented to maintain the health and safety of their students. Thus, the demand for this type of research is apparent.

Last, prior research has also suggested that college survivors are most likely to report their assault when they have readily available access to a breadth of resources, which may include access to individuals working in the medical, legal, and mental health fields (e.g., Linder, 2018; C. Spencer et al., 2020). Therefore, examining the efficaciousness of sexual violence policies is critical. Ideally, the data obtained from this dissertation will assist current and future college administrators in addition to each key member of higher education institutions, such as public safety officers, Title IX coordinators, and mental health counselors. Exploring current institutional shortcomings in this area will, in turn, illuminate college survivors' most prominent needs, which will allow these key individuals and entities to better support survivors post-assault.

Research Questions

1. Which parts of sexual violence policies do universities prioritize?
2. What types of prevention programming do universities offer?
3. What post-assault provisions do universities make available for survivors?

Conceptual Framework

The experience of college student survivors could be better explained from a feminist perspective through an examination of patriarchal influences. The onset of hegemonic masculinity, in particular, can be linked to the patriarchy. *Hegemonic masculinity,* also known as toxic or patriarchal masculinity, is defined as the "negative and socially aversive traits and behaviors associated with idealized societal masculine norms" (Van Doorn & March, 2021, p. 306). Some researchers have hypothesized that gender-based violence occurs most frequently within societies and cultures that have seemingly endorsed hegemonic masculinity as commonplace (Gerdes & Levant, 2018; Posadas, 2017). Our society is patriarchal and, therefore, some of us simply accept hegemonic masculinity and idealize masculine gender norms. Thus, our society's hegemonic masculinity has contributed to the normalization of violence against women, as well as gender-based violence in general, including intimate partner violence and homophobia. Of note, Kupers (2005) posited that a patriarchal society that has normalized hegemonic masculinity to some degree adversely affects men as well. Within this type of society, men are more likely to experience negative health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, reduced physical health, and diminished relationship satisfaction (Kupers, 2005). This evidence indicates that despite its apparent acceptance, hegemonic masculinity does not benefit any member of a patriarchal society.

Further, certain subcultures and contexts may be more likely to encourage behaviors associated with hegemonic masculinity than others, including the normalization of gender-based violence, and a number of these subcultures can be identified within colleges. Feminist researchers have postulated that men are more likely to commit violent acts when patriarchal influences have created clear social hierarchies, resulting in some men having more power than

women and other men (Hunnicutt, 2009; Yodanis, 2004). Martin (2016) argued that power differentials can be observed glaringly in two collegiate subcultures: athletic and Greek organizations. Athletic programs and fraternities ultimately contribute to a "rape-prone culture" through their emphasis on loyalty and homogeneity among members (Martin, 2016, p. 33). Martin stated that when homogeneous members of a specific subculture value loyalty, they also tend to value secrecy, especially when a member of the subculture commits an illegal or violent act. As a result, members of these groups are more likely to engage in behaviors that college sexual violence researchers consider high-risk, such as excessive substance use (C. M. Spencer et al., 2024).

As a result of their elevated social status, some collegiate athletes also display a sense of entitlement. These characteristics lead athletes to believe that they exist at the top of the collegiate social hierarchy and, thus, have more power than other students (Martin, 2016). Since athletes are most likely to be implicated in sexual violence reports on college campuses (ESPN, 2018), their perpetration of sexual violence may now be considered normal. Despite having fewer formal reports, this social normalization has occurred within collegiate Greek organizations as well. For instance, according to one recent study, members of both sororities and fraternities identified sexual violence as the foremost "threat" to their organization (Porta et al., 2023, p. 1489). This social normalization has not only affected college students themselves, but it has also influenced the way others talk about college sexual violence. For instance, an analysis of 71 news articles about college sexual violence found that 42% of these contained implicit victim-blaming language, such that the victim's alcohol consumption was highlighted (Siefkes-Andrew & Alexopoulos, 2019). By contrast, only 18% of these articles highlighted the perpetrator's alcohol consumption (Siefkes-Andrew & Alexopoulos, 2019). The use of

victim-blaming language, even when implicit, can contribute to the normalization of more explicit and, thus, harmful victim-blaming behavior. Victim blaming may be internalized by survivors themselves as well, such that they may not consider their experience violence at all. A qualitative study by C. Spencer et al. (2017) adds support to this hypothesis. They surveyed approximately 300 college student survivors, and among those who did not report their assault, 30% of respondents believed that it was "not a big enough deal" (C. Spencer et al., 2017, p. 171). This finding suggests that these survivors likely internalized the idea that violence against women is normal and, therefore, not noteworthy.

Researcher Perspective and Assumptions

My identity as a feminist inevitably affects the way that I think about social issues, especially those that concern women. For instance, I believe that patriarchal cultures have adversely influenced the way that sexual violence survivors view themselves as well as how they are treated by others. Since women are disproportionately represented among survivors of sexual violence, I have been interested in learning about the impact of sexual violence for some time. I later became acutely interested in research that examines college sexual violence when I had a firsthand experience with my undergraduate institution's Title IX department. This experience demonstrated to me that many of the policies that govern the way that sexual violence reports are investigated could be drastically improved, especially in terms of the treatment of survivors throughout the process. As a result, I am inclined to believe that all higher education institutions should have sexual violence policies that prioritize the health and safety of survivors. I tend to believe, however, that many colleges' applications of the federal regulations pertaining to college sexual violence are lacking. Therefore, I expected that my findings would indicate that many colleges continue to struggle to adapt to existing and updated or new federal regulations. Thus,

while my research design allowed and encouraged me to apply my knowledge and perspectives to the coding process (e.g., Hseih & Shannon, 2005), I maintained informal documentation of my assumptions and biases throughout my research. This allowed me to approach the data analysis process as openly as possible, while also acknowledging that the results were undoubtedly affected by my own biases, as the researcher.

Overview of Research Design

In order to answer the research questions, this dissertation utilized qualitative content analysis to identify themes within universities' websites. I did this to examine the current state of college sexual violence policies in the most authentic manner possible. This process was guided by a naturalistic methodological framework, which emphasizes the importance of placing oneself within the context of the phenomenon that is being researched (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

Originally, this dissertation sought to interview 10 to 15 current college administrators to assess their comfort and familiarity with the continually changing federal and state legislation. I intended to analyze this data with thematic analysis. Data collection consisted of identifying administrators at New York-based universities through their websites. I then emailed these administrators a description of my research along with an initial online data survey. After several months of attempted data collection, however, I was unable to recruit participants. I then decided to alter my project to include only publicly-available data, rather than participants. The implications of this change are discussed in depth in the limitations section.

Key Terminology

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is an all-encompassing phrase for a range of behaviors that are classified as either sexual harassment or sexual assault. Each state's legal system may have different

definitions for these terms; however, generally, the verbal and physical actions of the perpetrator determine whether the act is considered sexual harassment or sexual assault. For example, *sexual harassment* comprises a variety of acts such as stalking, unwanted sexual advances, and unwanted sexually explicit messages (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network [RAINN], n.d.). On the other hand, *sexual assault* consists of unwanted penetration of the body (i.e., rape), attempted rape, or unwanted sexual touching (RAINN, n.d.).

Survivor

I use the term *survivor*, rather than *victim*, throughout my dissertation because this is more common when discussing the sociocultural factors associated with and effects of sexual violence (Sexual Assault Kit Initiative [SAKI], n.d.). Conversely, the term victim is most often used within the legal system or when a sexual assault occurred in the very recent past (SAKI, n.d.). However, both of these terms have worthwhile meanings and may be used interchangeably across a variety of contexts by an individual who has experienced sexual violence. For instance, some feel that victim exemplifies the heinous nature of their assault, while survivor represents their empowerment and healing (SAKI, n.d.). Therefore, although I will use the word survivor in my writing, some quotes and themes may include the word victim.

Methodology

The current dissertation utilized qualitative content analysis in order to examine the efficacy of universities' sexual violence prevention and response measures. The research sample is comprised of three New York-based universities selected by the researcher. These universities were chosen based on the amount of federal funding they receive. Given that this project serves as a form of program evaluation, in which considering the context is critical, a naturalistic methodological framework was employed.

Rationale for Methodology

Naturalistic research arose from the philosophical claim that a phenomenon must be studied within its own context (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Therefore, all content analysis projects inherently follow a naturalistic paradigm (Hseih & Shannon, 2005). Naturalistic research also emulates several core principles, including an emphasis on the researcher as a core part of the research process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Since this project utilized existing, publicly available data, I knew that my role as the researcher was particularly impactful.

Naturalistic research values the role of existing literature and guiding theories, which also made it an appropriate paradigm for my project. I expected that my findings would illuminate varied ways to approach college sexual violence prevention and response. These diverse findings then informed my analyses and conclusions, thereby allowing me to provide recommendations, admonitions, and applications to current and future administrators.

Research Questions

1. Which parts of sexual violence policies do universities prioritize?
2. What types of prevention programming do universities offer?
3. What post-assault provisions do universities make available for survivors?

Information Needed

First, I needed to obtain federal funding amounts given to New York-based universities. In doing this, I selected the three universities that comprise my sample based on these amounts. I then explored the universities' own websites for more specific campus-based information. I identified precise campus locations, tuition amounts, enrollment data, and demographic information of students and staff. I hypothesized that each of these variables could be predictors of universities' overall compliance with the Clery Act and Title IX. For instance, prior research

has found that small institutions in rural locations often have greater difficulty implementing the required regulations (Griffin et al., 2017). Overall, I hoped to gather information about what components of sexual violence policies institutions are currently implementing and what appears to be prioritized in their implementation.

Sample

Since the current dissertation requires very specific inclusion criteria, a purposeful sampling procedure was used to identify my sample. To yield the most information about the phenomenon under study, purposeful sampling is a method that is typical of qualitative research (Patton, 2015). Thus, homogeneous sampling, a form of purposive sampling, was employed. Homogeneous sampling involves focusing on a group of people or institutions that share one or a few specific characteristics that are essential to the research topic and questions (Etikan et al., 2016). In this case, New York-based universities that receive federal funding were selected as my sample.

Rationale for Sample and Population

As the prevalence rates of college sexual violence generally continue to rise, it remains important for researchers to examine the factors that contribute to these statistics, which include the availability and visibility of post-assault resources for student survivors. One way that researchers can examine this is by conducting needs assessments of universities' prevention and response measures. Utilizing the regulations established by the Clery Act and Title IX as a guide, I chose to evaluate the efficacy of these programs by analyzing the content of universities' websites. Doing so enabled me to receive accurate data in terms of the accessibility of sexual violence resources.

Three New York-based universities that receive federal funding, and are therefore mandated to comply with the Clery Act and Title IX, were identified through my search for participating institutions. I chose the New York-based universities with: (a) the most federal funding, (b) the least federal funding, and (c) an average amount of federal funding. I hoped that this variation in funding would provide me with equally varied information about the program components that are easier or more difficult to implement.

Rationale for Sample Size

I identified three universities to comprise my sample. Sample size within qualitative research tends to vary according to the analysis methods used (Patton, 2015). For instance, many existing qualitative content analysis studies employed a team of researchers. Conversely, previous studies with a similar research question and sample employed quantitative techniques that primarily involved counts and statistical analyses (e.g., Griffin et al., 2017). Qualitative content analysis requires the researcher to scrutinize and conceptualize, rather than count, words, phrases, and over-arching themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). I determined that selecting a small sample would allow me to thoroughly examine the data associated with each university as well as maintain the integrity of the analyses.

Method

I employed qualitative content analysis methods to examine the websites of three New York-based universities. In doing so, I sought to identify what universities may prioritize when implementing state and federal mandates pertaining to sexual violence. Per the method of directed content analysis, I grounded my process in existing college sexual violence literature and sought to either expand or diverge from guiding theories.

Data Selection

Qualitative content analysis enables researchers to engage in data selection, rather than collection, since existing documents are used as the sample (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). My sample consists of three universities' websites with a particular emphasis on their crime reports (i.e., Clery data) and Title IX information. I then used this content in my coding process.

Procedures

I began the data selection process by identifying the federal funding amounts received by each New York-based university, which I obtained from the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES, 2023), as they maintain records of universities' research and development expenditures. I then selected the three New York-based universities that receive different federal funding amounts in the hopes that this would produce varied data and results. Finally, I analyzed the data according to directed content analysis procedures.

Ethical Considerations

The current study was approved by Antioch University New England's Institutional Review Board. This project utilized publicly available data and, therefore, posed no risk of harm to any individual or group. Given the sensitive subject matter, however, I decided to maintain the anonymity of the universities I selected by referring to them as Universities A, B, and C.

Data Analysis

I utilized qualitative content analysis to examine the state of three universities' sexual violence prevention and response measures. In their seminal paper on qualitative content analysis, Hseih and Shannon (2005) outlined several sub-types of content analysis as well as the steps that one should follow. Before I began to plan my analyses, I selected directed content analysis as my project's specific method. This type of content analysis acknowledges the value

of existing theory and seeks to find data that either support or diverge from that (Hseih & Shannon, 2005). This specific sub-type was most appropriate for my project given the breadth of research on college sexual violence policy.

When analyzing my data, I did not deviate from the directed content analysis methods proposed by Hseih and Shannon (2005), so I delineate the techniques they propose as a critical part of my process. First, the researcher should finalize their research questions and choose the content to be analyzed based on these inquiries. Next, the researcher should identify the coding scheme and coding units, based on guiding theories or frameworks, that will serve as a guide throughout the data selection process. Qualitative content analysis relies on the meaning of words or phrases rather than the frequency of words or phrases, so defining appropriate coding units before analyses is crucial. Codes can then be assigned to segments of content in order to identify relevant themes. Per Hseih and Shannon, the researcher should test the coding schemes against segments of text before engaging in thorough coding of the data. Finally, once all data have been coded, the researcher can begin to identify similarities or deviations within the data and conceptualize themes (Hseih & Shannon, 2005).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Researchers need to explain how they intend to establish and maintain their study's quality and accuracy. In quantitative research, reliability and validity are considered primary indicators of quality (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). In qualitative research, however, researchers must remain cognizant of verification procedures and one model, Issues of Trustworthiness, includes a focus on four core concepts: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Qualitative researchers who utilize content analysis have proposed additional measures that can be taken when engaging in document analysis (e.g.,

Hseih & Shannon, 2005). The ways through which I adhered to these core principles are delineated below.

Of note, qualitative researchers frequently employ the assistance of a second, or peer, reviewer as an additional assurance of their study's trustworthiness. When utilizing content analysis as a primary method, however, data checks are completed by the primary researcher (e.g., Hseih & Shannon, 2005). This is done by continually checking established codes against raw data. In doing this, the researcher has the opportunity to edit their coding units to ensure accuracy.

Credibility

Credibility is most closely related to the quantitative research concept of internal validity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). One way that qualitative researchers can maintain credibility is to assure that established themes accurately represent the data. In the context of content analysis, I maintained credibility by regularly checking the accuracy of my coding scheme against segments of content (Hseih & Shannon 2005). I edited my coding scheme after conducting additional research and reviewing my data several times, and the final version can be found in Appendix A.

Dependability

Dependability is most closely related to the quantitative research concept of reliability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). However, dependability acknowledges that data may shift throughout the research process and asserts that these shifts should be documented (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). To maintain this, I completed an audit trail throughout data selection and analysis, which is comprised of a description of the steps taken throughout the research process, including any changes in informal assumptions or biases (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

Transferability

Transferability is most closely related to the quantitative research concept of external validity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Although this dissertation is focused on sexual violence policies from universities in a specific geographic location, college sexual violence remains a prevalent issue throughout the US. Therefore, I anticipate that emergent themes will be generalizable to numerous higher education institutions within the US.

Confirmability

Confirmability is most closely related to the quantitative research concept of objectivity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). One primary goal of confirmability is to acknowledge the impact that our biases will have on our interpretations of the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). To maintain confirmability, I maintained a coding guide throughout the coding process, which initially included the coding scheme I followed for each webpage (see Appendix A). I also maintained detailed informal records and notes of my coding process for each university's website.

Results

Data were obtained from three New York-based universities' websites, which contain the universities' prevention and response sexual violence policies. The three universities were selected based on the amount of federal funding they receive: the universities with the highest and lowest amounts of federal funding were included in addition to one university representing an average amount of funding. While the universities' names will be withheld, key descriptive information is shared below. University characteristics vary based on several factors, such as precise geographic location and amount of funding received.

Demographic Information

University A

University A is a private university in New York City. It offers both undergraduate and graduate programs. The tuition cost (which excludes room and board, meal plans, and books) for a typical undergraduate student's academic year is about $68,000. According to the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES, 2023), University A received approximately $900 million from the federal government in 2022.

Despite its low acceptance rate (4%), University A has a large student body with about 40,000 enrolled students. Of these three universities, University A also has the highest four-year graduation rate at 88%. Conversely, its retention rate is the lowest of the three at 71%. With about half of enrolled students identifying as non-White, this student body is diverse relative to other private universities. The faculty, however, is less diverse, with about 80% of tenured and tenure-track faculty identifying as White.

University B

University B is a public university in Upstate New York. It also offers both undergraduate and graduate programs. Yearly tuition costs for undergraduate students are determined by the student's state of residence, such that tuition is less expensive for in-state students. As a result, tuition ranges from about $4,000 to $8,000. University B received about $600,000 from the federal government in 2022 (NCSES, 2023).

University B has a small student body with about 4,000 enrolled students. This is noteworthy given its relatively high acceptance rate of 70%. Both University B and University C have a four-year graduation rate of about 50%. University B's retention rate is slightly higher than University A's at 75%. While most of University B's student population is from New York,

about 10% of students are international. Most international students are from India and Nepal. Despite this, approximately 60% of students identify as White. Of note, the demographic information for University B's faculty is not accessible on their webpage with campus data.

University C

University C is a public university in New York City. Like universities A and B, it offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Depending on the student's state of residence, tuition costs vary from $7,000 to $19,000. In 2022, University C received about $1.9 million from the federal government (NCSES, 2022).

University C's total enrollment is about 16,000. University C has a relatively competitive acceptance rate at 51%, and it has the highest retention rate (84%) of these three universities. University C's student body is also the most diverse of the three selected institutions. About 40% of the undergraduate student body identifies as Asian, while about 30% identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Finally, approximately 20% of undergraduate students identify as White. Like University B, University C's faculty data does not include race or ethnicity.

Content Analyses

Techniques

Per Hseih and Shannon's (2005) steps for utilizing directed content analysis, I began the data analysis process by identifying the specific content to be analyzed. Each selected university maintains a webpage for Title IX-specific information and Clery-mandated data. However, the specific information and data that each university chooses to present can vary significantly, hence the need for program evaluation research in this area. Prior to starting my analyses, I created coding units that were informed by my research questions. To establish my coding units, I first created coding themes based on my project's guiding theories. The first theory consisted of

the concept that universities generally do not implement sexual violence policies as legislators intend for multiple reasons. The second posited that prevention programming is inadequate for multiple reasons, both in terms of content and delivery. From these theories, I created overarching themes that served as guides for the rest of the coding process. I then synthesized the overarching themes into subthemes, which acted as my coding units (see Appendix A). Finally, I scanned each university's website for pertinent content, then perused this content in order to begin sorting my findings according to my themes (see Appendix B for a sample coding table).

Findings

Results of the coding process were sorted according to the pre-determined guiding theories, which posited that sexual violence policies are not implemented as originally intended, and sexual violence prevention programs are often insufficient (see Appendix A). Themes were then derived from these theories as well as further review of the current literature. Thus, each theme is in some way a contributing factor to the college sexual violence epidemic: (a) inconsistent information, (b) unilateral post-assault support, (c) influence of patriarchal biases, and (d) lack of engagement. Through coding and organizing my data, I identified content that supported these themes and existing theories.

Inconsistent Information. This theme posited that one significant barrier to implementing comprehensive sexual violence policies is the lack of agreement among universities. While some definitions and procedures have been standardized across individual states or on the federal level, universities have the discretion to define many terms and procedures themselves. For instance, recent statewide legislation in New York standardized the definition of affirmative consent (Enough is Enough, 2015). However, other key terms that fall

under the jurisdiction of Title IX, such as sexual assault, do not have standardized definitions (Enough is Enough, 2015).

As stalking falls under the jurisdiction of Title IX, it is important that universities include an operational definition of it; however, stalking is one of many terms that does not have a standardized definition. Instead, each New York-based university is encouraged to present their own definition (Enough is Enough, 2015). Of the three universities I selected for this dissertation, two presented definitions of stalking. Both definitions highlighted the repetitive nature of behaviors related to stalking (e.g., messaging, surveilling, etc.). However, these definitions differed in one notable way. One definition stated that stalking is "reasonably likely to cause alarm, fear, or substantial emotional distress" (University A, n.d.). The other definition wrote that stalking is "intended to cause or does cause a reasonable person to fear or suffer" (University B, n.d.). The latter definitively highlights the intention of the person engaging in stalking, while the former uses more hesitant language and does not comment on intent at all.

Another key phrase without a standardized definition is sexual assault. Definitions of sexual assault tend to vary by state or organization because they typically describe a range of behaviors. Each university in this dissertation provided varied definitions with a few key similarities. Importantly, each emphasized that any act considered sexual assault is nonconsensual. Each definition also stated that sexual assault can occur through contact (i.e., touching or groping) or intercourse (i.e., penetration of any kind). Finally, each definition highlighted the role of sexual body parts, such as breasts or genitalia, in sexual assaults. While these are crucial statements to include, the definitions differ in a few potentially confounding ways. For one, two out of the three universities referred to sexual assault as an intentional act. One university specifically included "under or over any clothing" in their definition of contact,

and it widened the range of affected body parts (e.g., thighs; University A, n.d.). This definition additionally defined sexual assault as "making another person touch" the previously identified body parts. Finally, this university states that contact occurs as a result of "sexual gratification of either party" (University A, n.d.). Another university's definition of sexual assault differs in a few substantial ways. At this university, physical assault (e.g., punching) during sexual activity is considered sexual assault (University B, n.d.). This definition also clarified that sexual assault of any kind (i.e., contact or intercourse) can either be "attempted or completed" (University B, n.d.). Finally, one university used sexual assault and sexual violence interchangeably, and it also considers sexual assault to be a form of sexual harassment (University C, n.d.).

Universities should include dating violence in their sexual violence policies, although there is no standardized definition for this phrase either (Enough is Enough, 2015). Two of the three universities selected for this dissertation, Universities A and B, provided definitions of dating violence. The unifying description pertains to the violence occurring while the parties are involved in a close or intimate relationship. Notably, University A's definition of dating violence encompasses emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse (University A, n.d.). This definition also acknowledged the role of technology in dating violence, such that perpetrators can use phones or social media to exert control. University B's description simply stated that since New York does not provide a definition for dating violence, their dating violence policy would cover acts that are also considered domestic violence with the exception that they occur in an intimate relationship: harassment, sexual abuse, and attempted murder (University B, n.d.).

Unilateral Post-Assault Support. Previous research has found that some universities do not sufficiently present resources to access after surviving sexual violence (e.g., Linder, 2018). This contributes to students' lack of knowledge of these resources, which may prevent them

from being utilized. Importantly, previous research with college student survivors has found that awareness of post-assault resources is a strong predictor of initiating a Title IX report (C. Spencer et al., 2020). Therefore, I created this code because I hypothesized that universities may not provide students with enough information to make an informed decision about their post-sexual assault resources.

Each university in this dissertation dedicated at least a portion of a webpage to resources for survivors. Typically, these include information about the university's Title IX department, contact information for the university police or public safety, and measures that universities can take to support students who have experienced sexual violence. Notably, one of the three universities presented this information with few details. Their webpage simply stated that survivors should (a) call 911 or public safety, (b) do their best to preserve physical evidence, (c) seek medical care, and (d) contact the Title IX coordinator (University C, n.d.). Each university did, however, establish a webpage for frequently asked questions, which provides students with additional details about the Title IX investigative process. Still, it is noteworthy that this university did not elucidate on campus-based support options (e.g., counseling). On the other hand, two out of the three universities established webpages for their campus-based resources. They outline procedures for requesting changes to their course schedule or residence hall; they also assist the survivor in requesting a no-contact order against the perpetrator (University A, n.d.; University B, n.d.).

Influence of Patriarchal Biases. Implicit biases affect people in seemingly innocuous ways, including within everyday vernacular. Biased language has been identified in reports about college sexual violence, which can reinforce implicit biases (Siefkes-Andrew & Alexopoulos, 2019). In the context of college sexual violence, biased language often places blame on the

survivor. Victim-blaming biases inherently stem from patriarchal ideals that have contributed to the normalization of gender-based violence and subsequent rape culture in American society (e.g., Gerdes & Levant, 2018; Posadas, 2017). Thus, victim blaming is problematic, but its presence in sexual violence prevention programming may go unrecognized.

Each university's prevention programming contained some victim-blaming biases. As the 2019 study by Siefkes-Andrew and Alexopoulos demonstrated, discussing the substance use of the survivor or potential victim is one common way in which victim blaming occurs. This reinforces the idea that being under the influence contributed to their assault, as opposed to reinforcing the idea that only perpetrators are responsible for violent acts. One university wrote several educational, preventative statements that were coded as inherently victim blaming (University C, n.d.):

- "If you choose to drink, be careful"
- "When going to a party with friends, keep track of each other while you're there"
- "Go to a party with friends, not alone. Keep track of your friends and leave with them"
- "Know what's in your drink, whether it's non-alcoholic or contains alcohol"
- "Alcohol lowers inhibitions and impairs judgment"

Another university stated that leaving a party with a friend who has been using substances is considered bystander intervention (University A, n.d.).

Lack of Engagement. Prevention programming is critical in reducing the prevalence of college sexual violence, so it should be delivered in effective ways. It should also be mandatory, per recent updates to the Clery Act (DeMatteo et al., 2015). However, some universities' mandatory prevention programming is presented inefficiently, or it allows students to disengage through its delivery (e.g., online modules). Of the three universities I selected for this

dissertation, each of them has information about how they implement their federally-mandated prevention programming. Two out of three of these universities only mention the fact that prevention programming is mandated, however; they do not describe the programming they implement in practice.

Each university's website had varying degrees of accessibility, as well. University C has several webpages dedicated to educational videos, yet only three out of eight videos were active. This university also described an extensive prevention course for students to take, yet it is unclear how or when their engagement is tracked. University A listed hyperlinks to in-depth information about Title IX and Clery-related data, but stated that this training was only provided to students undergoing the Title IX investigative process.

Discussion

The current dissertation sought to add to the current literature in a meaningful way by answering research questions regarding university priorities, methods of prevention programming, and support options in implementation of sexual violence policies. This dissertation also sought to identify ways to improve universities' applications of mandates like Title IX and the Clery Act. My findings illuminated issues with these applications and subsequent potential areas for improvement.

My first research question pertained to colleges' apparent priorities when implementing their sexual violence policies. Through an examination of the data, I found that universities tend to prioritize implementing standardized mandates. For instance, each university selected in this dissertation included the New York-mandated definition of affirmative consent. This was the only unified definition presented by each university. Universities not only had different definitions for certain terms, but they also sometimes included different information as a whole.

This suggests that state or federal standardization would improve universities' implementation processes, which, in turn, would improve survivors' experiences at their universities.

The next research question sought to identify the methods used by universities when offering prevention programming. Only University B specifically named the variety of methods they use, which include prevention education through peer education programs, online modules, the university President's talks, and orientation trainings. University C presented in-depth information about the online module-based training they require students to take, although it is unclear as to how they monitor compliance.

My final research question pertained to the types of support options that are made available to survivors. I found that universities typically prioritize publicizing the support options that directly affect the survivor's campus experience. While this is not inherently problematic, it suggests that universities may not be prioritizing other forms of support (e.g., medical or mental health).

Inconsistent Information

The variation among the definitions provided by these three universities is alarming for a number of reasons. For one, the lack of standardization places a significant burden on universities. This likely contributes to universities' challenges with compliance, as research has shown that universities typically require extraneous resources to properly implement federal and state mandates (e.g., Griffin et al., 2017). The more concerning outcome of non-standardized definitions is the potential to create or contribute to loopholes. Previous research has found evidence that universities can exploit certain loopholes within Title IX or the Clery Act to present more favorable data for their institutions. More specifically, universities may choose to report their sexual violence statistics immediately before their Clery reports are audited by the

government, or they may include student reports made only to public safety officials, which excludes reports made to medical or mental health professionals (Lombardi, 2016; Yung, 2015). The New York-led standardization of the definition of affirmative consent allowed universities to present a unified, comprehensive description (Enough is Enough, 2015). This ultimately reduced some of the burden for universities. Federal or state provision of standardized definitions also allows universities to enforce unified policies and procedures. Ideally, increased standardization of sexual violence policies would improve the experience for both institutions and survivors.

Unilateral Post-Assault Support

Although the resources published by these three universities contain important information, they represent only campus-based support options that directly pertain to filing a report with the university. Previous research has shown that students today are most likely to turn to the internet to find resources after experiencing sexual violence (Griffin et al., 2017). This indicates the need for universities to maintain information about a breadth of available resources. Importantly, universities should also include steps survivors can take if they choose not to report their assault to the university. One university in this dissertation made an effort to include resources that all survivors could use, whether they choose to report their assault or not. The resources on their website include information about (a) sexual assault nurse examiners (i.e., SANE), (b) mental health professionals, (c) legal or law enforcement officials, and (d) prophylactic post-assault care (University B, n.d.). Including this information ultimately allows survivors to make informed decisions about what they would like to do in the aftermath of an assault. Most importantly, including information about health-related resources ensures that survivors can access potentially critical support.

Influence of Patriarchal Biases

Unfortunately, college students must take several precautions when socializing off-campus, especially at parties or bars. This is a result of concerns related to unintentionally ingesting a potentially fatal substance like fentanyl. While it is crucial for students to be cognizant of their physical safety, especially in the context of substance use, victim-blaming language is more likely to be present in preventative measures. Simply suggesting that students refrain from drinking alcohol cannot wholly prevent sexual violence. Importantly, extensive research has demonstrated that survivors often experience internalized victim blaming, which typically stems from substance-related concerns (e.g., APA, 2020). Thus, it is beneficial for universities to actively challenge victim-blaming biases in their policies. For instance, University B's educational materials for faculty and staff urges, "Do not ask questions such as: 'What were you wearing?'; 'Did you say no?'; 'Why didn't you tell me before now?'; "Why didn't you fight back?'; 'Do you have proof?'; 'Were you drinking?'" (n.d.). Another example actively challenging victim-blaming biases is, "Alcohol and/or drugs are often used as a tool by perpetrators" (University B, n.d.).

Lack of Engagement

The Clery Act requires universities to mandate sexual violence prevention and educational programming for students and staff. Universities have the discretion to implement this required programming however they like, which could present an issue. Universities' struggles to require their institutions' Title IX and Clery mandates be updated has been well-established by previous research (e.g., Griffin et al., 2017). This struggle may translate to insufficient prevention programming in practice. Only one of the three universities in this dissertation delineated the specific ways in which they implement their prevention programming

(University B, n.d.). Even with this level of transparency, it remains unclear as to how universities monitor student and staff participation. Online modules are convenient, but they also allow more opportunities for disengagement from the content (e.g., Griffin et al., 2017).

Recommendations

The current dissertation illuminated several policy and university-level implications. While there are some individual changes that universities can make that may improve their prevention and response measures (e.g., the presentation of data), my findings indicate that systemic interventions make the greatest impact. For example, New York's fairly recent decision to standardize a definition of affirmative consent ensured that students across the state should learn, and be responsible for adhering to, one unified, unambiguous definition and standard. Throughout the data selection process for this dissertation, I saw that the inclusion or exclusion of one word or phrase can make a significant impact on the interpretation of a given definition or policy. Therefore, legislators should continue to standardize Title IX and Clery-related procedures and definitions of terms. Survivors can have vastly different experiences depending on the university where they are located, and while this will always be the case to some degree, survivors' experience of the legislative process should be as uniform as possible.

Further, for prevention programming, many universities would benefit from system-level changes in the ways students and faculty are trained. New York developed their own educational program known as the Sexual and Interpersonal Violence Prevention and Response Course, or SPARC (Enough is Enough, 2015). SPARC is a mandatory training for all faculty and students at New York-based universities. However, its efficacy has been debated. In the context of this dissertation, University C presented survey data from SPARC participants, which was generally less promising than administrators had hoped. For one, less than half of respondents were able to

identify the role and function of a Title IX coordinator. Similarly, less than half of respondents were familiar with New York's standardized definition of affirmative consent (University C, n.d.). While the development of SPARC was a positive step in the right direction, it is clear that prevention programming could still be more effective. In short, this finding indicates the need for not only increased monitoring of student completion, but also more creative and engaging training courses.

Further, as stated previously, given the finding that many sexual violence prevention programs are geared toward potential victims' behaviors (e.g., covering drinks when in public), universities should make active efforts to challenge victim-blaming biases. Universities' prevention programming should also include safety considerations for all college students, rather than just potential victims. For example, education about the circumstances in which someone can and cannot consent to sexual activity is critical information for all students. Further, as referenced in the results section of this dissertation, using language related to the perpetrators' actions, rather than solely victim safety, would help in counteracting the societal instinct to victim-blame.

Finally, recent qualitative research with college student survivors has identified several concerns regarding the Title IX investigative process, including impersonal investigators, lack of disciplinary action toward perpetrators, significant academic disruption, and lack of transparency throughout (Webermann & Holland, 2022). With the help of advocates and mental health professionals, universities continue to move toward implementing trauma-informed procedures. While this framework can better support survivors, particularly when they seek medical and mental health care, it may neglect one important consideration: the institutional trauma and/or institutional betrayal one may experience in the aftermath of an assault (e.g., Thompson, 2021).

In the context of college sexual violence, trauma is experienced on the individual psychophysiological level as well as on the systemic ideological level. Trauma-informed policies generally refer only to the individual experience of trauma, like physical injuries or changes to survivors' neurobiology. However, survivors navigating system-level interventions, such as a Title IX investigation, often endure additional traumas as they undergo interrogations and confront perpetrators. Survivors may also experience blatant victim blaming throughout the judicial process. Addressing the individual experience of trauma is evidently critical in supporting survivors, but systems must also acknowledge the impact of their practices. Therefore, for trauma-informed procedures to be truly holistic, they must also account for the role of the institutional policies themselves. See Appendix C for a condensed list of recommendations.

Limitations

Limitations of the current dissertation primarily pertain to the method of analysis and sample size. While content analysis is commonly used in qualitative research, it is most often used alongside other methods. Utilizing three different data collection techniques is referred to as triangulation, which is more likely to ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). In completing this study, I learned that college sexual violence research may be most effective when multiple methods, procedures, or modalities are used. The original plan for this dissertation included both quantitative and qualitative methods, which I believe would have produced greater trustworthiness. However, as was the case for this dissertation, in practice, using more effective research methods will not always be feasible. Researchers can still learn a great deal from studies with different methods and techniques, but they also benefit from attending to challenges in recruitment, for example.

Additionally, although I took several steps to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, directed content analysis relies heavily on the judgment of the researcher. I used my knowledge of the current literature to create my coding scheme; I then sorted the selected data into pre-determined categories. Qualitative research generally allows for the researcher's perspective to add value to the study, as attended to in the literature review section, but my use of one method may not have mitigated the impact of my biases enough.

Finally, a smaller sample size may lead to the identification of fewer themes. Since college sexual violence is a widespread issue across the US, there are undoubtedly numerous perspectives on how colleges have been effective and how they can improve. Although qualitative research does allow researchers to collect data from relatively small sample sizes, it is possible that the themes observed within this dissertation were not fairly representative of the population. Thus, a small sample size, and the use of a qualitative research design, led to challenges with the generalizability of the research findings.

Future Research

Given the ongoing college sexual violence epidemic, researchers should continue to identify empirically-supported ways to improve students' experiences on campus. First, future research should continue to identify barriers universities face when implementing federal and state mandates related to sexual violence. Like this dissertation, this has often been done by analyzing content on universities' websites. Despite the challenges identified in the previous section, this type of research should be done through surveys and interviews whenever possible. Firsthand research with those involved in implementation is scarce, and it would provide invaluable information about universities' processes and challenges.

Previous research has established that college students are most likely to seek out internet resources after an assault (e.g., Griffin et al., 2017). This indicates a need for future research to assess universities' efficacy in publicizing available resources. For instance, in this dissertation, I identified one list of resources that had not been updated since 2016 (University B, n.d.). Research could aid universities in finding ways to improve their methods for maintaining these lists of resources. Future research should also continue to identify supportive resources that have been shown to improve campus safety, such as the presence of a women's resource center with a focus on sexual violence (Griffin et al., 2017).

Although it has been established by previous research, future research should continue to identify the impact of internalized victim blaming on survivors' post-assault decision making. Studies that examine the presence of victim-blaming language in articles or reports would also provide college administrators and legislators with more guidance on implementing prevention programming. Relatedly, future research should continue to identify ways to increase engagement and efficacy of prevention programming. This can be done, for example, by issuing pre- and post-surveys to students who undergo educational programming aimed at sexual violence prevention.

Conclusion

The current dissertation employed a qualitative methodology to identify similarities and discrepancies among New York-based universities' implementation of sexual violence prevention and response measures. College sexual assault remains a prevalent issue throughout the US and has been deemed a particular area of concern by organizations such as the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020). Additionally, given that recent statistics demonstrate a significant discrepancy between college sexual violence and utilization of post-assault resources

(Stoner & Cramer, 2019), further research on the accessibility and availability of on-campus resources is needed. Research has demonstrated that survivors may be more likely to seek out help when they were already aware of their college's resources, and these resources were readily available (C. Spencer et al., 2020), suggesting a need for an examination of how institutions have implemented these resources. However, research also continues to support the finding that universities face many challenges when implementing federal and state mandates. This indicates that researchers are uniquely positioned to assist both college administrators and legislators in improving this experience going forward.

The post-assault process will never be a positive one for survivors, but it should be as fair, safe, and supported as possible. In order to ensure that this process is enforced with uniformity in the future, standardizing the implementation, as well as key terms, of federal and state mandates would be beneficial. Most importantly, these mandates should continue to implement holistic trauma-informed practices that center survivors' health and safety. After engaging in a review of the literature and the data analysis process, I found that universities have begun taking several positive steps in a helpful direction. For example, having sexual violence advocates on campus has become regular practice for many universities. Some universities' decision to provide faculty trainings on avoiding victim-blaming language with survivors is another example of this progress. Also, even with occasional setbacks, legislation continues to identify ways to support students in both preventative and responsive practices. With continued collaboration among researchers, legislators, university administrators, and mental health professionals, the college sexual violence epidemic, with overwhelming damage of survivors, may no longer persist at its current scale.

References

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Campus sexual assault and campus climate.* https://rb.gy/nwag8n

Beaver, W. (2019). College athletes and sexual assault. *Culture and Society*, *56*, 620–624. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-019-00426-w

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2018). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Cantalupo, N. C. (2011). Burying our heads in the sand: Lack of knowledge, knowledge avoidance, and the persistent problem of campus peer sexual violence. *Loyola University of Chicago Law Journal*, *43*(1), 205–220.

Chavez, I. D. (2016). *Campus interpersonal violence in the Lone Star State: Available resources for students experiencing relationship violence, sexual assault, and stalking.* (Publication No. 10131641). [Doctoral dissertation, Texas Woman's University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

DeMatteo, D., Galloway, M., Arnold, S., & Patel, U. (2015). Sexual assault on college campuses: A 50-state survey of criminal sexual assault statutes and their relevance to campus sexual assault. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, *21*(3), 227–238. https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000055

Enough Is Enough, New York State S. 5965. (2015). https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2015/2015-s5965

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, *5*(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Gerdes, Z. T., & Levant, R. F. (2018). Complex relationships among masculine norms and health/well-being outcomes: Correlation patterns of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory subscales. *American Journal of Men's Health*, *12*(2), 229–240. https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988317745910

Griffin, V. W., Pelletier, D., Griffin, O. H., III, & Sloan, J. J., III. (2017). Campus sexual violence elimination act: Saving lives or saving face? *American Journal of Criminal Justice: The Journal of the Southern Criminal Justice Association*, *42*(2), 401–425. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-016-9356-4

Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, *15*(9), 1277–1288. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687

Huff, C. (2022, April/May). A crisis of campus sexual assault. *Monitor on Psychology*, 26–30.

Hunnicutt, G. (2009). Varieties of patriarchy and violence against women: Resurrecting "patriarchy" as a theoretical tool. *Violence Against Women*, *15*(5), 553–573. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208331246

Kupers, T. A. (2005). Toxic masculinity as a barrier to mental health treatment in prison. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *61*(6), 713–724. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20105

Linder, C. (2018). *Sexual violence on campus: Power-conscious approaches to awareness, prevention, and response*. Emerald Publishing.

Lombardi, K. (2016). Sexual assaults on campuses are underreported or not reported at all. In E. Schmermund (Ed.), *Campus sexual violence* (pp. 96–105). Greenhaven Publishing.

Martin, P. Y. (2016). The rape prone culture of academic contexts: Fraternities and athletics. *Gender & Society*, *30*(1), 30–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243215612708

Muldoon, K. A., Denize, K. M., Talarico, R., Fell, D. B., Sobiesiak, A., Heimerl, M., & Sampsel, K. (2021). COVID-19 pandemic and violence: Rising risks and decreasing urgent care-seeking for sexual assault and domestic violence survivors. *BMC Medicine*, *19*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-020-01897-z

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES). (2023). *Higher Education Research and Development: Fiscal Year 2022*. NSF 24-308. National Science Foundation. Available at https://ncses.nsf.gov/surveys/higher-education-research-development/2022.

National Network to End Domestic Violence. (n.d.). *Violence Against Women Act.* https://nnedv.org/content/violence-against-women-act/

Niblett, S. L. (2016). *Case analysis of sexual violence programs on college campuses.* (Publication No. 13423837). [Doctoral dissertation, Delaware State University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Nolan, J. J. (2022, June 24). *U.S. Department of Education proposes new Title IX regulations*. Holland & Knight. https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2022/06/us-department-of-education-proposes-new-title-ix-regulations

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Porta, C. M., Elmquist, S., Martin, L., Sampson, K., Stack, K., Hill, A., Lee, A., & Driessen, M. C. (2023). "It could bring down Greek life as a whole": Greek life members' perspectives on party culture, safety, responsibilities and consequences. *Journal of American College Health*, *71*(5), 1486–1496. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2021.1942004

Posadas, J. (2017). Teaching the cause of rape culture: Toxic masculinity. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *33(*1), 177–179. https://doi.org/10.2979/jfemistudreli.33.1.23

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network. (n.d.). *Sexual harassment*. https://www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-harassment

Sexual Assault Kit Initiative. (n.d.). *Victim or survivor: Terminology from investigation through prosecution*. https://sakitta.org/toolkit/docs/Victim-or-Survivor-Terminology-from-Investigation-Through-Prosecution.pdf

Siefkes-Andrew, A. J., & Alexopoulos, C. (2019). Framing blame in sexual assault: An analysis of attribution in news stories about sexual assault on college campuses. *Violence Against Women*, *25*(6), 743–762. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801218801111

Spencer, C., Mallory, A., Toews, M., Stith, S., & Wood, L. (2017). Why sexual assault survivors do not report to universities: A feminist analysis. *Family Relations*, *66*(1), 166–179. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12241

Spencer, C., Stith, S., Durtschi, J., & Toews, M. (2020). Factors related to college students' decisions to report sexual assault. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *35*(21–22), 4666–4685. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517717490

Spencer, C. M., Rivas-Koehl, M., Astle, S., Toews, M. L., McAlister, P., & Anders, K. M. (2024). Factors correlated with sexual assault victimization among college students in the United States: A meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, *25*(1), 246–259. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380221146800

Stoner, J. E., & Cramer, R. J. (2019). Sexual violence victimization among college females: A systematic review of rates, barriers, and facilitators of health service utilization on campus. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *20*(4), 520–533. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838017721245

Thompson, L. (2021). Toward a feminist psychological theory of "institutional trauma". *Feminism & Psychology*, *31*(1), 99–118. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353520968374

University A (Name withheld). *About Title IX*; n.d.

University B (Name withheld). *Sex and gender discrimination and violence*; n.d.

University C (Name withheld). *Combating sexual misconduct*; n.d.

Van Doorn, G., & March, E. (2021). Hegemonic masculinity, gender, and social distance: The mediating role of perceived dangerousness. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *30*(3), 306–316. https://doi-org.antioch.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1844000

Walker, T. (2020, May 1). *A second, silent pandemic: Sexual violence in the time of COVID-19*. Harvard Medical School Center for Primary Care. https://info.primarycare.hms.harvard.edu/review/sexual-violence-and-covid

Webermann, A. R., & Holland, K. J. (2022). Inconsistency is the consistency: The Title IX reporting process for sexual and gender-based misconduct within Maryland public universities. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *46*(4), 468–483. https://doi.org/10.1177/03616843221115340

Witkin, B. R., & Altschuld, J. W. (1995). *Planning and conducting needs assessments: A practical guide.* SAGE publications.

Wood, L., Baumler, E., Schrag, R. V., Guillot-Wright, S., Hairston, D., Temple, J., & Torres, E. (2022). "Don't know where to go for help": Safety and economic needs among violence survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Family Violence*, *37*(6), 959–967. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-020-00240-7

Yodanis, C. L. (2004). Gender inequality, violence against women, and fear: A cross-national test of the feminist theory of violence against women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *19*(6), 655–675. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260504263868

Yung, C. R. (2015). Concealing campus sexual assault: An empirical examination. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, *21*(1), 1–9. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/law0000037

Appendix A

Coding Scheme

Theories	Themes	Subthemes	Definitions	Units
Sexual violence policies are not implemented as intended	Inconsistent information	Burden of presenting accurate data and defining non-standardized terms on each university	Content that includes key terminology and crime/Title IX/Clery data	PD
	Unilateral post-assault support	Multidimensional resources (e.g., medical, mental health, both on campus and off) are often not readily available or publicized	Content that describes post-assault resources (e.g., medical, mental health) in detail	MR
Prevention programming is insufficient	Influence of patriarchal biases	Implicit victim blaming within safety measures	Content that describes protective measures for students to take	VB
	Lack of engagement	Trainings often consolidated to a significant degree	Content that describes the nature of the university's prevention programming	OE

Appendix B

Sample Coded Data Organization

Unit	Raw Data	Observation
PD	If you experience acts of aggression, intimidation, stalking, or hostility based on gender or gender stereotyping, this may be gender-based harassment.	+PD/definition created by the university – lack of standardization
OE	Institutions must develop and implement a year-round, ongoing campaign on sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking education and prevention.	+OE/references mandatory prevention programming without offering support
MR	When the accused is a student, to have the college issue a "No Contact Order," consistent with college policy and procedure, meaning that continuing to contact the protected individual is a violation of college policy.	+MR/offers basic campus resource for survivors
VB	Alcohol is present in 80-85% of reported rapes. Drinking too much in no way makes being raped or assaulted the fault of the person assaulted.	-VB/makes an active effort to challenge victim-blaming biases
PD	One out of every eight women nationwide is a victim of rape in their lifetime (National Center for Victims of Crime and the Crime Research and Treatment Center 1992)	+PD/an important finding, but it cites outdated research

Note: (+UNIT) indicates support for a theme; (-UNIT) indicates a lack of support for a theme

Appendix C

Recommendations for Improving Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Processes

Casey Buonocore, M.S., M.A.

Language & Definitions

- Standardize language and definitions across universities Title IX and Clery policies and procedures
    - This will allow students, families, and administrators to quickly grasp content from various schools' Title IX websites, for example
- Challenge victim-blaming biases, especially regarding language and proposed safety considerations for students
    - For example, replace "if you choose to drink, be careful" with "substances are often used as a tool by perpetrators"

Prevention Programming

- Include all students in prevention programming, including consent education
- Create more engaging prevention education courses
- To ensure effectiveness of prevention programming…
    - Implement means of tracking student participations
    - Evaluate programs with, for example, use of pre- and post-program surveys

---

University Administration Support

- Provide those involved in the Title IX process (e.g., investigators) with trauma-informed education to reduce re-traumatization of survivors
    - Acknowledge the potential detrimental impact of these processes
- Identify and reduce additional barriers for implementation; for example, provide support for keeping online resources updated, as students are most likely to access these themselves
- Provide universities with additional resources to establish supportive campus spaces, such as women's and/or gender & sexuality resource centers